

Translating my experience on the 2015 Ibrahim Leadership and Dialogue Program into reality will most certainly be difficult to do. Putting the inherent difficulty aside, there is an added component of complexity to it – me. To the pro-Israel students, I represent someone who has taken a steadfast stand against those opposed to their beliefs. To the pro-Palestinian students, I am a Zionist sympathizer who cannot possibly understand their point of view. As a result of all of this, coming back to campus after a summer with Ibrahim would be both wonderful and complicated. However, I am determined to begin a new club on campus dedicated to fostering dialogue about the Arab-Israeli conflict between pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian students, and I am confident that other students would welcome the opportunity to join me in this endeavor.

I recognize that this goal is ambitious. Therefore, I might begin the club as a Jewish-Muslim interfaith group. Growing up Jewish and independently studying Islam later on, I began to discover the astounding number of parallel experiences, customs, and laws. Muslims and Jews might have profound disagreements about the conflict, but the potential areas for collaboration should not be ignored simply because of one dispute. After building mutual understanding between the two groups of people, I would suggest discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I believe that after forming relationships with their “adversaries,” participating students’ dialogue will be constructive and respectful.

Furthermore, I plan on utilizing New York City’s vast resources to the benefit of this club. This year, I am a Jewish Student Leader Fellow with the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York. In this capacity, I have been learning how to develop relationships with community leaders of Jewish and Non-Jewish communities in New York City. I have learned about the inner-workings of religious and cultural groups, and I plan on bringing in many of the Jewish and Muslim leaders I met to this new club. Meeting more influential leaders in the business and political sectors in Ibrahim Program can provide me with many ideas about other kinds of people to bring in or events to hold.

There is a high possibility that Muslim and Jewish students might not be able to see eye-to-eye about Israel and Palestine. It is my strong conviction, however, that simply talking about the issue is an important first step towards the one thing everyone desires – peace. As Nelson Mandela wisely wrote, “If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner.” Students on college campuses will eventually become the leaders of this country, and I therefore believe it is imperative that they leave after four years with a comprehensive understanding of all the sides of a conflict which could very well be a defining part of our generation’s history.

Participating in the Ibrahim Leadership and Dialogue Program would help me achieve this goal. I spoke with a past participant of the program about her experience. I also read about other students’ experiences from their impact plans posted on the Ibrahim website. Reading about their experiences was inspiring, showing me that being a participant in this prestigious program would prepare me for the tasks I want to perform on my campus. Exploring some of the world’s most controversial issues with people of all backgrounds would most certainly help me succeed in my personal, academic, and professional goals.

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