



Seek peace and pursue it
Psalm 34

בקש שלום ורדפהו
תהלים פרק ל"ד

Avi Schaefer Fund Innovation Grantees Fall 2013-Winter 2014

Avi Schaefer Fund Summary Fall 2013

University of Toronto Hillel

Olives: The story of Olives in our culture, customs, and tradition.

Areas of interest: Fostering interfaith understanding and cross-cultural encounters.

Engaging with students on all sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This initiative will have multiple components; a speaker or panel discussion with Jewish and Muslim participants/facilitators surrounding the historical, cultural, and religious significance of the olive in the Middle East, as well as the symbol of the olive branch for peace and discourse. We hope to impart new knowledge and cross-cultural understanding of different cultures and traditions and how they relate to one another and how we can use them to strengthen ties. We also plan to have a hands on workshop where we learn to make something out of olive products (soap or food) and how that ties into our understanding of peace and civility. We plan to work with the Muslim Students Association and Multi-Faith Centre on campus to do this event on both a small campus where we recently just got club status (where there is a great need for cross-cultural understanding and dialogue) and one of our larger more established campuses. This program will be open to students of all faiths and backgrounds, and we are hoping that by using existing partners on campus this will continue to foster multi-faith dialogue and discourse.

The George Washington University Hillel

Avi Shabbat 2014 and the Freedom Seder

Area of interest: Fostering interfaith understanding and cross-cultural encounters

A key aspect of interfaith understanding is finding values and ideas that cut across the barriers of religion. On issues of social importance where agreement is met, groups of various traditions can unite, working towards a more just world. The George Washington University's Hillel will have an Avi Shabbat on March 15, 2013, which will bring members of both the Jewish community and the Interfaith council (including the Muslim Student Association) together for a discussion on this concept of Social Solidarity. In addition to traditional services prior to our Shabbat dinner, we will also have an interactive learner's minyan for those interested in learning more about Shabbat services. Then there will be a dinner for everyone. Each table will have an assigned relevant social, political, environmental or economic issue. The students will then think about and discuss their personal views on this issue, where their religious views fit in, and what differences and similarities arise among them. To sustain the interfaith momentum, the Monday following our Avi Shabbat marks the start of passover, when GW will host a Freedom Seder in partnership with the GW Williams House, an organization which promotes African American history and culture. As Jews celebrate their liberation from slavery in Egypt, African Americans note a stark comparison in their own embattled past. The focus will stay consistent with the theme of our Avi Shabbat, and use the Freedom Seder to engage a different but also very relevant group of students on our campus.

Williams University

Interfaith Alternative Spring Break Trip

Area of interest: Fostering interfaith understanding and cross-cultural encounters

An interfaith group of 10-12 students will experience the nexus of spiritual values and work of Tikkun Olam. We will be doing house construction with Habitat for Humanity in Tuscaloosa, AL, as the process of rebuilding after



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the Tornado of 2011 continues. Evenings are devoted to learning about our various religious tradition, and how we understand the meaning of work to improve the lives of others.

Loyola Marymount University Avi Schaefer Interfaith Dinner Series

Area of interest: Fostering interfaith understanding and cross-cultural encounters

This project will consist of a series of dinners (4-5) committed to interfaith dialogue and cross-cultural exchange. The project was inspired by the success of the Avi Schaefer Interfaith Shabbat Dinner that took place on LMU's campus last year, drawing in over 60 students to share their stories around faith and identity. By having a series of these dinners, we hope to allow students to go beyond the surface of interfaith dialogue, exploring a multiplicity of faiths and cultures with increasing depth throughout the year. This series will be entirely student-planned and student-facilitated with the partnership of LMU's Intercultural Facilitators, a group of student fellows trained in the art of facilitating challenging conversations. In addition, the program will be widely promoted within the residence halls, through the Resident Ministers, and more broadly through the LMU Student Interfaith Council. Each dinner will utilize a different lens or theme through which students may share their faiths, perspectives and cultures while learning from others. There are currently four themes selected for the dinners: (1) Artistic expressions of faith and culture through dance, art, poetry and music, (2) Gratitude practices and offerings in different traditions, (3) An exploration of various spiritual practices around our environment (this will be an outdoor dinner, held in the Avi Interfaith Peace Garden, (4) and "Intentionality, Introspection, and Interfaith Dialogue: an opportunity to delve deeply into the conversation about faith and identity."

University of Pennsylvania

Penn Political Action Week: Is the Two-State Solution Possible?

Followed by "Join the Conversation" series

Area of interest: Engaging with students on all sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Each fall the University of Pennsylvania's myriad political organizations join forces to host a week of insightful, engaging political events. These range from speakers to panels to films, and are centered around dozens of political issues from all over the world. The Penn Political Coalition, an umbrella organization for every political group, incentivizes cooperation between organizations during this week. J Street U Penn, on whose behalf I am writing, hosted one of the more successful events last fall, partnering with Penn for Palestine and other pro-Israel groups to attract one the largest audience turnouts. We have confirmed two speakers, Dr. Khalil Shikaki and Dahlia Scheindlin, to discuss their extensive work polling Palestinian and Israeli public opinion. We've asked them to speak about their research in relation to the ongoing peace talks - e.g. what can we learn about the prospect of peace based on public opinion? Follow-up programming includes "Join the Conversation", this program aims to create values-based discussions about Israel and Zionism with groups throughout Hillel and the broader Penn community. We want to work to create a safe space for students from all backgrounds to engage with the sensitive and important issues facing Israel. These sessions have been student-facilitated allowing for a non-hierarchical conversation that provides all participants with ownership over the discussions.

Much of the thinking behind this project was influenced by the training from the ASF Colloquium two years ago.



