



DEFINING ZIONISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

An Online Speaker Series

TRANSCRIPT

Monday, December 15, 2014

>> Tamar Arenson: Thank you for joining us. My name is Tamar Arenson. And I'm a senior at the Abraham Joshua Heschel School in New York City, and I'm also a member of Young Judaea, the National Youth Zionist movement which is also involved in peer leadership Jewish identity and social action.

Welcome to tonight's session of Defining Zionism in the 21st century. If there is anyone who is joining us who hasn't joined our series before, let me explain that Hadassah's Defining Zionism series was developed to create a welcoming opportunity for everyone to explore Zionism through a variety of perspectives. Tonight, we have an online audience as well as an in house audience including Janice Weinman, Executive Director and CEO of Hadassah as well a several members of StandWithUs.

As we heard throughout this series, there are many different definitions of Zionism and we don't all agree. But the goal of our program is to create a safe space so that we can have these open conversations and really explore the different perspectives of Zionism in a respectful and constructive way.

We ask that you listen and be respectful during this conversation, both in your commenting and questions today, as well as when you continue the conversation online and in your community. And as a reminder, we encourage you to ask questions via the Livestream chat box. Please register through Livestream if that function is not already enabled. Those in the studio audience will be also able to ask questions on the index cards provided.

This past summer I traveled to Israel with Young Judaea, an incredible summer trip that culminated my years as a camper in the Young Judaea summer camps. Being in Israel, I saw firsthand how differently everyone defined Zionism, especially teenagers.

I saw that we struggled to break through the classic definition of Zionism to find what it truly meant to us. We are so pleased to have Jasmine Patihi here with us today and she'll be talking about how to inspire Zionism in the younger generation.

Jasmine is a graduate of Binghamton University, with a degree in Judaic studies, philosophy, politics and law, and works for StandWithUs, an international Israel education organization as their New York, New Jersey, Connecticut High School Program Coordinator.

Jasmine found her passion for educating students about Israel when she was approached by university peers with questions about Israel, ranging the full spectrum of topics. From these discussions, she realized that many college-aged students did not have a strong factual base of Israel knowledge with which to have these conversations, nor the motivation to attain the knowledge themselves.

To help solve this, Jasmine applied to be a StandWithUs Emerson Fellow, where she took part in high level Israel education and advocacy training. Using the skills she learned as a Fellow, she understood the root of the problem on college campuses, stemmed from earlier on.

Students should not have their first conversations about Israel when they go to college because by then it's too late. Students need to be prepared for college level discussions and questions before they get there so they can hit the ground running and create pro-Israel environments wherever they go. As a high school Program Coordinator she teaches high school and non-high school students about Israel ranging from topics like Israel's diversity to world advocacy speaking skills. Her goal is to ensure that next generation of the leaders will empower Israel.

Thank you for being here.

>> Jasmine Patihi: Thank you so much. And thank you, Hadassah, for having me. I've been following this series, and it's really awesome, and I'm very honored to be here and be a part of this. Like they said, I work for this organization called StandWithUs and for them I'm the Tri State Area high School Coordinator. What that means is that on a daily basis I go into different high schools across my region, whether they're public schools, private schools, Christian schools, Jewish schools, youth groups, synagogues, churches, you name it and work with their teens and that work with teens can really span the whole spectrum. I've spoken to teens about Israeli vacations and about the U.S. and UN and done intense advocacy training with teens. With my job I've learned trips of the trade tips tools that I would like to share tonight so we can really get teens, get the younger generations, get the future leaders, even though I know that's a cliché, to have a factual foundation of information and passion and love of Zionism and of Israel so they can create a pro-Israel world as they become leaders. In fact, my vision for the future is that we can have conversations about Israel that are not clouded by any kinds of prejudices, that these conversations are truly fact-based. I would like to share with you a poll that I heard about this summer. And it scared me a little. I read a poll that said that Zionism could no longer be used as a trigger word for people outside of the typical pro Israel community because it had a negative effect on them. Basically when somebody heard, when somebody outside of the pro-Israel community heard the word "Zionism" they thought something negative. That really scared me I hated it and I almost took it personally like I know it had nothing to do with me, but the way I see Zionism, it is a beautiful, passion-filled, motivational, historical world that gave so much to our society and just to think that somebody people didn't understand that really, I took it personally, I'll let you know.

