

Upon returning from the Ibrahim Leadership and Dialogue Program, I plan on incorporating my experiences into the broader Brandeis community in a variety of ways. As many can attest to, Brandeis has a unique political culture thanks to its predominantly Jewish character. And as a Jew myself, I often take it for granted just how comfortable religiously, politically, and culturally I feel on campus. But that comfort, I am beginning to realize, does not extend to everyone, particularly those with views and cultures and practices deemed outside the norm. My comfort obligates me to promote that of my fellow Brandeis peers, and in doing so, make this campus a more welcoming and tolerant place for all.

I first plan on creating a joint Jewish-Muslim-Christian dialogue group. Building on my own experiences at My Faith Your Faith during my high school years, I hope to replicate the transformational experiences I had when encountering religions different than my own. The quickly shattered sense that I'm so different than a Christian or a Muslim, in many ways, laid the foundation for my bridge-building efforts, and this campus can totally benefit from that. Furthermore, in the face of religious extremism and violence and bigotry seemingly everywhere we look, imagine the message of religious moderation and dialogue with fellow Abrahamic faiths we can exemplify. Bi-weekly meetings will help spread this crucial message.

Next, I plan on changing the paradigm through which the Israel-Palestine conversation takes place on Brandeis' campus. Largely dominated between the AIPAC-sponsored group on the right (BIPAC) and the J-Street sponsored group on the left, in which I happily serve as education co-chair, Brandeis' campus dynamics nevertheless don't really make room for other viewpoints. Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), while deploying tactics I certainly don't agree with, doesn't deserve to be slandered the way they currently are amongst the pro-Israel community. In response, I hope to institute bi-semester conversations amongst BIPAC, J Street U, and our Brandeis chapter of SJP in order to have a more productive conversation about the Israel-Palestine Conflict. In doing so, I hope to put to rest the increasingly popular notion on campus that the two-state solution is untenable, and that we must look toward other approaches. The two state solution, I wholeheartedly believe, remains the only solution guaranteeing Israel's status as a Jewish and democratic state, not to mention its granting to the Palestinians a national home they so rightly deserve. Peers on my right and my left need not agree with me, but must hear this view articulated. In the face of cynicism and apathy, I hope to inspire American college students of the indispensable role they could play in ending this conflict.

Finally, I plan on changing the landscape of the Israel conversation within our communal Jewish space on campus, Hillel. Hillel has long clung to Israel guidelines that are increasingly putting it at odds with many Jewish students on campus. Simply put, Hillel will not allow anyone who supports the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) movement to speak at an event that it sponsors. And while the desire to maintain a "safe space" for Jews willing to voice support for Israel is understandable, and even noble, it is self-defeating and making the Jewish community appear progressively weak. Friends rightly ask, are pro-Israel students scared of hearing another view? Bearing this in mind, I hope to implement events and discussions for pro-Israel students who've never heard another narrative. I feel equipped to do so because before my gap year in Israel, I hadn't either.

If I am lucky enough to be accepted onto the Ibrahim Dialogue and Leadership Program, I know full well that the trip to the Middle East this summer will just be the beginning. And I

look forward to incorporating those experiences into educational opportunities for other Brandeis students because it is so needed on a campus like ours.

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