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Winter 2014 Innovation Grants

Binghamton University

Visit a Mosque/Visit a Temple

Area of interest: Fostering interfaith understanding and cross-cultural encounters

Visit a Mosque/Visit a Temple is an Interfaith Field Trip and provides an opportunity to build relationships and learn together. This trip will include 15 Hillel Students and 15 students from the Muslim Student Association that will join together to visit a Mosque and a Synagogue in one day. At the Mosque, they will speak with an Imam about the day-to-day activities of an Imam, holidays on Islam and the unique aspects of the service and then students will be able to watch a service take place. Then, at the Synagogue, students will speak with a Rabbi about Judaism, day-to-day activities of a rabbi, Jewish holidays, and they will look through a Siddur, and discuss some of the rituals of praying. Afterwards, everyone will return to campus and have a late lunch together to discuss what they just learned, and any similarities they noticed between Islam and Judaism. Also, assuming we have an equal number of students from each group, everyone will get a "buddy" assigned to them to encourage dialogue during the trip.

Stanford University

Stanford Hillel

Connecting Across Difference

Area of interest: Promoting open and respectful discourse within the Jewish community, specifically surrounding conversations about Israel.

This initiative began in the fall 2013 with a high profile lecture series and a faculty Shabbat dinner with Rabbi Melissa Weintraub. This spring, our initiative will include two components: A Hillel staff Israel weekly reading group, including guest workshops with Weintraub, author and journalist Ari Shavit, and a guest professor. It will also include a workshop for Jewish student leaders in May with Weintraub, to foster communication and questions from multiple perspectives and build dialogue skills. The goals of the program are as follows: to educate Hillel staff (8 employees) about Israel and bolster skills at facilitating conversation and questions from diverse perspectives, to train Jewish student leaders for improved dialogue skills; and foster a culture of open communication about Israel issues at Stanford.

University of Manitoba/Winnipeg Hillel

Interfaith Passover Seder

Area of interest: Fostering interfaith understanding and cross-cultural encounters

This event will be the first time that Hillel Winnipeg has brought together students from across Christianity, Islam, and Judaism for a Seder together. It will be the first time that Hillel has partnered with Canadian Mennonite University and the student group Arab-Jewish Dialogue on Campus. All these groups will come together as Hillel Winnipeg plans to hold an interfaith Passover Seder for University students from both the University of Manitoba and University of Winnipeg on March 30, 2014 at the Shaarey Zedek Synagogue. The evening will include a Passover Seder, a tour of the synagogue, and an engaging after dinner discussion program. Hillel Winnipeg will host 80 Jewish and non-Jewish students to learn about the traditions of the Passover Seder through the service. For the event, Hillel Winnipeg will design and print a modified haggadah and information sheets to help students understand the symbols and story of Passover. Each table will also include `conversation cards` to help facilitate discussion for all of the participants. Both the synagogues Rabbi and Chazzan will be there to help us lead the event. Hillel will follow up this event with its Avi Shabbat to further build on the success of the Seder. Hillel Winnipeg regularly hosts annual Interfaith Shabbat, but this



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will be our first occasion in recent memory holding a Passover Seder. This initiative will be a major event for the Hillel Winnipeg year, as well as for all of the partner organizations.

University of Pennsylvania Israel Across Penn

Area of interest: Fostering interfaith understanding and cross-cultural encounters

In the spring of 2012, a BDS (Boycott Divestment and Sanctions) Conference was hosted on University of Pennsylvania's campus. In response, Hillel organized an Israel Shabbat event in which we were able to engage 800 (mostly Jewish) students across campus to have meaningful discussions in Israel. Two years later, we hope to have an event that goes further than just engaging with Jewish students (although that is also a goal). Our Israel Across Penn event has two components: first, a decentralized series of Shabbat dinners with different Israel-related themes. Each dinner will try and engage with a group of students that do not normally interact with Israel, Jewish or not. As an example, we will partner with an African group on campus to have a dinner discussing African refugees in Israel. We plan to coordinate with an immigrant group on campus to have a theme about immigration in Israel and differences with the US. Ultimately, each dinner will allow for meaningful discussions about Israel. After each multicultural/multi-faith group has its own dinner, we will host a central Oneg at Hillel for all of the different groups to come together. The intent here is to allow for each different group to come and discuss what they learned with the others. As members of both Hillel and the United Minorities Council (an organization of cultural/ethnic groups on campus), we will have easy access to many different cultural groups that will be very interested in cross-cultural learning and discussion.

Miami University LGBTQ Community Across Faiths and Campus

Area of interest: Fostering interfaith understanding and cross-cultural encounters

This program is designed to create open dialogue about the LGBTQ community in relation to secular and various faith groups. Our goal is to promote a culture of understanding and inclusion. We are bringing in Dana Benson, a SafeZone trained 4th year rabbinic student to discuss LGBTQ related issues in the Jewish community. To integrate our campus, Spectrum will help develop and lead an introductory activity with us. This will be followed by a panel comprised of representatives from different religious groups around campus, and will be facilitated by a trained SafeZone leader from the Gay Alliance education program. The panel will focus on how the LGBTQ community is included, viewed, and/or understood by each faith group, and will provide a safe forum for the LGBTQ community to exchange their stories and experiences in relation to religious organizations. As part of the panel, students in the audience will have the opportunity to write out anonymous questions. These questions will be collected so that the panel can use them to guide the discussion. The panel will serve as a conduit for open discussion between all of the involved groups, thus allowing students to collaborate to promote the inclusion of the LGBTQ community within religious groups as well as around the campus. Participants will leave having a better understanding of the LGBTQ community, different faiths inclusion of that community, and how each is intertwined. The LGBTQ community will feel learn more about the faith group's views and feel welcomed within them.