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From February 24 to February 28, I had the wonderful opportunity to travel to the beautiful mountains of Utah and participate in the Wheatley International Affairs Conference. This year's theme was The Middle East: Power, Politics, & Prospects for Peace. I participated in the "Understanding the Role of Islamic Religion in Contemporary Middle Eastern Conflicts: Exacerbating or Mitigating Factor?" roundtable. Throughout the week, we engaged with our readings, discussed, and came up with a policy recommendation regarding our topic. My group decided to combat radicalization through a grass roots approach; bringing together Middle Eastern Muslims, Western Muslims, and Western non-Muslims for three weeks of living together, speaking with each other about their situations through the organization Seeds of Peace.

This was the first conference that I attended and I was enthralled by the experience. I was surrounded by so many intelligent people interested in the same topics that I am interested in. I witnessed heated debates regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, between more conservative and liberal Muslims, whether certain policy recommendations would work or not. However, besides these debates, I also heard and participated in interfaith dialogue and problem-solving discussions.

Listening to the incredible stories of the delegates' lives and travels helped me regain my passion for figuring out a way to get to the Middle East. Honestly, before this conference, I felt greatly disheartened because every attempt that I have made to research or travel over there had been rejected. However, I made connections to people researching in Jerusalem and am now

working on building a mentor-mentee relationship. I plan on either continuing my own language acquisition research project abroad or aiding in a more social psychology research project.

I thoroughly enjoyed this conference; it made me think deeply about topics that I had only ever skimmed the surface of. It gave me hope to see a group of people from many different cultures, gathered together discussing how to actively solve complicated problems, even if they seem unsolvable. I treasured those discussions as well as the ones not regarding the Middle East. On the last night, a group of us got together with one of the local delegates. He took us on a hike into the mountain as we got the chance to know each other and learn about each other's families and lives outside of academia. Climbing on that trail, being immersed in the nature, walking to a frozen waterfall is a memory that I will treasure forever. Even though I did not necessarily create lifelong bonds with many of the other delegates, I feel blessed to have been at such a conference with people who I am sure are going to change the world.