

When I was 18, I had the unique opportunity to volunteer in Northern Israel for half of the year. I lived and taught at a youth village for immigrant high schoolers from all over the world and served as a first aid responder with Magen David Adom (MDA) in Haifa. The diverse people I met who were proud to call Israel their home ignited my passion for Middle Eastern Studies. The more I experienced firsthand and continued to learn, I became fascinated by their individual stories and lives in Israel. Through volunteering at the youth village, I met children from the former Soviet Union, France, Ethiopia, and Brazil. Even though each of the individual children had their own reasoning to make aliyah and specifically live in this youth village, there was an undeniable commonality between their stories. Each and every single one of these children desired to live freely, safely, and openly as a Jew in the Jewish State. Through my service with MDA, I had the opportunity to meet minority populations of non-Jewish Israelis. I worked alongside and became friends with Israeli-Arabs, Muslims, Christians, Druze, and Bedouins. While working with MDA, our individual identities and backgrounds didn't matter. We all bonded on the basic premise that we were there to help and treat our patients who further embodied the diversity of Israeli society. This work allowed for pure human connections and relationships to flourish, despite our differences. In fact, I am still in touch with some of my students from the youth village and with friends from MDA two years later. I am looking forward to hopefully seeing them again when I am in Israel.

While I have wanted to go into fields of law and advocacy for a long time, these formative experiences sparked my interest in specifically immigration law and human trafficking law. Learning about the immigration stories from high schoolers at the youth village- like the French boy who chose to leave his home country to escape rising anti-semitism, or the Brazilian girl who's parents sent her to Israel so that she would have a better life- gave me insight into Israel's ability to be a safe haven to all Jews all from all places and to other people in need of

security- like Syrian refugees. Being the teacher and role model of recent immigrants allowed me to realize my potential to help immigrant populations. I am interested in working at an organization that provides legal and social services to immigrants, or that works to reform immigration policy.

The experience of working on an ambulance deepened my interest in human trafficking. While I quickly realized the medical field is not my calling, I do believe that I have an innate sense of compassion and empathy that will make me successful in working with at-risk populations. This issue is also appealing to me due to its intersection of law, women's rights, and international studies. I know that human trafficking is especially prevalent in Israel because of the country's strategic geographic location connecting Africa, Europe, and Asia. My father participated in a law enforcement trip to Israel a few years ago in which he learned about the innovative ways that Israel is working to combat this issue, further interesting me in this field. I am thus also interested in working at an organization that provides social and legal services to victims of human trafficking.

I am eager to study the Middle Eastern in order to enhance my understanding of Israel, a country in which I have spent significant time, increase my Arabic and Hebrew language skills, and enrich my knowledge of the fields I am studying, history and political science. I have taken several courses already in my first two years of college that relate to Middle Eastern Studies including Honors Islam and World Politics, Comparative Politics, and Arabic. I am looking forward to expanding upon my knowledge at the Moshe Dayan Center. I want to live and work in Israel after I graduate, and learning about the Middle East will not only compliment my academic studies, but will equip me with knowledge and skills to work in the fields of law or

public policy in Israel. Having a deeper understanding of the history, politics, and makeup of the Middle East and a better grasp of the languages spoken in this region will allow me to be more effective for the issues I want to help resolve- immigration law and human trafficking- in my career in Israel.

In addition to my studies and professional development, my extra-curricular involvement on campus and personal growth will also be greatly enhanced by learning about the Middle East. I am the Head of Political Affairs for our campus pro-Israel group, Badgers Allied for Israel. In this role, I am responsible for building a relationship with local government representatives and organizing lobbying appointments where our members advocate for Israel. By learning more about Israel and her relationship to her neighbors, I will be much more effective at this job. I will be better equipped to explain to our local leaders why they should sign petitions or legislation that protect Israel's security. Studying in Israel will also deepen my Jewish identity. I feel connected to my Judaism when I am in Israel, when I learn about Israel, and when I help Israel.

Because many of my professional and academic interests center around issues that are prevalent in the Middle East, gaining in depth knowledge about this region will be very valuable to my education and future career in government, public policy, or law. Improving my Hebrew reading and writing as well as my Arabic in general will also assist me in working in Israel and in navigating Israeli society as a whole. I am honored to have the opportunity to come to the Moshe Dayan Center of Middle Eastern and African Studies and am incredibly excited to gain skills that will help me in my academics and future career.