

The 'Back to Roots Summer Academy' visits NDU.

Wednesday June 30th 2010, LERC, NDU

Reported by Jared Keyel, LERC Visiting Intern

On Wednesday, June 30th, 2010, the students from the 'Back to Roots Summer Academy' visited NDU. These students, who all have Lebanese ancestry, came from North America to visit Lebanon for three weeks. The director of the program, Dr. Antoine Habchi, has been working for three years on this program and this is the first year it has proved possible to organize a trip to Lebanon. The students pay for their flight themselves, and then the organization pays for all of their expenses once they are in Lebanon. The program receives funding through individual donations. As part of the visit the LERC staff gave a two-hour presentation about Lebanese emigration.

Mr. Elie Nabhan began the program by introducing the LERC as well as the schedule for the presentations.



'Back to Roots' US students paying keen attention to LERC's presentation (June 2010).

For the first presentation, Ms. Basma Abdel Khalek provided the students with an overview of Lebanese migration, which began during the second half of the 19th century. Ms. Khalek focused on emigration to North America. Just as any other migrant group, the Lebanese went to North America looking for opportunities. Many worked as traders and then later established businesses of their own. Life was not always easy, as the immigrants faced discrimination based on racial, religious, cultural, and economic differences. However, without a doubt, Lebanese immigrants made lasting contributions in North America. One famous American of Lebanese origin, Ralph Nader, even ran for President twice.

Following the history of Lebanese emigration, Mrs. Liliane Haddad told the students about the electronic archive kept by LERC, which includes materials collected from Lebanese migrants around the world. Ms. Haddad showed selections from the archive including: articles, newspapers, dissertations and theses, official documents, photographs, personal letters, stamps, music, films and documentaries, as well as material culture. Ms. Haddad also played the music of Mexican musicians of Lebanese descent which mixes traditional Arabic instruments with musical elements of Latin music. She closed her presentation by showing a traditional Lebanese *Dabke* performed by a professional group of dancers of Lebanese ancestry in Argentina.



LERC's Director Ms. G. Hourani responds to questions from the 'Back to Roots's US students (June 2010).

Ms. Guita Hourani, LERC Director, led the group in a question-and-answer session. Ms. Hourani emphasized the importance of migration studies and of preserving the history of Lebanese migration. Students asked questions about Lebanese migration both to and from Lebanon as well as about the effects of migration on contemporary Lebanese society. Ms. Hourani also encouraged the students to share their own personal and family stories of migration.

After the question-and-answer session, the students toured the Lebanon Migration Museum at NDU.



'Back to Roots' US students at the Museum at NDU (June 2010).