Karim Abdel-Wadood

Service Journal Entry #1

I had just started service late into the first quarter and was trying to wrap my head around what I had to do and the concept of “service hours”. I was stuck in regards to what I had to do and I asked Mrs. Mazhar for some guidance and she recommended that I either teach orphans in Maadi, help out at a clinic with Taymour or help Mrs. Lantz teach Sudanese children. The third choice appealed to me as I had seen a presentation on it the year before and it seemed interesting.

Prior to going for the first time, I thought these children were able to communicate in English albeit on a basic level. They simply needed help writing an essay or other such projects. I also thought that they would be immature and unruly from what I had heard, despite having a bit of doubt about this. I had based my Action Plan on these things and was ready to go.

Early in the second quarter, I met with Mrs. Lantz at the back gate for the first time and I noticed that I wasn’t alone in this endeavor, far from it. The school was somewhere in Maadi near the Grand Mall and needless to say, I was surprised at the run-down state which was in. I went into the ground floor of the apartment building and there were Sudanese kids of several ages being taught in different classrooms. I met the head-teacher and I instantly had great respect for the man. I walked out into the outer area and found Mr. Ramadan (the head-teacher) preaching religious statements. Afterwards, Mrs. Lantz gave a little introduction and divided us up into groups after telling us what to teach the kids.

The boy I was assigned to was called Boulos and he was friendly. I had an advantage over the rest of my peers because I spoke Arabic and I was able to use that as a bridge for my teaching. Boulos was smart; he was able to speak basic English and it was obvious he understood the material but he just had trouble expressing it. He showed me a basic essay he wrote about himself and it looked good, despite messy handwriting and miniscule grammatical errors. However, it was incredibly difficult explaining some grammatical concepts to him yet, in time, he got some idea of them. But I feel that I should say that not all kids had the same mental capacity as he.

I had fun the first time I went but I was saddened by the fact that these kids are so underprivileged. While some were able to function well in an English environment, others had a lot of trouble and were reluctant to learn such a mysterious language. I knew it was going to be hard but I was determined to help them learn more as the year progressed.