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Maronite Academy: YearEbook 2013

Monday, 6 May 2013

Students' Experience with the Maronite Academy 2013

Topic: 2) Experience w/Academy

Write a paragraph (of at least 150 words) about your experience, so far, with the Maronite Academy 2013 (the recruitment process, the online sessions, and the closed group on Facebook), then talk about your aspirations related to Lebanon, now that you know so much more about it after having read the needs analysis and the contents of the five sessions, and after having answered all the posted questions.

Do not forget, at the end, to add some pieces of advice to all the Lebanese abroad who haven't really had the chance to learn about and visit Lebanon.

PS: If you prefer to submit a video of yourself talking about your experience, let me know and I will post it for you. The best video(s) will win a prize.

[Click on "Post Comment" below, on the right, in order to introduce yourself.]

Click on "View Comments" below, on the right, to read about the students' experiences.

Let me know if you have any questions or suggestions.

All the best!

Nada S. Abisamra
Executive Director

Posted by maroniteacademy at 11:57 PM EDT

Updated: Thursday, 9 May 2013 4:23 AM EDT

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Comments Page

Tuesday, 7 May 2013 - 12:23 AM EDT

Name: "Nada"

It was great having you in our group!

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Tuesday, 7 May 2013 - 9:47 AM EDT

Name: "Kristin"

I have really enjoyed this program. It was by chance (although I don't believe in chance) that I came across the projectroots website and applied. The program has opened me up to the past and present of Lebanon, which has made me prouder to call myself half Lebanese. I think all those involved did an excellent job with the educational material and bringing together a good size group of people that, otherwise, never would have met. All the students, including myself, seemed unified with their love for the Lebanese culture. I hope this program continues and encourages others to want to learn as much as I have. I honestly think with the current situation in the Middle East, that Lebanon's future could depend on people like us. As far as how I will be able to help Lebanon, personally, I want to see with my own eyes the situation there, and go from there. I know from the program that investment is essential. I will do my best when I am able to invest monetarily or with use of my skills to move people forward academically. I think what all of you are doing is great and I hope you continue doing what you are doing. I will do my best to represent this organization while traveling in Lebanon in the most professional and flattering way. Thank you once again.

Advice for those considering the program:

Don't think about it, just do it. It is an opportunity of a lifetime and you will be so glad you participated.

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Thursday, 9 May 2013 - 7:33 AM EDT

Name: "Melissa Zeidan"

The experience so far from this Maronite Academy has been truly fantastic! The online sessions have helped me gain further understanding and knowledge about my heritage and roots as well as help me gain further information about how the Maronites were first founded and how

hard their lives were back in the days. The recruitment process was very easy and everyone was very helpful throughout the journey, especially Nada. The facebook closed group helped a lot in terms of meeting new people from around the world and everyone always helped eachother and motivated eachother about the sessions and the trip.

I actually have early memories of visiting Lebanon in 1998 and I hope i can build on these great memories. I will be able to relate what I have learnt in the online sessions and form a link between the origins and roots. It is such a good opportunity for me and I will be able to have a clearer understanding and picture of Lebanon for myself rather than listening to what people say about the wonderful country.

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Friday, 10 May 2013 - 11:24 PM EDT

Name: "Michelle Haddad"

The Maronite Academy 2013 has truly changed my life for the better. Born to two Lebanese parents, I grew up with an appreciation for everything Lebanese: the food, the language, the special customs and traditions. However, because I was born in the United States and never have been to Lebanon before, I always felt like I was missing something.

Through the online sessions, I have learned more than I could have imagined about the country that my parents call home and the country that I feel is my homeland as well. I have learned so much about my heritage and the history of the Lebanese Maronites.

At times, I am shy in new situations but reading and participating in the online sessions and the closed Facebook group helped me to communicate with others that were also learning about a country that connected us. It felt safe and I was able to share my joy of learning.

One of my biggest dreams has always been to visit Lebanon, to visit its mountains and beaches, to feel its soil, to pay tribute to its historical and cultural monuments and artifacts. Visiting Lebanon with an organized and dedicated group such as the Maronite Academy is beyond my wildest dreams.

I hope to visit some of the monasteries that I read about, the villages and towns that were instrumental in the advancement of the Lebanese Maronites because I feel connected to their courage and their perseverance. I am very thankful for all of the

knowledge that I now have and am committed to nurturing the connection to Lebanon forever.

The best advice I can give to everyone is always believe in your dreams. I have been dreaming about going to Lebanon since I was young enough to dance debka with my parents. Whether you come from Lebanon, Syria, China, Mexico etc. Everyone should know their roots, culture, and heritage, the key to success is knowledge.

" KNOWLEDGE IS POWER"

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Saturday, 11 May 2013 - 4:59 PM EDT

Name: "Kathy Kuzni"

Receiving the email that I had been selected as a member of the Maronite Academy was such a joyful moment. Little did I know, that this experience would bring me closer to 39 other people who, like me, were of Lebanese descent and Maronites. It has been unreal, and I have learned so much, and for that I am very grateful. I first heard about this trip when it was posted on my church's young adult's Facebook page. I was skeptical, because I have never had any luck when it comes to "winning" anything, but my friend, Carolyn, encouraged me to apply. I was not expecting an experience like this one. The online sessions have taught me so much rich history that I had no idea about, and I actually consider myself pretty informed about Lebanon's history. As a result of these sessions, I have been able to educate my friends and family about the hardships that our country faced in order to be where it is today. As a matter of fact, our country still faces many hardships. My favorite part of the experience so far has been getting to know everyone on the closed Facebook group. I have "met" many people that I am super excited to spend 15 days with in Lebanon. We have shared ideas about our various cultures and what we thought of that week's session. I am glad that the FB group was set up this way- to be interactive. I feel as if we are all a family, and not a group of 40 strangers, which will make the trip even more fun!

pieces of advice 1) always say thank you or no thank you, so that you are not judged to be rude 2) always take what is offered to you 3) drink a lot of water, because you will dehydrate from all the humidity there 4) you are guaranteed to burn your first time in the Lebanese sun, it's soooo much more different than the sun anywhere else 5) never be alone, especially if you are a girl 6) never tell someone where you are staying, unless you know them personally. I can't wait to share this experience with all of you!

