

When women from around world are together

By Payal Talwar 16 August 2022



Spouses of International Fellows gather at an end-of-the-year reception.

Payal, whose husband Brig. Gen. Amit Talwar graduated from USAWC last year, reflects on her Carlisle experience alongside 80 spouses from around the world.

Women tend to talk, they discuss, and share a lot. And in doing so, the world does become a much smaller place. Kitchens merge and flavors mingle. Dishes get an international essence and there is a zeal to experiment and learn. Clothes are appreciated and exchanged, put together with love and careful deliberations by everyone involved, thus creating an eclectic look.

Kids are looked after by everyone, like one big joint family, as they soak in the language of diverse love. It's a live 'Mind Your Language' class - but it's not just languages that one picks up. One also learns to revel in a veritable mosaic of dialects, dresses, and traditions.

The exchange goes deeper. When culture is shared, values get discussed - and in an international arena, it is curiosity and not skepticism that governs

the exchange. Dreams, thoughts and beliefs expand - there is more openness and a willingness to listen and accept, which might be missing in the 'narrower' thought-vistas of one's own country. Here, one tends to try and understand, and then form an opinion.

Everyone is a part of the whole, and everyone's thoughts contribute. The views of the women in Hijab are heard with as much keenness as that of the women in dresses or shorts. Each one tries to understand the reasons and the experiences that have made all of us the women we are today - the cultural impact, role of the family and society, and life in the military in their country.

And what emerges is a mosaic so beautiful that one has no choice but to be a part of it. We take on what is congruent to our beliefs and maybe we also bend our beliefs a bit to make room for some new perceptions. We imbibe what we think would be useful in our lives and enriches our outlook. And the beauty of it is, as women, we will pass these new 'modified' beliefs on to the next generation.

For me, this journey started when my husband and I, along with military officers and their spouses from 80 different countries descended on one small American town last year - for one year - to learn from each other. The bonus being that we learned also to love each other and respect the traditions and beliefs that each one holds. We may not have always agreed, but we definitely learned to value the person behind the thoughts.

I, for one, am returning with a recipe book full of exotic recipes and a mind full of anecdotes from women from different regions. I now value the fierce freedom of my hijab clad friends as much as I value the elaborate thanksgiving traditions followed by my vivacious American friends. The same sex couples are as much on my party lists as the heterosexual ones. The stereotypes have dissolved in my mind and now I am willing to 'get to know' before I form an opinion.

There has been so much to learn from this great nation - it is the top. There has been so much to learn from this great nation - it is the top nation for a reason. The culture of giving back to society is deeply ingrained in its citizens - it's as essential as breathing to them. And with the values of acceptance and freedom at its core, America allows each person to live and thrive, leading in turn to its own growth and prosperity.

The women here are inspiring - handling it all with a smile - the housework, their jobs and the voluntary work - it's all a part of their daily lives. They hold each other up. thus showing us all how easy it is to love and accept very

different people.

So, what happens when women from all across the world are together for a whole year? They form lifelong friendships, merging the geographies, and making the whole world one large home.

Sponsors are key in welcoming our international guests and assisting in their transition to the united states. Since 1977 the U.S. Army War College has hosted senior International Military Officers from around the globe, the class of 2023 has 76 international fellows. During the months of April and June, the international fellows program matches potential volunteer sponsors from local communities with international fellows and their members based on similar interests, backgrounds, abilities, and expectations. Sponsoring is a truly unique and rewarding experience for the entire family.

RELATED LINKS

[Army War College seeks volunteers to serve as sponsors to International Fellows](#)