So I think we can conclude two things from the information the poll gave us. We can conclude, one, that we need to just remove Zionism from our discourse. Or, two, that we need to empower the younger generation to use Zionism in a way that they can be proud of and in a way that they can relate to, and they can get their peers to relate to, on a personal, emotional and intellectual level.

Obviously I advocate for the second one. And I believe that that's what I do in my position, and I believe we can all reach the teens in our communities, Jewish, non-Jewish with a strong Israel foundation without a strong Israel foundation to become

proud Zionists. So like I said the pro-Israel community reacts positively to Zionism and those outside of that community do not. That's our issue and our solution is going to be some way to make those outside of that community support Zionism.

I think that solution will come in kind of -- it must take two paths. The first path that we need to understand is how we tell the narrative of Zionism. The second path that we need to tell is what narrative are we exactly talking about.

I hope you have heard of that like cliché or joke two Jews, three opinions, one Jew, three synagogues, that's kind of from what I've seen how the Jewish and pro-Israel world works. What I'm going to try to do tonight is give us a very wide umbrella with many things that can fit in to make a positive Zionism that we can communicate while reaching many, many different areas of that umbrella. I hope that makes sense.

Like I said, the first one I want to talk about is how we tell the narrative of Zionism. Really, the way we communicate anything in any communication initiative needs to start with relationship building and the same goes for Zionism.

When I go into a school, let's say a public school or a school with little to no Israel background, I go into that room with the teens knowing that my goal is just to make those teens think I'm cool. And I hope that doesn't come off as superficial, but really, imagine, I'm working with some teens that have never heard of Israel, can't even point to Israel on a map. It doesn't make any sense for me to go into that group of teens and talk to them about the Arab-Israeli conflict or any conflict that Israel's been ridden with. It makes sense for me to talk to something cool and fun like a virtual tour of Israel and explore the clubs of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and go snorkeling. If they see I'm cool they'll see I've done fun things in Israel and I'm relatable. If they want to go have a cup of coffee after word I know my job was done right. If they think positive they'll project or associate those things also with Israel. Because I'm their first insight first look into Israel and I'm the only thing they have to base their opinion off. I think it's very important to keep in mind that the way to communicate and relate Zionism to the younger generation is by building a relationship with them.

Only once we have that relationship in place can we go on and have other important discussions about solutions to the conflict or about how we can, I don't know, bring peace to the Middle East, you know what I mean.

The other important aspect of telling or communicating Zionism is which narrative is it exactly that we're telling. As opposed to focusing on Zionism as a movement that started in the 1890s, and was at its height through the 1940s, and at its height in the 1940s and that we're maintaining today, we need to communicate Zionism as a story that was built and we're continuing to build.

And we can only continue to build if we take an active role in that building. And I've found that giving teens something that they can actually do, they can partake in, that's what resonates with them, not the facts and the numbers and the history.

It's taking that and giving them something to do with it. Community service project, if any of you have high school students, the most important thing in high school at this point in time.

One way that we can give teens something that they can do with Zionism, a story to inspire them that they can connect to, is by relating Zionism as a story about Jewish indigenous rights. The Jewish right to self-determination in the land of Israel. We need to talk about how Jews are the indigenous people of Israel because it helps people who don't know understand why Israel and no other place is so important to Jews, is so important to Zionism. We need to talk about how this is the only place where our people have an inalienable right to self-determination. I use that word inalienable very strategically because it's familiar to teens, it's something they've heard in US Gov or history classes from the document that formed our country you can relate it to the schoolwork based on the specific words you use.

And to do that again in a tangible way that gives them something to walk away with, we need to show them the proof, things that prove as fact the Jewish history and Jewish indigenous rights to this land.

And my favorite way to do that, I hope this is something that comes to mind very quickly when we're talking about indigenous rights and Jewish history in Israel is by explaining what the Kotel or western wall is to teens. It's one of my favorite things to tell them about because they can, A, go visit it, because, B, it really is one of the only places in the Middle East where Jewish holy sites or holy sites for that matter are open to the public so any teen can go visit it and it also shows how Israel is so different and special in its region. And also because it is just a really cool story.