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Sunday, 12 May 2013 - 11:13 AM EDT**Name:** "Brian Jbara"

This has been a really incredible experience. I have had the opportunity to meet 40 other incredible individuals who share the same passion for Lebanon as I do. I have always wanted to learn more, and connect by visiting Lebanon, but it seems I have just never had the time. The Academy has allowed me the opportunity to learn in an open forum where questions and idea-sharing are encouraged. I originally heard about this through my good friend who has lived abroad (including Lebanon) and encouraged me to apply. I will admit, I was a bit skeptical at first, not really knowing much about the program or its intended purpose; however, after being accepted, I quickly related to and appreciated the concept and purpose of such an important program.

The sessions have been really useful and has provided a lot of good context before heading to Lebanon. I really appreciated the structure and support that have been provided throughout the program. It has been so easy in the past for me to "want" to learn more about Lebanon, but always be too busy with things. I would encourage anyone thinking about this program or wanting to learn more to give it a shot. I already feel as if I have such a great network of Lebanese friends who can relate to my excitement over Lebanon and my appreciation for what the country means to me!

I have never been to Lebanon before, but have been to the Middle East multiple times. I love traveling, and, look forward to seeing this beautiful country! It's helpful, for those that haven't traveled to the area, to just understand the opportunities/challenges that might exist. Oftentimes, when growing up in a different part of the world, it's hard to anticipate what "issues" might come up. Just prepare, be aware, and, as I tell everyone, understand that no matter where you go, people really are similar! It's a beautiful thing to see how humanity, at its core, shares the same concerns, hopes, and desires! I that about people :)

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Tuesday, 14 May 2013 - 7:24 AM EDT**Name:** "Helio Mokarzel"

I was very happy when I was selected to participate in the Maronite scholar program and on the very day of my birthday, it was the best gift of my life.

Going to Lebanon has been my dream since I was a child and I am very excited and anxious to go on the trip.

I learned a lot about the religion, customs, culture and and, I made a lot of friends while participating in the group.

It was a great honor to be one of the Brazilians of Lebanese origin to be chosen to participate in this group.

I understand that this program targets Lebanese people abroad in order to bring them closer to their roots. I am willing to help, if needed. I will share the information about the program around my area to help spread the mission of the Maronite Academy.

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Tuesday, 14 May 2013 - 10:36 AM EDT

Name: "Theresa Trad"

This program so far is an experience of a lifetime. I have never been so excited about doing "homework" in my entire life. The Maronite Academy/ProjectRoots was introduced to me by the Young Adult group at the church I attend. I was trying to plan a trip to Lebanon with everyone myself, which proved to be a hassle to get everyone involved. After this program was introduced, the people that were able to go on a trip, applied. I am so happy I continued with it. Some of what I have learned from the five sessions online, are facts even my parents, who were born, raised and married in Lebanon, don't know. I am extremely proud that I was given this opportunity. I am trying to tell everyone that I know would benefit from this program, to apply for next year's trip. The amount of people I've met that live all around the world that are Lebanese and Maronite, astound me. I can't wait to meet them in person, although you learn a lot about each one of them on the Facebook private page.

My advice is to read through everything you are given. There is so much to learn about the mother land. Everything you learn will help you in making Lebanon a better place for all. If you are ever given a chance to visit Lebanon to see places you would have never gotten the chance to see, don't think twice. You are really never sure when this opportunity will come again, if it ever does. Like I said before, it's an opportunity of a lifetime.

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Wednesday, 15 May 2013 - 6:16 PM EDT

Name: "Fadi Khourieh"

Since the beginning once I learned about this trip, I was intrigued to know what I'd learn. I thought I knew quite a bit about Lebanon, this program proved me wrong. This program helped me in realizing the true history of my ancestors and gave me a better idea of the struggles we currently face and the future ahead of us.

I believe every Lebanese person worldwide should receive knowledge like we have through this program. First step I

recommend is to register in Lebanon if you haven't already, and see if you are eligible to register for a program like this. For those whom cannot, use the internet as a guide to learn about our culture and religion, it truly is an eye opener.

I encourage ALL to visit the homeland, its truly amazing. I've visited many countries in the world; this is by far the most beautiful one of them all! Go and indulge in your culture, we are truly the best out there!

P.s. Who else can say we have a Christian president in the middle east?

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Wednesday, 15 May 2013 - 7:57 PM EDT

Name: "Jessica Aoun"

I really enjoyed this experience from the Maronite academy. It was amazing. The program made me open my eyes about Lebanon, past and present, how it was before and how it became. I am truly blessed and proud to be Lebanese. This program helped me learn more about my homeland, not only the fun and party, but also the history of it. The online sessions taught me so much history about my beautiful country, even if its still facing hardships. I am extremely happy to see that it is still an amazing living country. For the recruitment part, it was the easiest way they could do it. Everybody should try and participate. It is an opportunity to not miss, and you will learn so much and the same time you will have fun. The thing that I loved the most in this experience, its meeting new people around the world that share the same pride as you, to be proud of their nationality.

