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"What Should I Think About, Today?"

By Miki Edelman
Chair, National Youth Assembly

Young people today have a myriad of thoughts spinning around in their heads. They might be thinking of tomorrow's chemistry test or today's big game or where they are going to college next year or if they are in college, what they are going to do when they graduate. Thoughts about other countries and foreign cultures and how these impact society are rarely at the forefront of a young person's mind.

However, as we have witnessed in late 1989 and early 1990, the world around us is changing rapidly and there has been a surge of global goodwill through community action. Sister Cities International has provided a forum for promoting world understanding for almost 35 years. In 1975, a group of young people decided it was important to them to play a viable role in their communities as well as in the global community. These youth called for the formalization of youth participation at the local, national and international levels of sister cities programs. Today, youth participation exists at all levels throughout sister cities programs via the SCI National Youth Program and youth chapters that engage in exchanges and other special projects with their sister cities.

When she volunteered to form a youth program in Mobile Ala., Launa Kowalski, now advisor to the SCI National Youth Program, noted the importance of involving young people. "I think it is important that young people come to understand Mobile as a part of a bigger world community. We are right at the beginning of something here. These youth are widening their horizons and I believe they are going to be extremely important for Mobile." The same could be said for any community.

Perhaps this helps explain why the W. K. Kellogg Foundation invested time and funds supporting projects like the SCI Volunteer Training for Youth Leadership Development program or why the U.S. Information Agency awarded grants to SCI to increase youth exchanges between sister cities.

What's it like being an exchange student? One, who participated in an exchange supported by such grants, stated that, "probably the greatest part is being

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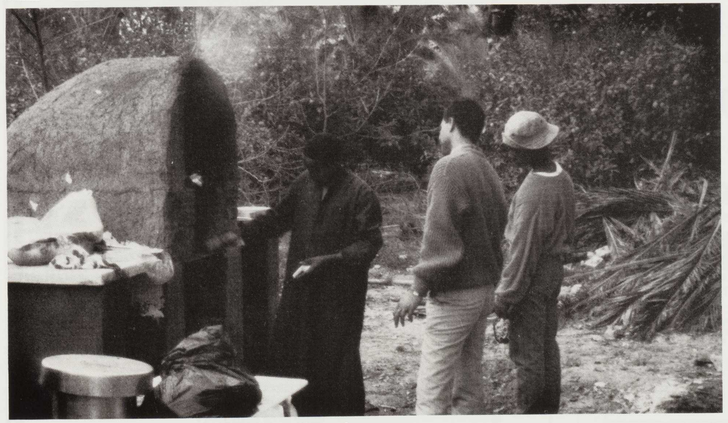

Scenes from New York/Cairo, Egypt, youth exchange.

. . . TOMORROW

Life after the NYP—where do I go? How do I find an international career? Are there other 21-35 year olds involved with local sister city projects? There are approximately 100 Ambassador Association members who have asked themselves these questions and are now part of this young adult division of Sister Cities International.

The concept of the Ambassador Association of Sister Cities International was established in July 1985 by enthusiastic people who had been dedicated to the sister cities program for many years. The group envisioned a new program for young adults between the ages of 21-35 to bridge the age gap that existed between the youth and adult programs. In July 1986 the Ambassador Association held its first meetings and elected its first slate of officers.

The Dean of the Association, Len Olender, feels that "the momentum finally has started to take over for our association of young, dynamic leaders sharing their ideas and resources." The Ambassador Association is another sister cities opportunity for young adults to continue their involvement in international exchanges, career and leadership development.