You know, I like to relate to them the story of approximately the year '70 when the Romans came and totally decimated Jerusalem and exiled the Jews the only thing standing not just the wall but the outer wall the courtyard make it a dramatic story which it was. And you tell them about the Kotel and encourage them to go visit it because it's a piece of archeological evidence that is proof of Jewish history in that land for thousands and thousands of years that it's proof of our indigenous rights to that land.

And something else that I encourage them to do is to Google a picture of a guy named Lindo who is a member of the group the Black Eyed Peas because this picture, to me it's really moving because Lindo is a hip, cool guy, rich and famous he's wearing a striped T-shirt with big famous people sunglasses on and he has a Mohawk with like stars and lines carved into like the side of his hair.

He is the epitome of modernity he's there there placing it in the Kotel I don't know what's the picture of it and having them face each other like that, I found resonates with the teens and also makes them laugh that there's this picture of this guy at the Kotel.

Another picture of archeological evidence I like to tell my students about is actually outside of Israel in Italy called the Roman Arch of Titus. I used it because it's from the same period I don't need to tell them another story they can focus on that time period. Roman Arch of Titus was a celebratory arch that the Romans carved to celebrate that they defeated the Jews and you can see it's very appropriate to tell this story now because on the front of the arch and in the center is an image of the Romans carrying the Menorah that was in the temple. Hanukkah and Menorah symbolizing they got it from the Jews because there's one piece of archeological evidence in Israel and one outside of Israel on top of many others that I'm sure we could come up an extensive list.

Because those who claim we're not indigenous, because they exist, we need to kind of tell this story of the Jewish indigenous rights to Israel. I think what people who say we're not indigenous really do more than just hurt our image they're effectively trying to erase our history.

By retelling these stories, by telling the stories of the Jewish indigenous rights we're making sure that our history continues, which again is something that teens resonate with knowing they're making a difference knowing they're continuing something, being one link in the chain.

Another aspect of Zionism that I believe we should really try to communicate to our teens and encourage them to communicate to others is Zionism as this marvelous story of a dispossessed and oppressed people becoming revived and coming back to life. Right? Because now Israel is this thriving country and there are Jews across the world from the U.S. to Australia to the Middle East, I don't need to name all the parts of the world.

And we're there and we're strong. And Israel in its short 67 years has created more things than, more things that benefit the world than almost any other country. Israel Silicon Valley is second only to California's.

Jews beat all of the odds by staying alive and by creating the modern state of Israel. They beat the odds of genocide, of people trying to kill us, of people trying to enslave us, of people trying to sell us.

And the thing is we're still threatened. That piece of our history that Zionism that happened is still, we're still threatened. But again the beautiful thing is that we are still strong and we're still a nation that inspires people all over the world.

Something about being a revival story is sacrifices that people made. That's one big aspect of having something come back to life. Usually people aren't selfish when they're bringing something back to life. I have a prime example in the audience with us tonight my grandfather holocaust survivor went through a lot but is still here today and has a Jewish family and another example is my grandfather from the other side.

Him and my grandmother, Zachary and Sara, they were born in Yemen. And at the time they were 16 and 17, respectively, and my grandmother was pregnant, because that's how they did it in Yemen back then in the '40s, they were kind of well off. Yemen was unlike many other countries where the Jews as they lived as Dimis second class citizens they had a good relationship with the government and weren't being exiled yet at that time.

Even with all of that, my grandparents, 16, 17 and pregnant decided they needed to go to Israel. They'd heard two things. They heard Hitler was persecuting Jews across Europe and was coming there next and the Messiah was coming. With those two pieces of knowledge they decided they needed to leave Yemen and go to Israel. They packed up their stuff and trekked from north Yemen to south Yemen, basically a seven day trek. I won't repeat it again aside from now, 16, 17 pregnant decided they were going to go on a seven day trek. Hired some Arab hands and stacked their stuff on

donkeys and camels and they walked. Day one and two was fine day three, they go to sleep and everything is gone. They understood it was robbed. It was likely by the Arab hands they hired, the food, the water extra clothes, the supplies, the camels, the hens, everything was gone. They had a choice to make either go back to what they were comfortable with to the Yemen, the life they knew, or they could go forward and go to this unknown Israel to fulfill the Zionist dream of going to Zion. I'm so thankful. Thank you they continued on and went to south Yemen and got to where the plane was to take them to Israel. Remember, this is 1940s Yemen, do you think they ever saw a plane before?