I have been to Lebanon since I'm a baby, but I always went just to see family and have fun, but this year, it is going to be different because I am going to visit places where I just read and learned about it, and its going to be an amazing learning session!! My advice to Lebanese abroad is to visit their country, to read and learn more about their homeland. There is so much to learn about the amazing country of Lebanon. Knowledge is everything in this world.

Thank you for this great experience and I cannot wait to share and experience this amazing opportunity of a lifetime.

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Friday, 17 May 2013 - 1:22 AM EDT

Name: "Carolyn Aboubechara"

I randomly came across a flyer about learning more about Maronites and Lebanon, and being a proud Lebanese and practicing Maronite that is greatly involved in church activities, I thought this would be a great opportunity to learn more and a chance for a free trip to Lebanon! I applied online filling out information about myself and sending in a picture and resume, and I got accepted!

The online sessions were easy to follow, and I learned a lot. Having to write short essays makes you want to do more research and more self-learning in addition to what is being taught to us. There was a closed Facebook group where all of the students communicated on a regular basis about questions on the homework or Lebanon, and we often shared stories, music and pictures and got to know each other well and developed personal relationships.

Now with all that I have learned, I will see everything in Lebanon with a deeper understanding, one that considers all the struggles the Lebanese and Maronites went through to be where they are now: strong, ambitious and always seeking a better life. The more I learned from the sessions about Lebanese and Maronites' past the more proud I became.

If you are of Lebanese descent, a trip to Lebanon is a must. Lebanon is full of history, faith, and culture. It is a small country with a big heart! You will find yourself there and have a unique connection with your roots. That is what I have experienced in the past and hope to strengthen with the upcoming trip. I hope to always be able to go to Lebanon and have a connection and help achieve the goals of the Maronite Academy. It has been a great experience so far with the Maronite Academy and looking forward to the rest!

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Friday, 17 May 2013 - 2:13 PM EDT

Name: "Flavio Abouchahine"

Having spent the last 4 months interacting with the Maronite Academy course makes me feel as if I had done an exchange program to Lebanon. It is really interesting for those who want to learn about the country's history, culture, religion and language.

At the beginning I was not sure if I would be accepted by the Academy, but then I noticed that the recruitment process was very simple. You only need to be a Lebanese descendent aged between 18 and 30 who is interested on learning and understanding about your own identity and about your motherland.

During the course, among a lot of history and culture, you find out where you come from and who you are in the world of today. At the same time you discover big opportunities and the power that you have being of a Lebanese descent. And if you want to go even farther, here you can have all the assistance you need to get the Lebanese nationality.

Furthermore, with the Private Maronite Academy Facebook Group you have the chance to know many (beautiful) people from all around the world who are also participating in this course and who have something in common to you. I can say that in this group I made new friends for life and the trip to Lebanon will make this experience unforgettable.

Now that I know much more about my roots, I have the answers for many questions I had about my own history, and from now on I hope to be much closer to Lebanon and to its issues that are directly and indirectly related to me.

If you are a Lebanese descendent, do not miss this opportunity. This course is more than just learning, it is also fun, and it is even greater fun for those who have never been to Lebanon, just like me, and will now have the chance to be there free of charge. If you are still not sure about it, invite someone you know of Lebanese descent and make the subscription together!

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Friday, 17 May 2013 - 3:42 PM EDT

Name: "Mariam DeLand"

I have always been proud to be Lebanese and my Christian faith has always been very important to me. However, being in the Maronite Academy gave me a deep appreciation for the history of our people that I did not have before. I became inspired by the faith of St. Maron and other leaders and by the struggle that was required over the years. That historical context made me proud not just to be Lebanese, but to be Maronite in particular. In addition to learning the historical context, I learned the modern problems related to immigration. I was unaware of these issues before this course. Finally, it was so cool to be a part of a group of young Maronites from around the world who I could learn with. I am the third generation born in the USA. So, my family has become disconnected from Lebanon, even though our Lebanese identity is strong. When I first went to Lebanon in 2011, I fell in love! I wanted to deepen my connection to the country, but I

was not sure how to do this. The Maronite Academy offered this opportunity and, although I still do not know what role I will play in assisting in the modern Maronite struggle, I plan to investigate this while I travel to Lebanon and meet members of the Maronite Roots Project. I HIGHLY recommend that any Lebanese young people attend the academy if they get the opportunity! It provides a sense of pride and identity as a person who is part of a group and a cause that has survived for so many years!

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Saturday, 18 May 2013 - 12:07 AM EDT

Name: "Serge Haddad"

My journey with The Maronite Academy has to be one of the best things to ever happen in my life. It is nothing less than a Dream come True. Indeed, these past four months were in many ways an unequalled opportunity for us to learn profoundly about ourselves and to become from now on proud carriers of the Lebanese flag. By travelling in time within the History and Heritage of the Christians of Lebanon, we were able to realize how truly lucky and privileged we are to belong to this rich Culture. We now feel more proud of our identity and more convinced of the importance of our presence within this particular region of the World.

Although most of us were born and raised outside of Lebanon, and many never stepped foot in our Homeland, we are all greatly blessed with the chance to actually travel HOME with a whole group of wonderful people coming from all across the globe. Thanks to the Maronite Academy, we were also given the opportunity to continuously interact with each other within the group and to now form one great family. We are certainly planning to make the best of it !

Fortunately, I think that this is only the beginning of something greater. Indeed this is the beginning of a long journey towards the regaining of a greater sense of belonging to our beloved country. This is why I deeply encourage every single one, whether you feel close or far from your Lebanese origins, whether you are first or fourth generation immigrants, to keep a close eye on such opportunities as the one offered by the Maronite Foundation in the World through the Maronite Academy. You will learn profoundly about Lebanon and all the richness of our roots. Thanks to the Academy, you will see, just like we do now, a brighter future for our country. So what are you waiting for? Apply now !

