

Besides its obvious benefits, studying abroad provides students with an outsider perspective necessary to dissect and better understand his or her home country and culture. I make an effort to educate myself on issues of race in America, but I still find myself easing into the daily convenience of being a woman in the white majority. When the time came for me to decide where to study abroad, I knew that I wanted to experience a place and a culture completely unlike my own. I was immensely attracted to the prospect of living in an Arabic speaking, Muslim country, so I chose to study in Morocco. Before leaving, I was excited but slightly anxious that my race would single me out as a foreigner (mostly as an American).

It's strange how easily one can adopt a routine in such a different place. Rabat soon became my new home. My homestay family was eager to answer any questions I had about Islam and invited me to celebrate *Eid al Adha* with them. I learned some *Darija* (Moroccan Arabic) under the tutelage of my homestay father. My homestay family immediately welcomed me into their lives, but it was trickier to adjust to life as a foreigner and a minority. There were times that I missed the feeling of belonging that I had at home. I felt my minority status the most when people asked for money on the street. One time, I gave a man some money, and he became angry with me and demanded more because I was obviously "Amriikia" (American), and therefore I must have been rich. I never felt remotely threatened at any time, but it was definitely a learning experience to navigate the ways in which my face, hair, and skin assigned me to a specific group and subsequent stereotype.

As seen through my interaction with the man on the street, I was a privileged minority. I studied the anthropology of migration and transnational identity in Morocco, and I saw many sub-Saharan migrants every day. Morocco is a gateway stop from sub-Saharan countries, mostly those in central and western Africa, to Europe and other countries. My race indicated my roots, and thus signified that I was an individual who enjoyed the perks and the security of being an American citizen. Many sub-Saharan migrants, on the other hand, were clandestine, asylum seeking, or refugees, and therefore lacked protection from any flagrant or subtle expressions of racism that they might experience in Morocco. However, these migrants could not voice any injustices because they risked exposing themselves and being sent back to their mother country. It was hard to digest that my heritage expressed by my race offered me asylum, while others experienced intolerance and discrimination due to theirs.

Every country has their issues, and most of the Moroccans I met were incredibly welcoming and eager to learn about my culture. Studying abroad in Morocco was one of the best decisions I've ever made. My experiences and observations were incredibly valuable in my understanding of the spectrum of racial relations in the US and anywhere. I now have a much deeper appreciation of the freedom we Americans have to freely discuss, debate, and act on issues of race, a right that I witnessed is not uniform everywhere. It is enormously important to remember and appreciate this right because it reminds us of our past, but also highlights persistent contemporary racial issues that we have the power to change.