They looked at the plane, saw all the Jews getting on they said it's either Hitler's killing machine or it's going to take us to Israel. Thankfully it took them to Israel. And they live there today.

But that's just one story of crazy sacrifices that two people made to get to Israel. And if we do not tell their story, if high school students don't tell their family story or personal stories of sacrifice, we are not moving forward. We are not continuing to build this Zionist story, and my grandparents' sacrifices will have been in vein and I'm sure many other high school students grandparents sacrifices will be in vein. That's something that resonates with them. They don't want to be the reason that a story isn't told there's Foma, fear of missing out. They don't want to be the person that's not telling the story.

Okay. I want to move on to the last aspect of Zionism. I think it's very important to tell our high school students and it's, and in a way that we can really relate to them. And especially relate to high school students that are not Jewish.

Because, right, we know that as Jews and/or Israelis no matter how many there are of us the numbers don't add up to populations of the rest of the world. And I fear that if we don't reach out to communities, greater than ourselves, we don't work together and co-sponsor, that that might not be so beneficial to us to say it in a nice way.

So I really encourage people to work with other communities. And Zionism is a really good tool to work with other communities. The way Zionism works, like we said, it was a movement that developed into something that we are still building. And it was really a movement of independence and self-determination for Jews.

There are many, many people across the world that are indigenous people but minorities in their countries. Those people can and many of them have come out and openly said they do use Zionism as inspiration and as a blueprint for working towards getting independence for their populations.

For example, I don't know if you heard of a man named Ryan Bellrose one of the leaders of the movement to get recognition and rights for the indigenous people of Canada. Right here in North America.

He has come out openly and excitedly saying that he supports Israel because he sees the work that the Zionist movement does and did, and he can use that and does use that to move the cause for the rights and freedoms and recognitions of native indigenous Canadians and other people that are also very, very friendly towards Jews and Israel and Zionism are the Kurds. I had the good fortune of meeting one they said

we thank Israel and Zionism all the time because they are one of our strongest, you know, leaders, like we can follow that. We use it as a blueprint.

So I thought that was very, very cool to hear. There's also a people called the Amazith in Morocco and in Pakistan, all people that want independence for themselves or recognition and rights in the countries they live in that can use Zionism as their blueprint. People in these communities continue to be inspired by Zionism. And that means that on a fundamental level, our story can inspire people outside of our community and worldwide.

We have to build on that. The other key that has been I hope underlying all of this is that Zionism, it's a narrative that's ongoing, and because it's ongoing, hopefully the Kurds and the Canadians will not be the last group of people to use our story.

We have so many reasons to have hope in Zionism and hope in the younger generation that are Zionists or will become Zionists, one reason to have hope is teens are interested. We have one here today who decided to take time out of her schoolwork to come do this program about Zionism.

And I also want to tell you one story about a group of teens that I worked with, hopefully to make us all really hopeful.

I'm asked to go speak in many, many different places. I feel very lucky that my schedule is so busy, but one of the places that asked me to come speak was a Y in the Tri State Area. It was incredible, they asked me to work with a group of 15 teens that were the youth staff for the other tweens at the Y, they were basically the counselors for these kids that would come to the Y after school programs and over the summer or whatever.

I said okay. So I walk into the first session with these teens and they're about as diverse as you can get. Every color under the sun, every religion ever created. I mean, we had a student from the Caribbean. A few Latinos and Russians and Jews and Christians, you name it and they were there. Also a lot of the kids had never had any education about Israel. There were a few of them but most of them hadn't. The first session I did with them was a virtual tour of Israel.

And we stopped in all the different places and I've been there. I told them my personal stories from when I was in those places and I thought they really liked it. But I asked them at the end of my program, does anybody have a favorite city, which city would you go to first if you got to go to Israel.

A boy raised his hand right away I was like I gotta pick him, right? I asked him and he said Jasmine, I don't have a favorite story I want to go to all of them. Why do I have to pick?

That made the point to me, and that was kind of the turning point about this whole relationship building stuff. That it was my stories and my enthusiasm about these places that made him want to go to every single one.

That's when I decided to focus on this relationship building kind of export it to all the other groups of teens that I work with.

I asked them another question and said, what was your favorite part of this presentation? And they said, one, was of course the personal stories, because personal stories resonate ten times more than any facts or numbers or dates you can give people. And they also remember them better.

