

WHAT A FULBRIGHT AWARD REALLY MEANS

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In a recent opinion piece in the *New York Times*, Roger Rosenblatt analyzed the meaning of prestigious academic awards that are given every year. He stated: “A Nobel or Pulitzer, for instance, says, ‘Congrats, you’ve hit the jackpot!’ while a Fulbright or Rhodes says, ‘Congrats, you’ve only just begun to live!’ A Guggenheim says, ‘Congrats, good work so far, keep it up!’”

Rosenblatt astutely captures the uniqueness of Fulbright awards in that they often mark the beginning of a life-changing transformative journey into new scholarly and cultural experiences.

Mark Twain famously stated “the two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.” Fulbrighters often say that their time spent in a different country on their awards marked that time in their life when they really felt as though they were making a difference in the world and/or had found new meaning and purpose in their life. Indeed, the ability to give back to something larger than yourself can be powerful and transformative.

There are three important stages of the process of becoming a Fulbrighter. First, there is the competition phase of applying for a Fulbright award and receiving that wonderful notification that you have been selected. Second, there is the cooperation phase of the award where you recognize that your goals will not be realized without the collaboration of your hosts. Last, and perhaps most importantly, there is the giving back phase of your Fulbright award. At this stage, you realize how indebted you are to the world’s greatest exchange program and you commit to ways of repaying your good fortune.

Fulbright alumni quickly realize how lucky they are to have an award that allows them to experience the world in new and life-changing ways. As a result, they feel obligated to give back to the Fulbright program in ways that truly make a difference. *Fulbright Chronicles* is the vibrant journal that it is today because alumni volunteer their time and talents; they serve on our editorial board or they inspire us by contributing articles, commentaries and book reviews. We invite you to join us in giving back to the Fulbright program by getting involved with *Fulbright Chronicles*.

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In this issue of *Fulbright Chronicles* we have more Fulbright alums that have successively competed, cooperated and given back to the Fulbright program. Gregory Fowler’s Fulbright experiences in Germany and Belgium challenged his assumptions about effective education and prompted him to advocate and

embrace “student-centered” approaches in his teaching practices. Katherine Kerr and Craig Goergen relate how the participation of student researchers in biomedical engineering Fulbright projects in France and Germany can boost academic productivity, cultural understanding, and community exchange. Tomas Valdes and Cole Grumbach’s Fulbright experiences in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) allowed them to witness and now play a role in the dramatic political, cultural, economic and social changes that have transformed and opened up the country in recent years. The research and workshops executed by Fulbrighter Johana Zapata in her home country of Honduras allowed her to promote interest in STEM fields in young children. College science dean Claire Phillips participated in a Fulbright funded administrator’s trip where learning about the French higher education system allowed her to further internationalization recruitment efforts at her own institution. Maria Montoya’s Fulbright stays in Colombia permitted her to develop partnerships in Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), a program that allows faculty and students to exercise critical thinking across cultures and to solve problems that are international in scope. Flavia Cavaliere, a Fulbrighter from Italy, spent time in the United States teaching college courses that were designed to dispel stereotypes about ‘Italianness’. Her experiences in the US simultaneously changed her own perspectives on American values and ways of living. Finally, in these pages, there are also more inspiring book reviews of work authored by Fulbright alumni.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle said, “The essence of life is to serve others and do good.” Fulbrighters from around the world do this all the time during and after their award period ends. Their Fulbright experiences uniquely position them to give back and continue this essential value of the Fulbright program of serving others and doing good. Please enjoy this issue of *Fulbright Chronicles* and consider how you can give back to the Fulbright program.