& MAY GOD BLESS LEBANON !

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Saturday, 18 May 2013 - 1:19 AM EDT

Name: "Christine Nassr "

My experience with the Maronite Academy has been unlike no other. My cousin enrolled in the program and immediately called to tell me about Project Roots, and encouraged me to join as well. Of course, I did. (Thanks, Marie!)

From the very beginning of the process, I was made to feel welcome for simply being intrigued by Project Roots. From the application process, to the homework assignments, the facebook dashboard and the peer to peer engagement, every step of this process has been a valued experience.

This program not only opened my eyes to real issues that face Lebanon, but also empowered me (and all of the applicants) to do something to make a change. We were given the tools to shape the future of the country. No other program does this.

Additionally, this program has given me the opportunity of a lifetime-to meet new people, make new friends, and to visit Lebanon and experience firsthand all that the country, our heritage, has to offer. This opportunity did not come easily, though. Everyone involved in the program dedicated much time and effort. It was up to me and my fellow applicants to dedicate time and focus into doing the homework assignments, and researching topics on our own. This has been an unmatched educational experience.

And of course, a special thank you to Nada and the organizers of this program for providing us with this opportunity. They worked harder than anyone.

It is important to me to know where I came from, to know what my family has been thru: their story and their journey. As many of the elder members of my family have passed, I cannot rely solely on their tales to understand my background. It is important for me to venture to Lebanon on my own, and learn all that I am able to while I am there. I am beyond lucky to have the opportunity to do so this summer.

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Saturday, 18 May 2013 - 3:50 PM EDT

Name: "Mia Rowan"

Honestly the Maronite Academy has changed everything this year. Even if I wasn't going to Lebanon, this organization is so special to me. I learned so much that I never knew about Lebanon. The program is awesome. The people that are in it are amazing, so nice and respectful, The number of people is just enough, to get to know each other a little bit at a time. From the beginning I was thinking "I would never get chosen, this is a

joke." but my dream came true. I get to visit the country I have wanted to visit since I was a little girl. Truthfully even though I am going on this trip with complete strangers I feel like we all know each other. My experience was amazing I liked everything about it. Nada you are truly a saint for putting this together for us. Thank you so much:) This is a opportunity of a lifetime.

My best advice is pretty much to always be with someone. Getting lost is scary even in a place u grew up in.

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Saturday, 18 May 2013 - 4:36 PM EDT

Name: "Marie Ellias"

My experience with the Maronite Academy has been a wonderful and enriching. Despite the fact that I have never set foot in Lebanon, getting to know the other people in the group has made me feel part of the Lebanese community more so than ever before. The group made me realize how many people there are around the world like me, who are so excited to learn about Lebanon and re-discover our roots. I was so impressed by our coordinator Nada Salem Abisamra, who somehow managed to put an amazing amount of work into this trip, while being a mother, working, studying and having a very busy life. She really made this group feel like a family before even meeting in person, and encouraged us to work hard to achieve our goals.

Throughout this experience, I have gained more insight into what Lebanon is like today, as well as a better understanding of the history that brought us to this point. It has become clear to me that the way for the world-wide Lebanese diaspora to contribute to the future of Lebanon, would be to become more connected. For many people, gaining dual citizenship and therefore voting privileges might be the way that you contribute. For others, registering births and marriages will create a strong international community that we can document and track in the future. For people like myself, who are third or fourth generation Americans (and in other countries as well) becoming re-connected to our lost roots is key. If people feel close to Lebanon on an emotional level, it becomes second nature to work towards Lebanese goals.

The reason I am so grateful to participate in this program and hopefully travel to Lebanon, is that I see how much of Lebanese culture has been lost on me. When my great-grandmother died a few years ago, it was clear to me how many phrases, foods, songs and memories of the old country went with her. When my grandmother died recently, she took even more of the culture with her. I would love my (future) children to feel connected to being Lebanese, but it will be up to me to make that happen. That is why it is important for me to become educated and feel connected to my Lebanese heritage- I don't want the connection to end with my

generation.

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Saturday, 18 May 2013 - 6:20 PM EDT

Name: "Nicolas Abraham"

My experience with the Academy Maronite and the World Maronite Foundation has been wonderful. I think that this opportunity was a gift from God. I'm very happy to have learned a lot about our beloved Lebanon, and of course the chance to travel too.

Everything has been great from the beginning. I was very anxious since I sent the form until I knew I had entered in the Academy. I really wanted to participate.

I think the weekly sessions are a great success. Every week I had to find the time to meet with Lebanon. I needed my time to read, study and think about the text and the question. It was beautiful because it was a way to be close to Lebanon and to know more. I think you can not love what you do not know. So this course is essential for all to commit ourselves and love Lebanon. The work developed by the Academy is invaluable.

The Facebook group has been also very positive. It allowed me to share and learn together with my partners. I enjoyed each post. I think we formed a great team that worked with a lot of joy and solidarity.

I think it will be the best trip of my life. I'm happy for the opportunity to visit the land of my grandparents. I have high expectations and I'm sure it will even exceeded them! I dream of visiting the Holy Places. And of course enjoy the Lebanese culture. Furthermore, full of emotion I want to attend in a Maronite Mass there.

To all young people who wish to know more about Lebanon, I invite them to participate in this beautiful Academy. They will live an amazing experience. They will learn a lot about the land of their parents and grandparents, and fundamentally, they will fall in love with Lebanon, as I have done in these five months.

