

The Power of Youth?

Two Headliners members attended an international youth peace forum in Egypt to speak about the relationship between young people and the media. Here Nina writes about her experience.

The Suzanne Mubarak Women's International Peace Movement held a youth forum on the 'Power of Youth for Peace' in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, from September 1-3 2007. Myself and Tara Brown were invited by the First Lady of Egypt (Suzanne Mubarak), to discuss young people's relationship to the media.



Our main role was to discuss how Headliners is different to mainstream journalism organisations in the way in which they engage young people in the media.

We had arrived for the conference a day early, which left us to find ways to indulge ourselves in the luxury hotel and scenic beach in Sharm el Sheikh. After the continuous tedious security checks, due to the presence of the First Lady, I was looking forward to the start of the conference the next day, and to meeting new people with different experiences and seeing how they felt about the event. But in the meantime I was soaking up the atmosphere and chilling in the heat...

My initial impression of the conference was that it seemed to be very high profile with banners and branding everywhere and huge numbers of people trying to organise things. It left me wondering what the overall outcome was going to be, and how they intended on bringing about change.

From the first day of the conference Tara became a bit of a celebrity because people kept recognising her from the brochure we were all given containing a small biography and picture of each speaker. Unfortunately I was left out of the brochure because of confusion amongst the organisers.

We met an interesting variety of people from around the globe interested in finding out what Headliners did while also sharing information about their own organisations. We also attended sessions to prepare us for our own panel, as well as exploring the other themes of the conference.

I felt our panel, which was on the second day of the conference, could have gone a lot better. However it was a success in the way the discussion was led, getting the audience to contribute a lot of questions and comments, which made it a lively debate.

In terms of my own performance it also could have been improved if I had sounded more confident in my responses - which made me realise I need to find a way to speak in public with the use of notes.

It was useful in the session to find out how people perceive young people in the media, and how they felt they could address that issue. This experience made me realise that there are a lot of people from around the world who have influence over the lives of young people, and they are available to help them develop.

Generally, the conference was not as I expected mainly because the 'youth' all seemed to be 25 or over (certainly the speakers anyway, although some of the participants were younger).

But I feel it was a worthwhile and positive experience as it introduced me to the world of conferences. It was also very impressive in terms of the accommodation, the location, and the mass of people invited as participants and speakers.



When asked for our suggestions on how the forum could be improved, Tara and I suggested that they should invite the actual young people from the different organisations represented, rather than just the staff who work with them.

Getting these young service users to engage in the debates as panellists and to share their opinions and experiences would give the organisations more of an insight into how they could help these young people further.

The forum experience showed me that being involved in Headliners or an organisation like it really makes a difference in people's lives.

About this article

This article was written by Nina Osei-Armah, 18, from London. She attended the conference in Egypt with [Tara Brown](#).

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