

Religion Site Visit #2

Marcenia Coulter

On December 1, 2013, I attended The Islamic Center of Cleveland at 6055 West 130th Street in Parma, Ohio. This was the first time I'd ever entered or even seen a mosque. It was not until after my first site visit that I realized that my denomination was actually Protestant instead of simply Christian. With that being said, this site visit was a whole new experience for me.

As I drove down the long driveway that led to the beautifully colored blue, white, and gold building, I couldn't help but think of Aladdin's palace. The parking lot was very large and after I'd heard how many people frequent the center, I absolutely understood why. Upon entering the doors we all stopped abruptly because before we could enter the mosque, we had to remove our shoes. Wooden shelves where shoes were meant to be placed were provided for us. The women wore scarfs covering their heads and shoulders out of respect and modesty for the Virgin Mary. The carpet inside the mosque was new and extremely soft. It had a gorgeous red and gold design. We all sat in chairs lined against the wall listening to the President speak to us about some of the background of Islam. As I listened to him talk I couldn't help but notice the large white pillars in the middle of the floor, the lack of pictures and art, and the windows that were very high up. He explained to us the prayer rituals that the people of this religion participate in as well as recited the beginning passage of the Quran. When he spoke in Arabic it came out so fluently and clear and made me wish I knew what he had said. The one thing that he told us that I'd never thought about was that when prayer is taking

place, the men and women are separated. I never knew this fact and still couldn't quite picture how a service like that would go until I witnessed it myself.

Just before the end of this wonderful eye-opening experience, we were able to stay and observe a prayer session involving roughly 35-40 young boys and girls. We all sat off to the side, the boys were up front and the girls in the back. The unity that those young children exhibited with one another as they stood in a line was awesome to see. The President who had spoken to us earlier began the prayer, but soon after was replaced by another gentlemen. The children went through several positions that ranged from them being bend over to standing up, then dropping to their knees with their heads on the floor. These same children who had entered giggling and acting like "normal kids" instantly changed when it was time to give praise and they were so committed. They were so humble at that moment.

Overall, this visit was very educational and allowed me to really appreciate another way of worshipping. The atmosphere was welcoming as well as the people inside. I'm glad I had the opportunity to actually meet and hear from such as sweet Muslim man who obviously is very passionate for his family and values.