And the second thing was the pictures. And to me I've seen Israel. I almost didn't think anything of the pictures they were just to help me tell my stories, which stories went in which order. But for them just seeing Israel how beautiful it was, how it wasn't just yellow and desert and hot and camels how there was greenery and snow and parties.

That was really, really beneficial to them and being able to share my stories and having them relate back stories that of their life that my stories reminded them of was a really incredible way to open them up and start building that relationship.

We went through all of those sessions and towards the end they told me you know Jasmine we're having so much fun we want to go visit your headquarters in LA. And I almost laughed at it like okay good luck getting a trip to LA planned they did it they worked with the Y got this trip to LA planned. They went did an intensive advocacy training program in our offices there, and also at one point, when they were in New York with me, I went over Israel's history with them, Israel 101 from pre-state Zionism until today, current events.

And they showed me they actually decided to divide up Israel's history and each group got a section, maybe a segment of 10 years, and they presented it back to one another. And the way they did it was really awesome. Some did a PowerPoint like I did with Israel 101. Some made a videos, one made a music video, one created art to represent their time period.

It was so awesome and they decided to do this. They come back and we met, we had our last session together, a few weeks after they came back from LA. Some of the teens told me that they actually were now confident and told their friends to use them as their Israel Encyclopedias, to use them because now they could answer questions about Israel.

Two of the boys even told me that they had always loved Israel. They didn't know so much about it. One even had a father that served in the IDF. Admired the IDF. Considered serving but having Israel so much at the forefront of their mind they went and serve in IDF, they did they're in basic training of Israel. I would never ask that of any my teens but it's unique and by starting relationships starting easy by inspiring stories and motivational individuals with virtual tours of Israel and then building up, that's how you can really get teens to take the theoretical or take the fact, the things that they can't touch and help them to put it into something concrete, something they can do and something that they can feel will further Zionism, whether it's joining the Army or whether it's just being the Israel resource for their friends and the other reason that's so incredible and empowering these teens why it's so important is because all of us, all of us in this room, even everybody who isn't in this room but is watching, we're only so many people. We can only reach so far. But if we have students with friends, you know, they teach their friends, it's the, what's it called, the ripple effect.

And that's what I see very, very clearly with my students. Once they're confident in their knowledge, they're eager to share it with their friends. Want to share with you a few other reasons, much shorter, for us to have hope.

As Jews, our history has shown us that when our backs are up against the wall, we manage to become more unified. And I think that now this point in history we for sure have our backs up against the wall especially in regards to Israel.

And I believe that history will continue to repeat itself in so much that our backs are going to be up against the wall but we're also going to be more unified, become more unified. I think we saw it a lot over the summer especially when a bunch of tragedies happened in Israel, the murder and kidnapping of those three boys, we really became more unified.

One last reason. Our history, our story will always be there to inspire. We just have to find the right way to connect it to the current generations. Israel, despite all of its challenges, continues to do really inspiring things.

And what that means is that our inspiration isn't going anywhere. Right? Getting inspired is the first half of making a difference.

Then we have to actually go do an action to follow up on the inspiration but at least that first 50% is already there.

To conclude: If we're going to communicate this idea of Zionism, we need to do it in a way that's relevant to the younger generation, because they're the ones that are going to reach the masses and I'm very proud with StandWithUs we're the only Israel organization that's reaching high school students on a mass scale. We also need to make sure that that narrative is unified, because well you know why, it's a unified narrative. But I hope I gave you some tips and tools and aspects of Zionism that fall under the same umbrella but can reach and can be taken in many, many different directions.

I want to again thank Hadassah and I'm happy to take any questions.

>> Tamar Arenson: Jasmine thank you so much again. We have a couple of questions for you we'll continue to have some as our conversation goes along.

The first question is, as a high school student, I've learned a lot about Israel through my youth movement involvement, through my school involvement, and I always feel this is so important to me, what can I do next?

And so what are some concrete ways that I can get involved here, without planning a trip to LA or joining the IDF, what are some of the concrete things can I do in my community to raise awareness about Israel and help other teens to discover their own definitions of Zionism?

>> Jasmine Patihi: Sure, that's a great and important question. And I am so happy that you asked.