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Saturday, 18 May 2013 - 7:08 PM EDT

Name: "Miriam Moussallem"

I knew about the Maronite Academy/Project Roots through a friend of mine who is the general secretary at my church here in Cairo. It was the first time for me to get included in such a group program. During the past 5 months, I have learned so much about the Maronites, starting from their origin and ending with the amazing Lebanese language. I previously knew a little about, but this program offered me the chance to be deeply

involved and know more. I was highly amazed with their struggling and striving through the hardships especially from the intolerable intruders who wanted to steal from them their identity and existence. I am proud to be the descendant of such great ancestors, who increase the glory of Lebanon as years go by.

It was a great honor to have been selected to start such an educational program with the most amazing person, Nada Abi-Samra who I honestly wish to get to know her close. She was handled a huge responsibility and volunteered to take care of us all. Not only this, but also she guided us and helped us a lot while going through this. A big thank you to every single person in the academy who surely did a lot to make this program succeed.

I'm extremely excited for this trip. It's true that I first visited Lebanon in 2010 but I'm sure this trip will be extremely different than the one I had before.

I highly recommend this program to all the students/youth who are interested about knowing the history and glory of the Maronites. And especially those who have never been to Lebanon or the Middle East before. And one of the missions I'll start working on, is spreading the word to my friends and people I know. I'll tell them how fantastic it was being in this educational program and part of this amazing group.

And to all the Lebanese who have never had the chance to visit; You missed a lot! Lebanon is a piece of heaven! :)

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Saturday, 18 May 2013 - 8:02 PM EDT

Name: "Sandra Aoun"

My experience with the Maronite Academy was exceptional. I learned so much about the history of the Maronites, their present and future challenges, their sacred sites and about the opportunities and losses of the immigration. Because of my parents, I always kept a link with Lebanon, but I never knew information such as those taught by the Maronite Academy.

I've always had a passion for Lebanon, but now this passion has evolved even more. I would love to be part of this beautiful country (on a daily basis) and to participate in its development.

I will certainly continue to promote the Maronite foundation and to contribute in helping immigrants to register their marriage/children as Lebanese. Sajil ma t2ajil...khalik Lebnene ☺

****** An important advice I would like to give to future/new immigrants: Do not forget about your roots. Always speak Arabic with your children, teach them about Lebanon and take them to visit their homeland and families upon small ages. The most important part is to raise your children as Lebanese or else they would not be interested in their roots.

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Saturday, 18 May 2013 - 8:29 PM EDT

Name: "BelÃ©n Morales Azar"

My experience with the Academy has been (till now) unforgettable. Through each session I could learn many things about the wonderful history of Maronites, the sacred places, the culture and Lebanese language, the reality of the immigration, and the incidence of other religions.

I`ve also been able to know my other classmates through our facebook group. We share different questions, and important information. I think it`s a way to join us throughout this time.

I would like to highlight the excellent predisposition and patience of the instructors, especially the warmth of Nada Salem Aabisamra who has worked tirelessly on the goal of the Academy.

I am extremely grateful for this generous opportunity. On my trip to Lebanon I`d like to meet my grandfather`s family who are my blood my roots in order to establish lasting contact.

My job now is to disseminate and share this fantastic experience, so others can do it too.

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Sunday, 19 May 2013 - 1:44 PM EDT

Name: "Victor Moussallem"

Being engaged in the Maronite Academy 2013 was really a new & interesting experience for me. I knew about Project Roots from the secretary of the Maronite

Church in Heliopolis, Cairo, Egypt; actually she recommended this program for me just few days before the registration deadline. I wasn't sure whether I would be selected or not; I thought it was a program for the Lebanese descendents living in North America only. I was happy being selected to enroll in the academy.

During the past months, I have learned much about Lebanon & the Lebanese (especially the Maronites), their culture, reasons of immigration & many more. I loved all the online sessions, but I most liked the last two sessions (Immigration & the Lebanese Culture & Language).

I enjoyed exploring & participating in the closed Facebook group; all the students were highly active & craving to go to Lebanon; nearly all the posts showed our Lebanese lifestyle & culture (Lebanese landscapes, churches, food, singers...etc).

I was on cloud nine when I knew that I was selected with other 39 colleagues to travel to Lebanon during this summer. I became more excited to go to Lebanon especially after I read the itinerary. Though I have been to Lebanon before in 2010, I haven't been to one tenth of the stated places & sites.

I will recommend this program to every person of Lebanese descent & try to spread the culture of being registered there & its importance.

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Sunday, 19 May 2013 - 1:50 PM EDT

Name: "Thomas Shiver"

Overall, I've enjoyed my turn with this online program. Ever since I was a kid, I grew up hearing stories, and stories are always in the past-tense. With this, I became naturally interested in history and things from the past. Not to mention, both of my parents were very involved in, and knowledgeable of, their respected geneologies. I honestly knew practically nothing about the Maronite rite before taking this course, and am know glad to have been enlightened, as it falls in line with the interests I've carried all my life. With what I've learned from this program, I hope to make more "visible" connections to the Motherland, so I can become a little more of an involved descendant, to carry my culture on to future generations. I'm not sure how much I (as an individual) will be able to contribute in my current life circumstance, but my pride will keep me hopeful and trying. For some sort of note to those who have not had much exposure to our history and our culture, the best advice I can

give is to seek out and speak to the older generations of your family. They are the ones who have seen our history, and carry our culture. Learn from them, take an interest in what they have to say, because experience is one of the greatest resources on this planet, and it is always fleeting; take the chance while you still can.

