

12.22.14

Ilana, A Glimpse at How Israeli Innovation is Changing our World

Preeminent leader Mahatma Gandhi famously declared “the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” After just one day of starting to intern with Innovation: Africa (iA), there is no quote to better encompass my feelings about taking part in this organization’s seminal mission. Even though TAMID Israel Investment Club (for which I am VP Fundraising) has been involved with proposing projects for iA throughout the year, the fact that I was granted the opportunity to personally work with iA in Israel overwhelmed me with utmost excitement, passion and drive.

I went to my first iA lecture last night and was moved beyond words. iA is a non-profit organization that brings Israeli solar and agricultural technologies to African villages to improve the lives of rural African people and, in doing so, improves the image of Israel around the world. iA has 85 different projects in 6 countries sponsoring villages by bringing Israeli technology to power health clinics, light schools and orphanages, pump clean water, provide drip irrigation, refrigerate vaccines and so much more. Talk about Tikun Olam and Israel being a light unto the nations!!

Later that night, in culmination of its Chanukka campaign, iA brought together many young professionals and prominent leaders in its “Share the Light” event at one of Tel Aviv’s top rated bars. Joining together with iA to share the gift of life with thousands living in darkness was profoundly meaningful. I am honored and inspired to be contributing toward this purpose.

The following day, I began my formal internship and planned my projects for the next three weeks with the Executive Assistant in iA’s office in Herzliya. I will be working on evaluating past campaigns and designing a template to use in future ones, assisting in preparing for several group lectures and events, attending the three-day long “Global Israel Legitimacy Hackathon” at the Reut Institute in which participants work with focus and energy to create new tools to combat delegitimization of Israel and lastly, designing and preparing a campaign for the Spring semester to bring back to TAMID National on North American campuses to raise \$10,000 in an effort to sponsor a village and power a school, orphanage, or medical clinic.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon asserted that 585 million Africans live without electricity and that “more people die from unsafe water than from all forms of violence, including war.” iA understands that without energy, there is no chance for a better education, no way to pump clean water, and no opportunity for proper medical care. To me, the work in which iA engages epitomizes the essential role of Israel and the Jewish people in the world today. This is what it means for Israel to be a beacon of hope and light in a region with such turbulent violence, communities at risk, and lack of democracy and freedom.

Ever since the age of 8 when I first visited Israel, Israel has been my whole life. It is the driving force with which I wake and I would live and die for it. People ask why? THIS is why. Organizations like iA, people like its staff, communities dedicated to helping others and repairing our broken world – that is why Israel is

my everything. While we face many of our own social and political issues, we are resolute in helping others. Whatever struggles and challenges come our way, even at the existential level, we never abandon the core purpose of Tikun Olam and we unwaveringly commit our time, passion and dedication in order to bring good into this world. After the terrible war this summer and so much bloodshed and terrorism in recent months, the paramount importance of focusing on Israel beyond the conflict is urgent, and iA is a great tool to broaden world perspective and attitude toward Israel.

I am filled with gratitude and appreciation to Ambassador Eizenstat for providing me with the opportunity, through the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies, to intern with this incredible non-profit. It is no less than an awe-inspiring honor to continue in the legacy of Frances Eizenstat's love and devotion for Israel. Until next time,
Ilana (Check out the video attached as well)



1.6.15

Ilana, An Amazing Way to End My Trip!

This past week, Innovation Africa (iA) was invited to participate in the Reut Institute's "Israel Legitimacy Hackathon," bringing activists and thinkers together with cyber and technology experts to build a network and design technological tools to combat the delegitimization of Israel. I had the special opportunity of joining iA's Community Development Coordinator in participating as a part of one of the teams for this hackathon. It was truly incredible to see how within just three days, activists and thinkers collaborated with tech experts to create groundbreaking innovations and develop thorough and comprehensive plans about how to implement these creations.

Our "Heat-Map Discourse" team designed the system and business plan for "Isra-ACE," an application that we built (within three days!) that would provide a system to measure anti-Israel activity across regional and global platforms. Here is just a short introduction of what "Isra-ACE" is all about as described in our proposal:

Members of the global pro-Israel community lack the ability to assess delegitimization activity and the predictive tools needed to base assumptions on how to respond. The Isra-ACE system helps to create data analysis at multiple levels allowing our application to give metrics that measure the velocity, variety, volume, veracity and severity of anti-Israel activity mapped regionally and globally across a digital platform. In addition, our system creates a connected community of pro-Israel activists so that they have a common space in which to collaborate and respond proactively through a uniform ability to access information.

After our proposal was well-received, we actually were awarded \$3,000 for our application by the Reut Institute at the end of the hackathon! Truly an amazing experience!!

Sitting around our table at the hackathon just speaking with one of the women on my team, I had one of the most memorable conversations I can recall. The woman was telling me about her favorite quote that "you make a *living* off of what you *get*, but you make a *life* off of what you *give*." This hit me in an extremely profound way. Looking around the room, watching so many brilliant thinkers put their minds together for three days (barely sleeping, eating as we worked...), it was truly moving beyond words. So many prominent leaders and talented activists and experts took three days out of their tremendously busy lives for no reason other than to improve Israel's image worldwide and expose the lies, anti-Semitism, and anti-Israel rhetoric in order to portray what Israel truly is. This was so poignant for me because I have always felt that Israel is in my blood and is such a major element of my identity, but I have never felt that my peers necessarily shared the same depth of commitment and connection as I felt inside. The 100 or so people invited to attend this hackathon definitely changed that feeling around for me. I was profoundly moved and inspired by so many like-minded, hard-working, deeply committed and devoted professionals with whom I had the privilege of working for

three days. The quote that this woman shared with me truly epitomizes the entire experience, in addition to encapsulating exactly what guides and drives me in my life. *You may make a living off of what you get, but you make a life off of what you give.*

Earlier in the week, I had spent a day on the beautiful beach of Herzliya after enjoying the delicious wine of Israel at a local boutique winery. Later that evening, on route to Jerusalem I hopped onto the light rail to be stunned by the picture you can find below. The outside walls of the light rail, although bullet and stone proof (Thank G-d) had countless marks from stones and rocks being thrown at them everywhere you turned. This was just an average day for me in Israel, eye-witnessing the juxtaposition of total peace, serenity and enjoyment on the one hand, and total terror, violence and hatred on the other. It is not even reported on the news every time stones get thrown at innocent citizens just making their way into work because it has become so commonplace, but it afflicts the inhabitants of Jerusalem on a constant basis. Standing on the light rail with this sobering thought, I began suddenly to cry. After such a wonderful day reaping Israel's fruits and beauty, I was now seeing the heartbreaking hardships Israelis must live with daily. The craziest part of this all is that, at the end of that day, my unwavering desire to move to Israel and spend every day in my homeland only grew stronger. I cannot wait for the day when the people of Israel do not have to live in fear of their lives anymore and can send their children to school without worrying about sirens or stabbings or terrorism, a day when Israel can live in peace with her neighbors.