The first thing again is starting by relationship building. If you know there are some kids in your school or wherever that don't know about Israel, try to befriend them, mention

Israel and that you're Jewish have that be their first exposure to Israel or something Jewish. That's one basic thing that anybody and everybody can and should do whether it's in the workplace, it's in school, it's in camp, it's in your youth group, wherever.

The other thing that you can do and I want to encourage you to do and I'm happy to help anybody who wants to do is create a program. Create a program about Israel you can do in a Jewish club or synagogue, get a group of friends together whether it's an Israeli food night or scavenger hunt based on Israel innovations, tons of things can you do with a group of friends or people in your community that you think might be interested?

>> Tamar Arenson: Thank you. Also what would you say is your biggest challenge working with high school students?

>> Jasmine Patihi: I think that the biggest high school and -- the biggest challenge in working with high school students is their teachers. High school teachers are so important, but often teachers, they kind of like to sometimes give their own ideas when it's not so appropriate.

So I have a student who was in a math class. And a teacher gave out a math problem that had to do with like Palestinians and Jews. And it just wasn't appropriate.

So sometimes when kids have those teachers, and even in subjects where it's a little bit more relevant like a social studies class, teachers will have their own personal beliefs or ideas, notions, even misinformation about the Arab-Israeli conflict and try to promote that amongst their teens, which is I think detrimental to learning because it doesn't allow the teens to get facts and create their own decisions, their own opinions.

And the other thing that I have found with some teachers, and of course not all. I want to make the disclaimer most of the high school teachers I work with they're very important and only a select few make it a big challenge is that when they don't want someone from the outside coming in because they don't want anybody else giving these kids ideas, which is scary to me that they don't want outside ideas coming in, I understand there's bureaucracy to get things approved but sometimes working through bureaucracy and working with teachers that have anti-Israel agendas for sure is the most challenging part.

>> Tamar Arenson: Building on the anti-Israel agenda, how would you respond to negative attitudes about Israel making a claim that Gushateon is not part of the Israel or about the Israeli as occupiers or how would you counter act that I guess in the most productive and respectful way.

>> Jasmine Patihi: So we have a method that we use at StandWithUs to address claims that people say or questions that people have that are either a little bit loaded or even if people just want to know. Basically that this method that we use to answer questions is called ARM. It's an acronym for address or acknowledge, reframe and message.

So address, the A, is to remind you to like talk to the person. Remember, you're speaking to a person. And try to have them see that you're really on their side and want to get to the bottom of it.

You're right, there's a lot of conflict in the Middle East. And Israel is not perfect. It's okay to admit Israel is not perfect. If we love this idea of a perfect Israel, we don't love

the true Israel because every country has its flaws. Our beautiful America even has flaws. It's okay to acknowledge Israel's flaws.

Then you want to use the R, the reframe, that's what I call the meat and potatoes. So I would introduce myself and say, oh, I understand you, this part of your argument is valid, but here's maybe where you got it a little wrong and I would fill in the meat and potatoes the facts to argue their argument and the beauty of being pro-Israel is we do have the facts on our side.

And M is message. End on your message and a positive message. Amil Lazreth, he's a funny Israel advocate, says if you can end with the words hope, peace, future children, you're golden. Because no one can hate hope, peace and future for the children. So even though there's a lot of conflict in the Middle East you're right, however, your meat and potatoes, and Israel really wants peace, can you imagine there's a day in the future there's peace amongst the Israel and Palestinians and they can play together that's a method that I would use to answer any question about Israel.

>> Tamar Arenson: Also. So we live in a social media age whether that be Facebook or Twitter, instagram, whatever various social media outlets there are, and a lot of times you'll find that there are anti-Israel sentiments on social media websites and in a conversation it's very easy to use the ARM method. How would you counter act on social media, online, without trying to create a whole big speech on someone's comments?

>> Jasmine Patihi: Yeah, I've totally been in those long spiels on people's comments. We're in social media, where everything you said was right.

So I would honestly, I would again use ARM. I would just write it out. And hope that either the length of my response intimidated them or that they actually read it and were open to genuine dialogue.

