

## **Fulbright Association Michigan Chapter Event Report**

**Report: Arab American Cultural Tour day, Saturday, March 22, 2014**

**Chapter Name:** Michigan Chapter

**Name of Person Preparing This Form:** Hashim Al-Tawil- Co-Organizer

**Date of Event:** March 22, 2014

**Title of Event:** Arab American Culture Tour – Livonia & Dearborn, MI

**Was This Event Co-Sponsored?** No

**Was This Program Open to the General Public?** No

**How many total persons attended?** 52 Total attendees: 31 Visiting Fulbrighters, 8 Fulbright Chapter members, 9 paid guests, and 2 children.

**How many were Fulbright Alumni?** With the new E-CBC funding, we now report:  
-the number of chapter Members served with CBC funds (8, noted above)  
-the number of visiting Fulbrighters served with E funds (31, noted above)  
-the number of Guests (9 paying adults and 2 children, noted above)

**What Was the Cost of the Event?** \$1760 (E-CBC funds supplemented with in-kind/cost sharing from Chapter General funds for transportation. Note: in-kind/cost sharing from schools and from paying Guests omitted.)

**How Was the Event Funded?** Principal funding was from E-CBC grant funds from the National Fulbright Office, supplemented by in-kind/cost sharing from General Chapter funds with nominal gasoline contributions from paying Guests and schools.

### **Please describe the event:**

The tour was a collaborative effort by three board members with the assistance of other members. Maher Mualla, Michelle Metro-Roland, and Hashim Al-Tawil. Michelle planned, supervised, and followed up on the sign-in form; Maher coordinated and helped in the transportation, and Hashim planned, arranged, and confirmed the three stops for the tour. The **Arab American Culture Tour** took place on Saturday March 22, 2014 as noted. Participants travelled from different locations: Lansing metropolitan area, Ann Arbor-Washtenaw area, Kalamazoo, Detroit, Adrian, Dearborn, Mid-Michigan, West Bloomfield, and Troy.

10:00- 10:30 AM Participants arrived by cars and vans at St. Mary Antiochian Basilica in Livonia 18100 Merriman Rd, Livonia, MI 48152 – the region’s only Eastern Orthodox (Arab Antiochian Orthodox) Basilica. The service observed was a funeral

spoken in both Arabic and English. We toured the building, observed a funeral service, and listened to prayers, hymns and recitations in the original Eastern Christian tradition. Fr. George Shalhoub welcomed the group and talked about the history of the Basilica, the congregation, which is mostly Arab American from Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan. The visitors learned about the architectural details and the iconographical program of the narratives inside in Byzantine style. The visitors observed the work-in-progress painting of a “Pantokrator” on the ceiling of the church. Several visiting Fulbrighters accepted the invitation to ascend to the top of the interior dome of the Basilica via the existing scaffolding for the unfinished portion of the facility.

12:00 noon Participants arrived at Al-Ajami Restaurant at 14633 W. Warren, Dearborn, MI 48126. The menu for the Lunch included Trays with: Shish Kabab, Kiftah, Shawarma (meat and chicken) Falafel, Hummus, Baba Ghanouj, Grape Leaves (Vegetarian and meat) and, and Mjaddara (sauté onion and large lintel) along with home made small fresh pita bread, salads, and pickles.

2:00 PM Participants arrived at the Islamic Center of America (ICA) at 19500 Ford Rd., Dearborn, MI 48128. This is the main Islamic mosque in Dearborn and was designed, planned and constructed in 2005. We visited the building; observed the prayer area in action, listened to a guide’s description of the architectural design- interior and exterior presented by Dr. Eid Alawan - coordinator of the interfaith program at the mosque because the Imam of the mosque was out of town. Dr. Alawan gave an informal presentation about the mosque, its history, and the different activities. The visitors learned about the non-figurative interior design, and the meaning and significance of the Arabic calligraphy. They also learned about the use of Qur’anic verses to illustrate certain religious and cultural concepts. The make up of the congregation of ICA is primarily of Lebanese, Iraqi, as well as other Muslim groups along with local non-Arab Muslims. Hashim contacted and arranged the visit at the three places ahead of time- back in November with follow up and confirmation as the day approached.

3:00 PM Participants were invited to drive and shop around Dearborn. Some visited Papaya Fruit Market, 14615 W. Warren Ave., Dearborn, MI 48126, others visited **Super Greenland Market at 12715 W. Warren Ave., Dearborn, MI 48126**. A number of participants also visited the newer **Dearborn Fresh Supermarket** at 13661 Colson St, Dearborn, Michigan 48126, and stores known as “sweet shops” in the Arab American tradition. These places provide mainly Arabic and Middle Eastern food items.

6:00 PM Participants ended the tour, embarking from Dearborn to their original areas of origin from around the Chapter service area of Michigan. The participants came from University of Michigan – Ann Arbor, Michigan State University, Eastern Michigan University, Central Michigan University, Western Michigan University, Wayne State University, Adrian College, Henry Ford College, several online and K-12 programs, and an international intellectual property law firm. They enjoyed the three part tour, exploring and learning about the Arab American community culture with first-hand experience while sampling some of the remarkable diversity of American society. These Fulbrighters and their family-guests hailed from Europe, Africa, South East Asia, South

America, North and Central America, Australia and Pacific Rim nations. The tour was replete with an abundance of cultural enrichment, learning and fun. Attached are some pictures from the tour.



Michigan FA chapter at St. Mary Church, Livonia, MI

Photo: Haitham Fakhouri-Bold Media



Michigan FA chapter at St. Mary with Fr. George Shalhoub

Photo: Hashim Al-Tawil



Michigan FA chapter at the Islamic Center of America, Dearborn, MI



Michigan FA chapter at the ICA with Eid Alawan

Photo: Hashim Al-Tawil



Michigan FA chapter at Al-Ajami Restaurant, Dearborn, MI

Photo: Hashim Al-Tawil