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Sunday, 19 May 2013 - 2:45 PM EDT

Name: "Christina Thomas"

This experience is truly one in which I will cherish for a lifetime. Though at times I did want to give up because I had so many obligations on my plate, I never did. The Directors of this project have been so wonderful, understanding, and have really bent over backwards to help us along the way and ensure we be the best that we can.

I have always been proud of my Lebanese roots. However, I did not know what our ancestors actually endured through the centuries. Now, understanding the willful nature of my people I am even more grateful to claim my Lebanese heritage.

"Have a heart that never hardens, a temper that never tires, and a touch that never hurts." -Charles Dickens

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Sunday, 19 May 2013 - 5:17 PM EDT

Name: "Layla Yazbeck"

Upon applying to the Maronite Academy, I had no idea what to expect. I anticipated it to be a series of articles and questions on topics that I assumed I already knew everything about. This program completely surpassed my expectations. I learned a tremendous amount about my religion and country's history, current issues and even aspects of the Lebanese culture and language that I had not known. If it was not for the Maronite Academy, I do not know where I would have learned such important details about a culture that is a huge part of who I am. I enjoyed the challenge of the analytical questions asked in regards to topics such as immigration, Lebanon's challenges, and the sacred sites. Aside from learning about Lebanon, I became acquainted with other Lebanese young adults from around the world who shared the common love from Lebanon. My dreams and aspirations for Lebanon is for it to be restored to its original beauty and reputation. Nothing breaks my heart more than how Lebanon is perceived in a negative light by the media and by those who associate it with the stereotypes of other Middle Eastern countries. I believe the only way to overcome these obstacles is to educate people. It is important for

Lebanon to be known as more than that small country bordering Syria and Israel. My piece of advice to all Lebanese abroad who haven't really had the chance to learn about or visit Lebanon is not to give up. Do not give up on your roots. Always strive to learn more about where your ancestors came from. There are plenty of resources out there to trace family history. Also, be proud. Whether you are 1% or 100% Lebanese, you are still Lebanese; be proud of your heritage.

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Sunday, 19 May 2013 - 5:18 PM EDT

Name: "Angela Maron"

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So far, my experience with the Maronite Academy of 2013 has been awesome. I am so grateful that the Lebanese Routes page posted a picture on Facebook to help recruit people interested in this trip, or else I would not have known about this wonderful opportunity. The online sessions each week have helped me understand what my descendants have been through and where they came from to be where they are now. The closed group on Facebook was my favorite part about the Maronite Academy of 2013. The closed group helped each member interact with another and sparked interest and enthusiasm of the Lebanese Culture itself, while everyone shared their favorite food posts and anything that reminded them about Lebanon. It has been a fun way to get to know each other without having met one another in person yet. Overall, this program has really emphasized my pride for being Lebanese. After having read all of the sessions relating back to my routes, I would really like to see an increase in the Christian Lebanese population of Lebanon. I hope to obtain Lebanese citizenship one day to help personally be apart of the solution to this problem.

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Sunday, 19 May 2013 - 8:47 PM EDT

Name: "courtney beasley"

I heard about the Maronite Academy from my church, St. Anthony's. There was a flyer in my church's bulletin about it, so I figured I should apply. After that, it was all set! My experience with the academy has been very simple, and not very time consuming considering what I am going to be getting out of it. The online sessions were painless, and all of the information given was very informative. What I loved most about the program was the closed Facebook group because it was a way for all the participants of the program to interact with each other. I could ask questions whenever I wanted, and receive feedback almost instantly. It's a nice way to connect with everyone. Throughout my experience, I have learned a lot about Lebanon as a country. I have learned about the

challenges, which makes me wonder if there is anything I can do to help. With all the information I have learned from the academy, the best I can do is help promote Lebanon as a country, and the Maronite Foundation. I am able to give accurate information to people so that hopefully it will get many others involved in helping a country in need. I have realized it doesn't take much, and Lebanon just needs a push in the right direction. With the proper motivation and people, big changes will be able to happen in the country as a whole.

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Sunday, 19 May 2013 - 11:07 PM EDT

Name: "Christina Magri"

This experience has been a blessing for me. I was raised in the United States, and I am third generation half Lebanese and half Italian. An appreciation for the Lebanese culture is something that my grandmother and parents instilled in me from a young age. The food, special customs and traditions were a large part of my upbringing. However, since I do not speak the language, and because I have never had the opportunity to visit the country before, I always felt that I was missing out, especially because I have so many family members and close friends who have always told me so much about the country. I feel this program was a great opportunity for me to read about the history of the Maronite church, and about Lebanon, and having the opportunity to actually visit the country on an educational trip where we will visit so many of the places that I have heard and read so much about is like a dream come true.

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Monday, 20 May 2013 - 1:59 AM EDT

Name: "Kasey El-Chayeb"

I was lucky enough to sort of stumble upon the Maronite Academy. My father heard about the program from a friend of a friend and word got back to me. Thus far, it has been a great experience. Not only have I learned a lot about Lebanon and my heritage through the online sessions, but I've also had the chance to interact with other young Lebanese people similar to myself. I really enjoyed interacting in the Facebook closed group. Everyone has been so friendly and encouraging! It's really great that we are all learning together and trying something new together. I do not know many Lebanese people in the town where I live, so it has felt nice to be able to connect with people who share my heritage.

I am very excited to visit Lebanon. The trip will be exceptional, based off of what I've seen on the proposed itinerary and because the people in this group are really great. I hope to make this the first of many trips to Lebanon and to devote time to connecting with my family's homeland. I now know more than ever, thanks to the online sessions, how important it

is to stay connected with your home and your community. This is something that is important to me and to Lebanon. I strongly advise anyone who can to visit and to also reach out to other Lebanese they know.

