



Common memory, common heritage

Heritage and culture have always been "objects" of intrigue and study throughout the world. I have always had a strong curiosity towards these topics without really realizing their true meaning. This was the case until June 2005.

During that month I have been lucky enough to participate to the Salto training course "Common Memory – Common Heritage" which took place in Greece.

I applied thinking that these topics were interesting and useful to my volunteer work with young people... but I did not realize that by applying I was giving myself a chance to undergo a life changing experience.

At the airport, while I was waiting for my flight to Athens, I began to wonder if this was a good idea to spend an entire week in a foreign land with complete strangers. Freshly arrived, I met 18 people from different countries of different ages and backgrounds!! I felt distant from everyone not knowing how to connect with them but through something as simple as a fairy tale, events took a welcoming turn.

We came with our own backgrounds, presenting fairytales from our own countries and through these stories we were able to find binding ties between us, searching for the common features and looking beyond the differences. I was not only able to experience all these cultures, but also to take a deeper look into my own.

It was not an easy job, analyzing and dissecting the tales and by using the infrastructure given to us we were able to transform a rocky beginning into a smoother road.

The climax of this process was when we began the creation of original tales based on our collective cultures. Even within my own group, we had many barriers to overcome: those of culture, language, age... Yet none of them seemed to matter, the creativity flowed like a well oiled machine; everyone had something to offer building the new tale piece by piece.



For me, as well as many others, the peak of the training course was the final night (the night of the tale) when we presented our tales. Each group had worked really hard and managed to present something truly original nevertheless infused with a diverse cultural feeling. It was a truly "magic" night filled with joy for what we accomplished and with sadness for our imminent departure.



Each one of the participants gained something different to bring back home. Maarika from Estonia felt it was an amazing week: "Before I came, I was afraid of miscommunication and not getting along with



anyone. Now I realize how much cultural differences are over-emphasized, it is true they exist but it does not mean that "we" as "people" are really different".

Samer from Palestine also had a lot to say

about his experience: "This is my first time on an airplane and out of the Middle East; I did not know what to expect when I landed, but it was a pleasant surprise, for the participants were great, they have a wonderful spirit and were very supportive of me"

This is how we ended our week. In the "mythic" atmosphere of Greece, between gnomes and the genies, we discovered that the world was open to us.



RAZAN NASSER

razan.nasser@gmail.com