

Report on the Summer School at Salzburg

Shortly after the Second World War, there was a need for discussion as to where civilization should be headed in the post-war era. The wounds from the war were still fresh on people's hearts, but it was in the tranquil, soothing landscape of Salzburg, Austria where people who were enemies could sit and talk with each other.

Six decades later, it was amazing to find myself in this same place - the Leopoldskron Schloss. Besides being the place where they had shot *The Sound of Music*, there was also something magical about the atmosphere that came from all the history and the people who have been to this place. It was in this place that I met and became friends with peers from all over the world, discussed humanity and world issues. I realized people with different religions and sexual orientations were people all the same, and while holding on to my own beliefs, I must not end up judging them.

There is a reason why I call this place magical. The people who come here are conscious that they are here to talk and interact with people from different cultures, and are mindfully open to making friends from Mexico, Argentina, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, China, England, the United States, Uganda, and Russia. Being in the United States a month later, I find that most of the people I met and become close with here are Asians – it is hard for both me and the local people to mingle.

By the end of the three weeks at the Salzburg Academy on Media & Global Change, I felt compelled to the responsibility of promoting justice through the media. I had a shallow idea about framing theories before attending the academy, but by listening to lectures, constructing lesson modules and case studies, I realized how huge a power the media has – and the responsibilities that inevitably comes along with it. I have responsibility not only because I am part of the media sector, this responsibility comes from the very fact that I am living in such a privileged environment, with tertiary education and Internet access. Those were basic things, I had thought, but little did I know that only around 6% of the world's population received tertiary education, and among them are 85% of the world's decision makers.

It is really fascinating how media is empowering citizens all over the world to strive for democracy and equality. In our module of media portrayal of the women in the Egyptian Revolution, I saw how underprivileged groups can utilize the media to break deeply-wedged stereotypes against them. Prior to doing this module, I did not know much about the Arab culture, and what I did think I knew about it were the typical stereotypes constructed by various media. Through the research I did, and through living and interacting with students from that area, I realized there was a big gap between what the media portrayed and the situation in reality.

In the academy, we also did a series of Public Service Announcements, that made us think about issues we were concerned with and how we could make a change. I wanted to do something

about my own city, Hong Kong, which has a really serious ageing population. However, people at retirement age actually still have high working capabilities, so I came up with an idea to encourage senior citizens to volunteer. Senior people tend to be less tech-savvy and therefore less confident in their ability to help, and tend to “leave it to the young people”. I wanted to tell them that their experience was really important, at times more helpful than technology, to solve problems. My PSA and others could be found here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QKXI8WBLjC8&feature=channel_video_title

It wasn't easy. For both lesson modules and PSA, I found it difficult to think immediately of a topic that I really wanted to work on about. Without a clear mission it was easy to get sidetracked, and I would change my topic easily, or be simply unable to organize the whole thing into something coherent.

It was also hard to think of a creative and persuasive way to express my idea amidst constraints. For example, initially for my PSA I wanted to film children and elderly, but I could not find such actors in the academy. Also, my computer wasn't able to run video editing software smoothly, and I had to redo it on another friend's computer. People were amazing in offering help, everything we did we ended doing with great teamwork.

After three weeks of learning, working, living, travelling and having fun with each other, it was a sad time when we had to part. However, thanks to Facebook, we are still in touch with each other, and we talk and discuss about the problems in our countries. With this group of friends, there isn't the notion of being “too serious” or “nerdy” when we have intense debates and discussions.