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Monday, 20 May 2013 - 2:03 AM EDT

Name: "Samantha Maron"

A few months ago my aunt showed me a flyer from Project Roots recruiting people with Lebanese descent from all over the world. I was prompt to answer and immediately sent my resume and application. I was fortunate enough to advance on to the next round where I learned many things about Lebanon as a country, its history, and current issues. Throughout this whole process, I have engaged in exciting and educational conversation within the Facebook group with people who are also a part of the program. We have shared our favorite music, food, and other parts of Lebanese culture that have fascinated us growing up. It has been a wonderful experience bonding with people who are similar to me. I find it amazing how people from all over the world are able to connect and unite. Although we are different and come from different upbringings, we are connected through our curiosity and love for the Lebanese culture. I look forward to what this trip has to offer. There are so many things to see and learn while in Lebanon and I am thrilled to be doing this with my new Lebanese friends.

My goal for the future is to acquire Lebanese citizenship. After completing the five online sessions, I learned how important it is to keep the Lebanese Christian population present within the country. It is vital for Christians to maintain a voice for their country. As the Christian population persists to decline, it becomes clearer as to why it is essential to promote and educate the Lebanese diaspora internationally.

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Monday, 20 May 2013 - 2:09 AM EDT

Name: "Waseem Khourieh"

Through this experience that the Maronite Academy has provided to me, I have learned a great deal about where I come from and the struggles of my people. I have learned the origins of the Maronites, which is something I have always been interested in but have not found the proper channels to find the information that I sought. I have learned the importance of registering Lebanese and the importance of raising awareness to the issues of the decreasing Christian population in Lebanon. I truly advise any Lebanese descendant to take part in this Academy if given the chance. It is a great tool to learn about Lebanon's history and interact with other Lebanese descendants from around the globe.

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Monday, 20 May 2013 - 2:25 AM EDT

Name: "Fernando Schekaiban"

You can count the time as a set of seconds or hours, you can measure your age with the help of predefined digits in a calendar, but life has only one measure: the breathtaking moments.

Maronite Foundation has forged in me a greater pride of my Lebanese roots. That pride has always been in me, like a seed ready to become a great cedar, but had missed the food that could make it grow; the four months of online study and coexistence with other Lebanese descendants was that missing nourishment.

Being one of the fortunate 40 people who were selected to participate in this voyage to Lebanon is wonderful. I cannot stop the smile when I think of the trip (more than a trip, it will be a journey of self-discovery).

But I am aware that this voyage has an impact more sublime: it is not for the "fun", but the "knowledge"; it is not for the "I", but the "we"; it is because our past, but only to forge our future; it is for our families, it is for Lebanon.

I only feel gratitude to the Maronite Foundation for giving me this opportunity to help the country of my ancestors to be a better place.

The only advice I can give to the future participants: Try hard and do the impossible to be one of the 40 fortunate; this is a once-in-a-life-time gift right from the Heavens.

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Monday, 20 May 2013 - 11:51 AM EDT

Name: "Joelle Abdallah"

Hello friends, Hello futur students,

i would like to say that this was a great experience, first to be meeting 40 young lebanese in our homeland,

The courses were great, i was thinking that i know my roots as Maronite but i figurate it out that lots of things were missing, and now thanks to The Maronite Academy i know it.

I think its a very Huge thing, i never thought that something like that may

be possible.

And my message for the Futur student is that, if you get accepted to be part of this academy, please take it seriously, and make time for it, you will think that s not intersted but trust me, all the informations you will get, will help you after when you Will be asking "WHERE ARE YOU FROM" , you now say, IM FROM LEBANON, but after taking this lessons, you will add IM FROM LEBANON AND IM PROUD TO BE.

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Monday, 20 May 2013 - 7:18 PM EDT

Name: "Joel Hage"

The Maronite Academy has served as a close-knit community through which I have been able to learn more about Lebanon, understand my ancestors and our past, and relate to Lebanese descendants in situations similar to my own. From the start, it seemed like a rewarding process, one that would be challenging yet simultaneously rigorous. Although I am not heavily involved in a Lebanese community where I live, I found out about the Maronite Academy through a family friend and decided to apply. After I was accepted into the program, we were asked to complete a series of online sessions over a period of several months. During this time, we (the students) were able to learn about Lebanon through the online courses and then share our knowledge, interests, and experiences with each other via the private Facebook group. I have always been passionate about Lebanon's future. I feel as though I am heavily invested in the country's prosperity and I would love to be a part of its success. In all honesty, the Maronite Academy provided me with important tools of understanding that have allowed me to better appreciate Lebanon's delicate balance. I would advise all Lebanese diaspora to make an effort to get involved in Lebanon's future. God blessed us with a beautiful country, one in which diversity is valued and honored. It is our duty to take care of Lebanon, not run away from it.

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Wednesday, 22 May 2013 - 3:42 AM EDT

Name: "Paul Yazbeck"

Being able to be a part of the Maronite academy was definitely an eye opener. I learned so much about my culture and there's even more out there to learn and discover. The academy gave me the ambition I needed to keep in touch with my roots and discovering the paths my parents took in their native land. I loved getting to know everyone else in the academy and being able to share the same interest and motivation in learning about the maronites of Lebanon. I got excited when I realized I wasn't the only one that loved Lebanon as much as I do.

