

The experience from this fellowship is something I can bring to everything I do in the future. From one-on-one interactions with friends to my career, I hope to incorporate my experiences and create an environment open to multiple beliefs and understandings. Two specific ways I will incorporate this experience into my communities are bringing the experience back to my campus and to the Orthodox community in my hometown.

As the student president of Hillel, I created three additional chairs to the student activities board. The first chair is the Israel Events Coordinator, who creates programming surrounding Israel for Hillel. The official Israel group on campus does not deliver political programming, and I felt it was important to have an outlet for political discussions regarding the Middle East on campus. So far, we have had a couple of exciting speakers, including one who discussed his organization's work to open Israeli curriculum to include the Arabic language in order to knock down language barriers. I plan to continue to open up the Hillel to many different types of speakers, both about Israel and the Middle East at large. I will take the experiences from the fellowship to expand dialogue on my campus concerning the Middle East. With a better understanding of the intricate politics surrounding the Middle East, I could better assist the Israel coordinator in moderating complicated discussions and programs.

The second position I added includes two students who are in charge of inclusivity, or making Hillel more open to working with our LGBT+ community as well as students of other faiths. Interfaith programming includes volunteering, discussions, and social events with students of different faiths. Since my first experience with pluralism, I have always made sure to integrate pluralism into every community I am a part of. Interfaith events are always complicated, so they are created with great care to make sure to avoid conflict. We typically stray away from politics to build positive relationships and focus on similarities instead of differences. In the future, I hope to expand interfaith dialogue into more than relationship building. The current programming is extremely important, and I believe it could build the foundation for more complicated discussions. If the community had the ability to talk to others about complicated affairs, we could grow to understand and respect the other, even if we do not agree. As I gain more experience engaging in complex dialogue with people of different faiths with Ibrahim, I will become better equipped to create environments for more complicated interfaith discussion on campus.

Lastly, I would like to bring my experience with Ibrahim back to my community at home. Discussions with my family and friends in my Orthodox community surrounding the Middle East have always been tense. Many of their opinions are rigid, and it is difficult for them to recognize other beliefs. I want to talk to them about my experiences to share more than just anecdotes from books and articles. By participating in an immersive trip to explore this complicated topic, I can have productive discussions with my traditional community about the different truths I have explored first hand. This will give me the tools to navigate differences as well as similarities between the opinions of my community, myself, and others. Through the fellowship, I will also have the support of a dedicated cohort to help navigate these complicated discussions. This fellowship would open many doors that have previously been locked within the communities I am part of, and allow for mutual discussions and understandings beyond the realm of tolerance.

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