

Currently, a significant amount of my time is devoted to doing interfaith programming, and I plan on using the experiences, insights, and skills I learn through the Ibrahim program to both raise quantity and quality of that work next academic year. I have helped lead the planning for an Interfaith Holiday Feast celebrating Eid al-Adha and, built a closer relationship with other Queens College faith and culturally based clubs, and am in the process of planning an Interfaith Social with the Muslim Student Association. So far these events or their planning have been greatly successful and have encouraged constructive dialogue between student populations. It is my hope the dialogues with other Ibrahim participants and people I meet will inform both the content and the structure of the future dialogues I plan.

More specifically, my experience on the Ibrahim program can help me, and other students from the program or Queens College, think of innovative and exciting culturally based events that will both accurately reflect different cultures and will draw in those students new to interfaith programming. Furthermore, gaining first hand knowledge of Middle Eastern culture can help me produce programming that is based on cultural themes that are truly current. In addition to one-time events, I would also like to try combining the dialogue skills and knowledge learned through Ibrahim with my existing contacts to establish a consistent series of events that give a smaller (but only limited by interest) group of students regular opportunities to engage in interfaith dialogue.

Events, however, are not the only way to engage students in interfaith dialogues that promote tolerance and understanding. On a more personal level, I would use my participation in Ibrahim to overturn prevalent misconceptions about travel to the Middle East held by my religious and collegiate community. I want to be able to use my Ibrahim experience to prove that not only is travel to the Middle East possible, but is just as valuable experience as travel elsewhere. People often perceive the Middle East as simply a place of conflict, but I want to use my experience to prove, through casual and more planned conversations, that while conflict is present, that is not what defines the Middle East. The Middle East can and should be defined by its rich cultural heritage and contemporary innovation. More specifically, I want the opportunity to use my firsthand experience to show others the Jewish cultural connection the Middle East (and not just Israel) is not a thing of the past. The Jews peacefully and productively existed in the Middle East throughout much of history, and I want to both be able to reconnect culturally to the Middle East and give over that experience to my community.

My participation in Ibrahim would also have the potential to influence both my work as an Arabic minor and as an Anthropology major. I have been immersing myself in Arabic for almost two years now but nothing will accelerate my progress more effectively than to the Middle East. Moreover, it will be fascinating to observe the variety of dialects spoken and how speakers of different dialects interact with each other.

On a level more applicable to academic work I will do that can affect others, my participation in Ibrahim would jump start anthropological research I am planning on conducting next year for my senior honors thesis. Lately I have been fascinated by how practicing members of different religions incorporate religious terminology or words from other languages while speaking primarily in English. As an Orthodox Jew I have a lot of firsthand experience with this mode of speaking, but I plan on studying it in a more formalized manner along with the speech of members of other various religions. Both traveling to the Middle East and speaking with

other program participants will broaden my perspective of the topic as a whole and perhaps inspire more focused research and survey questions.

While I already have many ideas for how I would be able to apply what I learn in the Ibrahim program to my community and academic work, I also firmly believe that my participation will inspire new ideas of ways to foster dialogue and interfaith tolerance.

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