

6
AUG

That Hokey Changey Thing

by *Zoe Dobkin*

This summer, I worked as a program assistant at [AMAR U.S.](#), which focuses on women’s empowerment, health, and education in the Middle East, mainly in Iraq.

I have to admit, as a recovering cynic, AMAR was very good to me.

Every day at work, I read about the [Women’s Health Volunteers program](#), where women in Iraq become empowered and valuable leaders in their communities as they ensure families receive the health care they need; or I learned more about the [Leadership and Capacity Building project](#) in northern Iraq, where both men and women, in addition to religious leaders and members of the government, are all involved in efforts to change the cultural discourse in Kurdistan surrounding the role of women in society; or I worked on proposals to create a national campaign for women’s rights in Iraq.

Through AMAR, I was once again reminded of the necessity to take the good with the bad. In an instant, I’d go from lamenting the vulnerable situation of women in Afghanistan with my colleagues, to analyzing field data detailing how thousands of students are successfully tackling gender issues in northern Iraq. I found the constant switch between these two types of discussions exhausting and abrupt; since I was too busy focusing on the horrible news stories, any hint of progress in any region of the world, let alone the tumultuous Middle East, was too overwhelming for me.

But I am beginning to adjust—slowly. As of now, I am starting to realize that all the positive changes happening in the world are immensely underreported, and it does society a great disservice.

Through AMAR, I am once again reminded of the power of perspective. One of the most moving lectures I had the privilege to attend was a working group comprising NGOs, ambassadors, and female Iraqi members of parliament on how to advance the fight for women’s rights in Iraq. While all participants were forthcoming in listing challenges—and there are numerous formidable obstacles to progress in Iraq—the atmosphere was filled with not despair, but rather tremendous determination. The female MPs repeatedly described how they believed the situation in their country will improve and looked to the US as a source of hope. I was completely taken aback by their unrelenting sense

FOLLOW BLOG VIA EMAIL

Enter your email address to follow this blog and receive notifications of new posts by email.

Follow

FEATURED POSTS

Reacting to the Red Light District

by Nicole Chenelle When I say that I spent a week in Amsterdam during my semester abroad, most people respond with something along the lines of, “Oh! So did you see the Red Light district?” coupled with wide eyes and giggles. I spent the week in Amsterdam with my Prostitution and the Sex Trade class. [...]

So Much More Than Gender: The Social Class/Race Disconnect

by Angela Bui Going from an environment comprised of a mainly lower class, predominantly Latino and African American community to an upper-middle class and predominantly white area gives me a combination of experiences which continue to increase my awareness on both sides of the spectrum each day. Growing up, I was under the impression that [...]

Tired

by Anonymous I should be angry. I should be enraged and impassioned. I should be motivated to fight and struggle. But I’m not. I’m simply too tired. I’m tired of going to my evolutionary biology class. Tired of being a gay in person in a space where all we talk about is critical importance of [...]

Hurting

by Anonymous Trigger warning for language and depression MAJOR TRIGGER WARNING FOR SELF-HARM He was my best friend. The only person who knew every big secret I had...and I had a few. That’s why, when he called me a bitch, I was inclined to believe him. I had always had moderate self-esteem, spurred on by [...]

of inevitable positive change in combination with recognition of trials and tribulations. Their sense of purpose, focus, and indefatigable motivation made me feel foolish for ever being a cynic, about anything.

Never have Stephen Colbert's words on cynicism [within the last two minutes of his 2006 commencement address to Knox College](#) resonated so deeply with me:

"Young people who pretend to be wise to the ways of the world are mostly just cynics. Cynicism masquerades as wisdom, but it is the furthest thing from it because cynics don't learn anything. Because cynicism is a self-imposed blindness—a rejection of the world because we are afraid it will hurt us, or disappoint us."

Hope gets a lot of flack these days, but when channeled appropriately, it is an essential, impressive, and commanding force for progress.

A feminist with hope is truly unstoppable.