And something we need to remember about people that we're talking to is there's kind of a bell curve when it comes to Israel probably when it comes to, when it comes to everything but I can't say it definitively, we'll call it the 80-10-ten bell curve. 10% are on the right side of the bell curve and they're always going to be on your side. They're always going to support Israel no matter how dumb you sound and there's 10% of the people on the left side of the bell curve no matter how smart you sound and no matter how many facts and personal stories you throw at them, they're always going to hate Israel. And then there's the 80% of the people in the middle of the bell curve and that's our target audience because those are people that might have opinions one way or another, maybe they don't know anything. But they're the ones who are really open for discussion.

So sometimes when, if you are ever dragged into a conversation with somebody who is just vehemently anti-Israel doesn't want to listen to your answers, I would say if it's appropriate, you can walk away from that situation if you know it's not going to make a difference, that's okay.

If there's an audience and you know people are there or that it will make a difference, I would engage them and talk to them and, again, using ARM and of course keeping a cool and level headed head, because this can be a very emotional topic, and you have to look like the person who is not crazy.

Yes, so that's if you're talking to the 10% of the people or the people who make up the 10% that really, really just hate Israel. If you're talking to the 80% in the middle, hopefully they will be open for dialogue and you can give them a short snippet of ARM and they'll listen.

But, again, hopefully that Facebook conversation or whatever it's on will be the beginning of that built relationship where you can progress it and if everybody's really there for open dialogue and to learn from one another you can probably build a very, very prestigious relationship with them.

>> Tamar Arenson: Thank you. What advice would you give to an American high school student who is nervous about anti-Semitism on college campuses, I know there's been a rise recently with Apartheid week and such things.

>> Jasmine Patihi: That's a good question. We're seeing you're right a big rise of anti-Israel action on college campuses. It can be very scary and intimidating.

There are many organizations out there that have programs and internships and fellowships to work with college students to get them ready. I know that we have one that's called the Emerson Fellow. There are many organizations that do.

But I would say a few things. But before you get to college I know I said that building relationships is super important, and it is. And that telling personal stories and making Zionism fun and relatable is very important. At the end of the day also you have to know your facts, because I don't know that somebody can be confident in defending Israel if they don't know everything they need to know about Israel.

And there are many fun ways to learn about it also. Doesn't have to be like a boring class or something. But for sure you have to know your facts and also once you get into hopefully the college of your dreams, be educated about the kind of Israel environment there is on campus.

Is there BDS? Did BDS pass or fail there? Is there a professor that's on a list of professors who are anti-Israel. What is the Hilla like is it a open or regular Hilla be very aware of it. And the other thing about college campus be familiar or even join the student government because the student governments on campus actually do have a lot of power and they're the ones that make a lot of decisions about things that come to campus things that don't come to campus and decisions that are made about all things about student life.

So if you can meet people that are part of the student government, build a relationship with them or if you can even become a part of student government, make it part of your agenda to become part of student government, I think you'll set yourself up for success.

>> Tamar Arenson: Thank you. So generally the younger we are the more emotional we are. Our emotions are heightened as teenagers, and for those of us who have gone to Jewish schools and Jewish camps we've been learning about Israel for years. We love Israel.

We've learned about it to the fullest extent in class and activities. It is very hard when you hear someone criticizing Israel, you know you have the tools to defend it but your emotions keep getting in the way because you love Israel so much. And you can't

separate that from your defense. So how would you suggest that we separate our emotion from being accurate and giving the facts that we've been able to learn?

>> Jasmine Patihi: Yeah, right, puberty stinks. Makes you all emotional. And for sure it's hard. I think the best answer I can give is practice makes perfect. I'll let you know I was even at a dinner with a friend of mine and her father wanted to play let's stomp the Israel professional he wound up becoming very emotional and shedding a few tears. So it's not just teens that this happens to.

It's so important we practice whether it's with our friends or with people you know that disagree with you, that you practice this debate, I guess, about Israel and also not to forget that again when you have the facts you are more comfortable, but also that, A, you can use your emotion for good if you're like wow I can't control myself, I'm for sure going to start crying. Show that you're crying because this means so much to you.

And emotion does resonate with people if you can control that emotion, if you can hone it. And also one good way, I think, to hone that emotion is by connecting that emotion to a personal story. Like you said most of the students in the Jewish day schools or Jewish camps, they've been to Israel and had experiences with Israelis, and oftentimes Israel can be an emotional trip or experience, it's a very amazing place. If you can hone that emotion into being able to tell an emotional personal story that can relate to someone, it can be a good way to try to manipulate your emotions.

