

World wise

Stacy Kinion is a Program Coordinator at Northern Nevada International Center.

You recently concluded another session of the Algerian Youth Leadership Program. How would you rate the individual session, as well as how far the program has come, now in its 11th year?

This was the first time since I've been here that we worked [together] with American kids, and I think that that added a lot to the program. I mean ... the overarching goal is for different cultures to meet and to be able to break down stereotypes. And I think that really goes a lot better when there's American youth. So, in that regard, I think the program went really well this year. And in terms of us being in our 11th year, we've learned so much more about the culture ... understanding the country a lot better, the intricacies of it. ... It's gotten better every year, and I think we're able to serve the kids more every year as we understand their context better.

In terms of the bigger goals of trying to foster better relationships between countries—how impactful do you think this program has been toward that?

The more Americans come in contact with the kids, the better. So, for this year, having American participants and American host families ... there



was more exposure to Americans. So, this year, I feel that it was particularly effective. Over the last decade, I would say that the Algerian people, through dissemination do have a much better idea of the U.S. and its culture. Unfortunately, the duration of the program means that they don't get full exposure to American culture, obviously. The thing that is [often] said is 'they're just teenagers.' I think that surprises people. They think that there's going to be a different ideology or they are going to be very fundamentalist [but] no matter their degree of religious beliefs, they're all just teenagers and that comes through no matter what.

Spending a lot of time with teenagers can be an emotional roller coaster. What was your favorite moment, and on the flip side, your most awkward moment?

I don't know that there was anything awkward this year. ... But you did say my favorite moment. ... I definitely have that. So, one of the participants ... her glasses were destroyed, and I had to take her to an optometrist. ... She was, first of all, very surprised at the, I guess, the quality and quantity of testing mechanisms that we have in the U.S. So, she went through the whole eye exam, which the optometrist did for free because we had called and explained the situation. When she got her glasses, she put them on and just started sobbing because she had never seen before, that well. ... So, she put these glasses on and just was overwhelmed ... like, "Oh, my gosh, is this what the world looks like? Is this what you guys see all the time?" And she had just never seen ... leaves on trees and the nuance in the clouds. So, that afternoon, driving her around and her noticing these things that she never even knew looked like that or possibly even existed, was insane. That was definitely the coolest experience, I think that I've had, in all the four years I've done it. And just the kindness of the doctor as well.

So, do you think this cultural exchange model can work with places where the U.S. has more tense relationships?

Absolutely, yeah. And we do have an Iraqi youth program. [NNIC] doesn't run it but the United States. There is an Iraqi youth program, a Russian youth program. I have heard about Palestinian and Israeli youth programs. □

NOTES FROM THE NEON BABYLON

BY BRUCE VAN DYKE

An unexplained death

What happened in Angels Stadium in Anaheim on Friday, July 12 was pretty doggone storybook crazy. It was the baseball club's first home game since the death of their beloved teammate Tyler Skaggs in Dallas the week before, and the team, quite cornily, went out and beat Seattle 13-0 and—oh, yeah—didn't allow the Mariners a hit. Whoa. You got your 13 to zippo no-hitter to say good-bye to Tyler, and there's no way that script ever gets written for a movie because it's Total Toxic Corn. But when it actually happens in real life, it turns out to not be some hyper-groaner, but way real, way special. and just kinda neat. I mean, Tyler's mom got up there for the ceremonial first pitch, and she threw a killer strike and it perfectly kicked off what turned to be an awesome emotionally powerful night and—I still wanna know why this guy died.

I mean, a 27 year-old professional athlete goes to bed one night and doesn't wake up, and we're not supposed to wonder why the heck this guy goes toe-tag? There's not a peep of info available on cause of death—nada. Not one word as to why this ultra-healthy young man mysteriously expired. That's kind of weird. So if it's up to us to fill in the blanks, fine. Leading off, you gotta roll with some kind of meds accident, Heath Ledger-style. Right? The standard guess, which is correct 90 percent of the time, points straight at opioids, maybe some oxy for a sore arm, combined with two too many beers, something like that? It wouldn't be a surprise. The report comes out in—8 months? Say what?

This past Monday was a drag. And it was a gorgeous summer morning in the high desert! But there was no

escaping the ponderously heavy, incredibly ugly, nation-wide buzzkill stifling the United States with its dark vibe from sea to shining sea, courtesy of the Grand Dragon Imperial Wizard of the United States. Thanks for the massive bummer, Your Horribleness. (It was but three years ago that a reasonable, respectful, decent, intelligent man lived in the White House.)

• "What is most striking about the Republican Party is the total abandonment of any pretense that kindness or compassion are admirable human qualities. Donald Trump has spend decades proving he sees these as weakness, and now, the GOP has eagerly embraced the same." Stuart Stevens, a strategist for Romney, on how Republicans have quickly morphed into a sadopopulist horde of pitiful pugnacious Putin Punks. □



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