

Dalton Price's Personal Statement for the Jessica Jennifer Cohen Foundation

Internship with the World Health Organization's Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office

To the Jessica Jennifer Cohen Foundation's Board Members,

Even after leaving Cairo, completing my internship, and returning back to school, it is still difficult for me to reflect on the entirety of my summer experience – and even more difficult to cogently put this experience in writing! When I first arrived, I experienced the hardest two weeks of my life. I arrived knowing no one in the country and having to build a life there. I didn't know where to go for food, where to buy supplies for my new apartment, or the best way to get to work. Even worse, both my cellular service and apartment Wi-Fi were down, *and* it was during Ramadan, so everything was closed from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM. Additionally, much less people than I previously anticipated spoke English. Most only knew Arabic, so I was forced to use the Arabic that I studied in school and was still nervous about using. The country was also much less developed than I expected. There was constant madness in the streets, no traffic lights or sidewalks, people out all hours of the night, no police, and many impoverished families with their children. Whenever non-Egyptians come to Egypt, they generally go on a guided tour. And if they don't, they take a taxi directly to the Marriott by the Giza pyramids and do not penetrate the real Cairo. It was overwhelming to say the least, and I had to do it all alone. At times I wondered if I had gone too far this time, if I bit off more than I could chew. I still reflect on these first two weeks of my summer – two weeks of constant stress and discomfort – but am glad they happened. It was one of the first times of my life where I faced something like this, and I realized that it is OK to be uncomfortable sometimes. I just need to learn how to deal with the discomfort, which I did. Through this challenge I was also able to learn a lot about myself and my own social anxieties.

Things fortunately – and expectedly – got better. My Arabic improved rapidly, I made some of the best friends of my life, I assimilated into my work, and I became a local. And for this, I want to give a special thank you to Egypt and its incredible people. Thank you for the most challenging experiences and the most fulfilling experiences, for starving me during Ramadan and filling me up at iftar, for the sunrises with shawarma and sunsets with shisha, for the hole-in-the-wall koshary restaurants and your sprawling mosques all throughout the city, for the uber drivers who “don't believe in air conditioning” and yachts on the Red Sea, for the serendipitous encounters with strangers and some newfound best friends, for the days spent doing nothing and the days spent running around hospitals for work, for the animal blood in the streets during Eid and the late-night bargaining in the Khan El-Khalili bazaar. Thank you for the pyramids, camels, stray dogs, felucca boats, African sun, Sahara Desert, North Coast, Dahab, and Hurgada. Thank you for teaching me so much about myself — both my anxieties and pleasures — and the world around me.

And importantly, I also want to thank the Jessica Jennifer Cohen Foundation for supporting me in this endeavor. Without your support, absolutely none of this would have been possible.

Best,
Dalton Price