

As an Ibrahim Scholar, I would see two main pathways for making a tangible impact. The first is an Environmental Science: Geology major. Few know the extent of collaboration of Israel and its neighbors on projects involving water, solar, agriculture and energy. The recent approval of the Red-Dead Canal between Israel and Jordan is only one such example. Environmental progress is a default dialogue that happens regardless of peace negotiations, and it has played a critical role in cementing relationships in the Middle East. It is my ambition to live and work in the region on projects that are collaborations across borders. I have no doubt my experience on Ibrahim would be an invaluable resource in that context, and help me play whatever part I can moving those projects forward, whether on the scientific or the political side. However much the need to conserve water, collaborative projects cannot happen without cultural understanding.

However, there is also more local, immediate work to be done in this regard, specifically on a college campus. I believe that the example of environmental collaboration is one of the most effective ways to show people that peace is not only a possibility, but a desperate necessity. It is a less politically charged subject, and therefore more approachable to people across the spectrum. As a member of the School of Earth and Environmental Science club, and as a student active in the department, I think there is great potential to create a project showcasing environmental collaboration in the Middle East as a paradigm for creating peace through science. Queens college had an interfaith panel on climate change last year, featuring scientists and religious leaders. I believe I can create an equivalent program to discuss Middle Eastern conflict resolution. To do that, I need to better understand the Middle East at large, which I hope I will be able to do on Ibrahim. A non ideological collaboration like this is only a stepping stone to creating genuine understanding, but it's a necessary first step.

The second pathway is as a student leader at Hillel on Campus. In the past the Hillel at Queens College had been sorely lacking conversation about the Middle East, and for months now I have been helping to craft the Hillel's program for Middle East engagement. This means bringing in speakers, leading discussions on the conflict, and exploring ways to approach Zionism. This type of programming is in its infancy, and it will shape for years how issues are approached. I regularly meet with the directors of Hillel, have spoken at numerous panels, and met with many students about this issue.

Queens College is lucky to have an amicable relationship between the Hillel and the MSA, and between students of different faiths in general. There are annual interfaith events. But when it comes to Israel and Palestine, there is an unspoken polarity; and from what I observe about the Jewish community at Queens, there is no lack of passion beneath the surface. Too frequently, the "conversation" at other campuses becomes a yelling match and divides along religious lines, so part of creating constructive dialogue at Hillel is to find an approach that takes advantage of the calmness that already exists on campus. As a leader at Hillel, I was fortunate enough to meet personally with Israeli Journalist Ari Shavit, who commented that what we have at Queens in terms of interfaith tolerance is unparalleled across the country. It would be more than a shame if we lost that. So when it comes to crafting Hillel's Israel and Middle Eastern programming, we can't afford to have anything less than dialogue. How to do that constructively is exactly what I hope to learn from Ibrahim.

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