

U.S. Department of State Edward R. Murrow Program Participant Spotlight:



Farah Farouque

Farah Farouque is a senior writer for *The Age* newspaper, a leading broadsheet newspaper published in Melbourne, Australia. Her interests range across social policy, politics, law and arts and culture. She has been on several short-term International assignments, including reporting on the Bali bombings of 2002 and the tsunami disaster in Sri Lanka in 2004 and 2005. Farah began her media career in 1992 after completing degrees in Law and Arts.

On her Murrow exchange experience:

“My three weeks in the US as a participant in the Murrow program was professionally and personally invigorating. For one thing, it's a rare opportunity for a reporter to have a 'time-out' from the frantic pace of a newsroom to embark on a project like this. We met such a variety of people, ranging from 'higher-ups' in the State Department to leading American journalists and, of course, numerous enthusiastic volunteers. Being journalists, we engaged in robust interlocutions but there were no deadlines hanging over us. We also observed metropolitan and regional newsrooms at work and people in these workplaces were frank about the pressures our profession faces in the Internet age. Given the trip's proximity to the election campaign, we were also afforded an excellent birds-eye view of American democracy in action. It wasn't all heavy-lifting, though: my cultural exposure included a visit to the Texas State Fair and a high-octane high school football game in the small town of Grand Ledge in Michigan.”

On how her visits to different American cities helped her to better understand the United States and its people:

“Although I had travelled to the US before as a tourist, there is a tendency amongst all of us, I think, to view America sometimes in reductionist terms be it 'Hollywood' or 'superpower' or through the prism of contested foreign policy. The nuances and diversity of a place, in particular its people, can sometimes be lost in this. It was refreshing to leave the East Coast, where I'd travelled before, to see different faces of America in Texas and Michigan. People always have the capacity to confound your expectations: like the Stetson wearing trucker whom I met at the Texan State Fair (we were both tucking into the fried food) who turned out to be an ardent Obama supporter. I really enjoyed these types of small 'vignettes' on the road: these small parts added to the sum of the total experience.”

On how her program experiences in the United States has been of value to her as a journalist in her home country:

"My contact book is bulging, of course - the program was a good networking opportunity. I am also more alert than ever to the fast changing media landscape. In Australia, as in America, the journalism industry is facing the challenge posed by new technologies and the ubiquity of the Internet. It's not an easy transition, by any means, for traditional print journalism not least because the economic model to make it pay is still elusive. I think I have gained a better understanding of what is needed to make the transition because of the developments I have been exposed to in the US, and will be personally endeavouring to be more 'tech-literate' from now on."