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Fearless: Haya Mohanna

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Fearless: Haya Mohanna

Abstract

Constantly pursuing new avenues on and off campus to engage in different communities, raise awareness about issues in the Gaza Strip, and learn more about leadership, **Haya Mohanna '17** fearlessly pursues knowledge and activism opportunities to learn more about her own leadership style and capability to create change in her home community. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, ethnicity, individualism, Palestine, Hope Fund

Disciplines

International and Area Studies | Peace and Conflict Studies | Women's Studies

Comments

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](#) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at surgegettysburg.wordpress.com Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that -isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

FEARLESS: HAYA MOHANNA '17

February 22, 2014

Constantly pursuing new avenues on and off campus to engage in different communities, raise awareness about issues in the Gaza Strip, and learn more about leadership, **Haya Mohanna '17** fearlessly pursues knowledge and activism opportunities to learn more about her own leadership style and capability to create change in her home community.

Haya, an international student from Palestine, found her way to Gettysburg College with aid from the Hope Fund, an organization that makes it possible for students from the Middle East to travel to the US for college, and Haya has already used her first year at Gettysburg to make a name for herself in the campus and local communities, reaching out to students and members of the town. On campus, she holds two jobs with Residence Life and is involved in the Women in Leadership program this semester. These opportunities have provided Haya with many difficult, enriching experiences that have shown her more about what it means to be a leader who makes decisions based on critical thinking and innovation. "I love working at Res Life because of the fact that you have to deal with so many different types of people—students, parents, faculty, staff—and every problem is not the same.

You have to think about it, ask about it, look at it from different angles and perspectives. It's very challenging, but the idea is to make connections and solve each problem in new ways, which is a skill I've really developed a lot since starting working there."

Haya decided to get involved with the Women in Leadership program on campus because she understands the importance of learning more about how to be an effective leader. "I wanted to get involved in the program," says Haya, "not just because I think leadership skills themselves are important, but also because I wanted to learn how to show people you are a leader, how to prove it to them, how to get people to follow you." Back home in Palestine, Haya wants to see more women stepping up in the Gaza Strip as leaders, and hopes that she will someday be able to transfer the skills she learns in Gettysburg back to her home. "The women leaders in the



Gaza Strip tend to be less active than women leaders here, and I want to bring these activist ideas I'm learning back to them so that we can start to change lives."

Recently, Haya has also started getting involved in the greater Gettysburg community as a speaker travelling to different churches in the area to talk about her experience living in the Gaza Strip, which all started with a chance visit to the doctor's office. "I needed to go to the doctor's office to get the chicken pox vaccine, and when I started talking to the doctor about where I was from, he was immediately interested and wanted to know if I'd talk to the people at his church about it. And I said 'Sure!'"



Her first presentation was so well-received by the church she visited that members of that church started spreading the word to other churches in the area, and soon, Haya was being contacted by other congregations, even the Lutheran Seminary, about having her come and present. "People don't know a lot about the Gaza Strip," says Haya, "or, at least, they don't know much about how low the standards of living are. So when I go around and give these presentations and tell people about what life is like there, a lot of people are amazed. And there's been a lot of positive feedback. Plus, I've been using these presentations as a way to fundraise for Hope Fund, the organization that helped me, so everything's going really well. I just really want to let people know about my country and where I come from, and all these opportunities are a great way to do that."

Haya's passion for leadership and the initiative she's taken in spreading her stories about her experiences living in the Gaza Strip, not just with the campus community, but with the wider Gettysburg Community, show her dedication to making change and standing up for what she believes. "I've started getting involved in all these different leadership activities because I can see the difference between how people live and think back home, and how people live and think here. At Gettysburg, I've been exposed to so many intellectual and critical thinking

concepts—it's impossible for me to just sit there now and not analyze what's going on, to not participate in some kind of activism, to not want to impact my community back home and change things. I want to make a difference.”

Throughout her first year at Gettysburg, Haya has found new and exciting ways to get involved in the campus and local communities as a passionate leader excited to learn more about creating social change, raising awareness, and finding innovative ways to spread ideas. If she's already done this much with her first two semesters at Gettysburg, we can't wait to see how far she'll go the next three years and the many years after that she'll be using her fearless leadership skills.

<http://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com/2014/02/22/fearless-haya-mohanna-17/>