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It's not a scholarship, but a 'school-a-ship'

Thursday, April 3, 2008

Students from various countries have come together aboard the Scholar Ship. Students and faculty alike have found it to be a rewarding journey. They believe it has been enriching and rewarding, and has changed the way they view the world

YASEMİN SİM ESMEN

ISTANBUL - Turkish Daily News

Dreams of visiting distant lands have come true for students aboard The Scholar Ship, a cruise liner that was turned into a school ship.

What sets this one apart from many other school

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DREAM COME TRUE: For students, the ship provides the opportunity to visit foreign lands, meet with people from all around the world and engage in rich discussions.

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ships is that it is the first "International School Ship," a joint program between universities from seven countries. The ship docked in Istanbul Tuesday and will stay here until April 6, during which time students and faculty will get the chance to explore the city and Turkish culture. "[The semester on Scholar Ship] has changed how I view the world. Even before I got here I learned a lot," said student Aries Jordan. It has been one tough journey for her to even get on the ship, as she was the first one to

be accepted from her home college SUNY New Paltz, where she majors in Political Science and Black Studies. Jordan explained she had to struggle to come up with the finances to join the program and believes she had learned a lot even before she got aboard. "I knew how important it was for me to be here. I kind of feel like I have to represent my community. Because one of the points of the Scholar Ship is that it brings together people from different backgrounds, classes... So I felt like I had to tell my story of 'this is what it is like to be an African American woman in America,'" said Jordan. It is the second voyage of the Scholar Ship, which hosts 200 students and faculty members from 35 different countries around the globe. Istanbul is the eighth port of call for the ship, after Shanghai, Bangkok, Chennai, Port Victoria, Cape Town, Cape Verde Islands, and Barcelona.

The ship will continue to Lisbon and Amsterdam before returning to the United States. University of California, Berkeley, USA, Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, Shanghai's Fudan University, Technologico de Monterrey in Mexico, Cardiff University in the United Kingdom, Al Akhawayn University

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in Morocco, and the University of Ghana, are participating in the program. At first, Jordan was anxious as they were told the worst things that could happen in the security briefing they received. She believes the journey has taught her that there are good people everywhere. "You know there will be bad people but you have to trust humanity. In America we are so brainwashed, you are afraid of the world. You see the world as an enemy... In all these countries, there are beautiful people everywhere. I would say this is the biggest thing I found, how people all around the world live and that they have respect for you," said Jordan. Professor Lowry Wyman, though a lawyer by training, teaches international relations on board. She has lived abroad for many years – in Spain during the rule of dictator Francisco Franco, in the former Soviet Union, and has helped establish the Department of Law at the American University in Yerevan where she also served as professor of law between 1998 and 2003. Her international experiences have helped her conceptualize what to expect. "I fully expected it would be challenging and interesting," she said, adding, "what has been wonderful for me has been the international family we established on the Scholar Ship." The students of the two graduate courses Wyman teaches come from various backgrounds for which the professor finds herself very lucky. "When we have a class discussion, it is very rich. I can ask my student's involvement as colleagues and not just as students who are learning a specific subject. That has been very rewarding for me." She has done some preparatory reading before going to Spain. "I am going back to Spain after 40 years and I wanted to make comparisons between Franco's dictatorial Spain and the constitutional democracy of today. And that was absolutely fascinating," she said. The second country that Wyman has researched before coming to the country was Turkey. "Turkey, because it wants to join European Union and because it is on the crossroads between East and West and because it has been the focus of my class's attention. Because we study the diplomatic history of Europe and the evolution of the international system, we have looked at Turkey as the focal point for many problems and intercultural communication, how East and West can understand each other better, and why conflicts arise," she

said. "Visiting all these countries has been marvelous," said Wyman, adding, "because there is nothing like going to a place where you have focused your attention in books, or literature, or music, to feel it directly under your feet." Wyman plans to do research and establish relationships with the professors of local universities in the places they visit.

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