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Wednesday, 22 May 2013 - 11:46 PM EDT

Name: "Alicia Massad"

Growing up in a Lebanese/American Family is very interesting. My mother was born and raised in America but is first generation Lebanese. While my father was born and raised in Lebanon. Growing up we spoke english in the house and only heard arabic when A) my parents didn't want us kids to know what they were saying. B) when company came over, and C) when my father got really angry. Even through I don't speak arabic, Thanks to my parents, and my church (Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church), I have some knowledge of my culture they introduced me to my religion the food, music and dance.

When I got the email that is was excepted into the Academy I got so excited, I had to tell my family right away. My Uncle Sam takes credit for this opportunity because he was the one to show me the appication. The sessions were very good I learned a great deal about my culture and about the Maronites that no one really elaborated in all of my catechism studies.

I cannot wait to see some of the beautiful places that were mentioned in the sessions. Harissa in particular, I've seen pictures and cannot wait to see her in person. I'm also glad that I will be experiencing this with 40 others that i cannot wait meet.

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Thursday, 23 May 2013 - 2:13 PM EDT

Name: "Aline Rassi"

I feel very honored to have had the chance to be a participant of this wonderful project. It's a unique chance! Not only for the free trip, but how much I could learn from the online sessions about my origins, its history and reality nowadays. It was very enjoyable learning these months. Not to

mention the super special people that I got the chance to know through our closed group on Facebook, where we could change information, curiosities and help each other. Some of them, for sure, we'll become friends for life! I'm sure this trip will be unforgettable. All young Lebanese descendants could have this great chance as I'm having, to better understand its origins and culture, to know himself better. If you fit the prerequisites, candidate. It's an amazing experience! And never give up of your dreams.

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Sunday, 26 May 2013 - 1:51 AM EDT

Name: "Nada B"

My experience so far has been amazing, I'm very honored to have been able to be apart of the Maronite Academy. The online sessions allowed to gain further insight into my background and how maronitism all began. Completing the questions each week was challenging, although it was completely worth it as I wouldnt have learnt as much as I did otherwise. The facebook group was great to meet everyone else in the academy from around the world and I feel as though everyone helped motivate each other.

I can't wait for the trip as I haven't been to Lebanon for 10 years and during the trip we will all be able to relate what we learnt in theory through the online sessions to the real thing. I would definitely recommend the Maronite Academy.

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Tuesday, 28 May 2013 - 5:21 PM EDT

Name: "Christine Boumoussa"

I was lucky enough to learn about this program through my Church, Our Lady of Lebanon and my sister and I instantly began researching. It was simply a pleasure to apply because the online enrollment process, as instructed by the board of the Maronite Academy, is so clear and easy to follow. I was and remain humbled to have been accepted into the program; I know enrolling was one of the best decisions I've ever made. As a student in the Academy these past few months, I've read many interesting excerpts about Lebanon's tumultuous past as well as present, but what is most exciting is what Lebanon holds for my future.

I am so unbelievably excited to be a part of this and to finally experience Lebanon in hopes that I can find my place contributing in some small way, to a

more prosperous, thriving future for Lebanon. Awareness creates change and I believe that through this program we, the students, will find a way to be that change. Having the opportunity to create relationships with the members of the class through our private Facebook page, I already feel that we all share a common love for Lebanon as well as its people and a desire for a far superior-quality future.

Throughout the course we have posted pictures of the beauty of Lebanon, shared conversations reflecting on the reading assignments, as well as the very many things we love about being Lebanese, so I know that traveling to Lebanon and seeing first hand what we all love and dream about will change us for the better. Through our readings it has become apparent that the youth leave Lebanon in search of financial gain and prosperity in America primarily. Among other things, if we can inspire some sort of change in the work force and desire of the youth to stay in Lebanon then I think the future holds endless possibility and success.

To those contemplating enrollment – stop thinking and make the best decision of your life! It is an opportunity that would be foolish to pass up, not to mention a major loss. This is the chance to be a part of something greater than us, something life changing.

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Friday, 31 May 2013 - 9:09 PM EDT

Name: "Evonna Boumoussa "

I would like to start by saying thank you for this amazingly generous opportunity. I really had no idea when signing up with Project Roots that it would eventually lead to this. I wasn't sure what to expect to learn from the online course, but I really have gained knowledge about the people, culture, traditions, economy, etc. of Lebanon. I never knew or understood all the struggles the Maronites in Lebanon have been faced with. I was shocked by how they preserved through every hardship and flourished. However, I feel as though some of the readings and assignments were repetitive. I felt as though I could've benefited from learning about something more or different. With that said, I was surprised at the amount I did learn about Lebanon. I'm sorry to say, but I'm not big fan of Facebook; I actually created my account for this class! So ill be honest in saying I did not participate as much in the Facebook group chat. I'm not used to looking at it and forget that I even have it now. I'm also unsure of its purpose in general.

I cannot believe the class is coming to an end. It's bittersweet because I

know when this concludes we will be going to Lebanon. I'm overly excited for this trip because I can finally see where my family comes from and see everything first hand. I already know it will be an amazing experience!

[Reply to this Comment](#)

Wednesday, 13 November 2013 - 8:53 PM EST

Name: "Sarah B."

My father first showed me what the Maronite Academy offered. This seemed incredible, so I immediately applied. I couldn't believe when I heard I had been admitted to the program.

From January until now I have learned so much about Lebanon. The sessions were very well constructed and organized. In a few months, the Maronite Academy managed to give us an overview of our beautiful country. Everyone was very available and receptive. In a few words, it was an amazing experience. The closed group on facebook was a way of getting to know each other and share our thoughts and ideas.

The trip to Lebanon is only another way of getting closer to our roots and to each other. It will give us the opportunity to apply our knowledge "in the field". I don't see it as a conclusion to this experience. I see it as a start filled with new friendships and an increased love of Lebanon.

Thank you!

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