

Paullette Diaz-Reed

PAS 409 – Final Project: **I AM ISLAM**

June 23, 2018

Step One: Group Identified –Islamic Prayers (Turkey), RAMADAN and IFTAAR

Step Two: Local Mosque

Step Three: Documenting the Experience

1. I entered a local Mosque and spoke with a young man, (Rene), who introduced me to the protocols associated with the preparation for prayer. For RAMADAN, I have practiced the religious expectations associated with RAMADAN, EID Mubarak and IFTAAR, but I have never prayed.
2. Ramadan is a religious practice associated with the Islamic Religion. During that time, participants will refrain from eating or drinking anything from sun up unto sun down. It is okay for the family to enjoy a meal in the early morning before the sun rises. Sometimes, the sun will rise as early as 5:00, therefore, in some cases, the family will eat as early as 3:00 in the morning. Then the rest of the day is dedicated to strict fasting. If someone is ill, or in need of medication, those individuals would be exempt from a full fast or at times, from fasting at all.
3. Understand that I am a Christian, many of my friends found it interesting, that I would even consider participating in the RAMADAN practices. However, I explained to them that as a Christian, we also have a time of “fasting,” or denying ourselves, and it is often during LENT. From a very early age, I taught my children about LENT and would encourage them to participate in the FAST and give up something for LENT. This has been a part of their lives ever since they were little children, and such is the same for many Muslims.
4. The experience that surprised me the most is that women and men can pray together, but women must pray at least two feet behind the man, and at no time can they be positioned in front of the man, as this would indicate that they are the leader. This is very different from what I learned in Senegal. In Senegal, women must go to another area of the mosque, where the men cannot have view of them, and then they can pray. Also, in the Turkish culture, my experience with the Prayer Preparations, EID MUBARAK and RAMADAN taught me a great deal about the strict structure of not only prayer, but their lifestyle. The reactions that I received was most welcoming. Many Muslims are interested in sharing their religion with other religions.

5. In the Islamic religious practices, the men have all the power! Men are the leaders and men have all the power!
6. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience because I for one, knew that I was participating within the boundaries of the United States and therefore I felt safe. If the situation was different, and I was in a country that heavily adhered to the Islamic culture, other than Senegal, I am not so sure that I would have felt as free as I did.

Step Four: Making Sense of It All

1. While living in Senegal, West Africa, many of my staff members were Muslim. I would often watch them pray and neglect the consumption of certain foods – pork. However, when I participated in this field experience, I was able to learn a great deal more about the preparation of the prayer, the process of the prayer.

Process of Prayer: Prior to praying, there is a process that involves washing. Before washing you must say “Bismillah....” I never fully got this, but someone helped me every step of the way. This process is called ablution. The words that begins with Bismillah translates to in the name of Allah, most peaceful and most merciful. This process was followed by the unique washing that must be done before each prayer.

I found that the steps in washing is just as important as the need for washing. It goes as follows;

The Hands: Right hand in the water first, then right hand over left, then left hand over right and with soap.

The Mouth: inside of the mouth three times

The Nose: clean the nose and blow out until the nose is clean. Take water with the right hand and clean your nose with your left hand.

The Face: From the border of the hair, borders of the ears, and then borders of the chin.

The Arm: Right arm first. Arm is washed all the way to the elbows and exceeded a little. Next is the left arm, then wash the head.

The Ears: inside

The Back of the Neck

The Feet are last: Include ankles and between toes.

It is very important to remember that there must not be a place left dry! It is important to wash your head and feet with your arms. Note, if you are not bleeding anywhere, the ablution is okay. However, if you are bleeding anywhere, you must stop the prayer and wash again. In Turkey, the women can pray with the men, but they must stay one or two feet behind the man, but never in front.

When the prayer begins, you must look to the right, then to the left and then bow as you pray. Some stand up and then kneel and bow, this takes far more effort than others realize!

Almost everything that is practiced in the culture is tied to the five pillars of Islam. These pillars help to guide the motives behind what every member of Islam. It would be safe to say that these five pillars can be likened to the ten commandments for Christianity.

The Five Pillars of Islam are as follows:

Pillar One: (Belief) - Allah is the only one God and Mohammad is the messenger.

Pillar Two: (Prayer) Pray Five Times a Day. (Just before the sun rises, in the afternoon, three or four hours later, then just as the sun goes down – during the night.

Pillar Three: Fasting – mainly done during RAMADAN.

Pillar Four: Giving, sharing what you have with others, mainly, you must give money to the poor, amounting to one year's profit.

Pillar Five: Mecca – must go at least one time in your life.

Women must be covered when they pray!

2. As I have stated once before, I have always been fascinated with the practices of Islam, as well as other religions. I believe that due to the radical Islamic groups, the religion has been given a very bad reputation. Even though the women are required to pray behind the men, they do not feel slighted, but more so protected and in a place of comfort. Often, their husbands are present, it is almost unheard of for a woman who is married to be in the company of another man who is not her husband, let alone pray. I do not need to develop empathy with the Islamic group, because I believe that their religion has some similarities as Christianity. For example, Christians believe in prayer, fasting and giving. If I had to make any necessary changes, it would be in making time to learn more about their religion and culture, and in some way, assist in dispelling the myths that are often associated with the Islamic religion.
3. If someone were to do field work based on my experience with the Islamic culture, I would say that they would discover that many who practice the Islamic faith are extremely kind and open people. If the person doing the field work were to take the time to become even slightly acquainted with the religious practices, then they would understand the culture and, in some cases, the individual much better, as the two are literally one in the same. Unlike Christianity, where for some being a Christian means being a part of a religion, and it stands separate from the culture, Islam is the culture, and there is no separation of Islam and State!