>> Tamar Arenson: Thank you. On the other side obviously not everyone goes to Jewish camps or is in Jewish school but still have profound love of Israel how would you suggest that kids who don't have a Jewish day school environment or camp environment to learn about Israel in fun ways, not everyone can take a trip to Israel.

>> Jasmine Patihi: Yeah, I wish. I wish we could all go to Israel whenever we wanted, that would be awesome.

First thing I want to say is this confidence in your knowledge of Israel and love of Israel and knowing that as a Zionist or a lover of Zionism you have the facts behind you, just having that knowledge, A, means you are ahead of probably more than 70% of American teens. So be confident in your knowledge.

But some fun ways are again to partner with organizations that have these resources. And like I mentioned we have an Israeli innovation scavenger hunt and I like to get ideas of what an Israel person would have done that day, sharing stories when the USB worked and when it didn't work and have them do the scavenger hunt and have them come together now that you learned about more innovations that you didn't know about what can we do with these to connect people outside of our circles or people who might not have a structured Israel education. Take a virtual tour you can take one in so many different directions. There's really a ton of things. I'm happy to help anybody come up with a program, a fun program about Israel to teach their friends.

>> Tamar Arenson: Thanks. And for non-Jewish students because you said you work with students of all different religions, how can you relate Zionism to non-Jewish teens, we said there's history any other ways to connect Zionism to non-Jewish teens.

>> Jasmine Patihi: Yeah, for sure, so many ways to connect Zionism. And I can't say enough how much building that relationship with somebody who is different than you, somebody who wants to know but just doesn't, it's just imperative. So again non-Jewish people at your high school. Non-Jewish friends that you have, work with them, build that relationship, get a conversation about Israel going. But the things we can do, the

parts of Zionism we can relate are Zionism as a revival story. Are the indigenous rights of Jews to Israel and Zionism that non-Jews can use. I think those are parts that we should focus on to relate to the non-Jewish community.

>> Thank you. What advice would you give to a high school student who loves that they're Jewish and loves being Jewish but feels very discouraged by the news in light of this past summer a lot of news that put Israel in a bad light and not everybody is available to hear the whole story I love Israel I love being a Jew how can I advocate for Israel.

>> Jasmine Patihi: First thing is go with your gut. If you hear something on the news that doesn't sound like Israel would do, most likely Israel didn't do it the way the news is portraying it. Most likely something was left out or something was twisted and turned not to make it the truth.

The other thing in regards to the news is we have to remember that media is a business and their first and foremost agenda is to make money. And they're going to publish the stories that sell. Perhaps to be stories that they can exaggerate. Stories that they can show blood with are the ones that sell. And even though it's totally not the full picture, even though the media rarely talks about why there's a conflict let's say between Israel and Gaza it's just that there is it doesn't talk about Hamas the terrorists organization across the board is the one ruling in Gaza and has been using Gaza as a launching pad on to Israel throwing rockets and mortars into Israel. That's the stuff we don't show. Not that we don't show, that's the stuff that we would like the media to show.

So the media can be very discouraging, but there are also things that we can do. Again, because the media is a business, they have that first agenda of wanting to make money. And they make money by having viewers. You can write petitions. You can write letters and op eds and write letters to the editor if you get enough people signed on to them or enough letters sent, usually the media will respond and they'll change a story, put in another factor. At least they'll recognize that some of their viewers are not happy with what they're doing and will stop watching if they don't portray the story in a more fair way.

>> Tamar Arenson: Thank you. As I mentioned before you have a background in Judaic studies politics and law. So how do you use your background to help you advocate for Israel?

>> Jasmine Patihi: I think being a PPL, politics philosophy law major in college, really it honestly helped me with my logical thinking and reasoning skills and helped me with my debate skills because as kind of a prelaw student you have to get up and argue your case or at least write it out in one of the many long essays they made me write. So I think just with the strategic kind of analytical way of thinking for sure I gained that from that major.

And then with Judaic studies major, it just solidified my pride in being Jewish and Israel and learning about it in an academic way, secular way was quite opening. Very insightful to see how the non-Jewish world used Jewish history. I'm happy to say that they viewed it very factually and they viewed it in a very positive light at least from my experiences at Binghamton.

>> Tamar Arenson: You go to schools around the Tri State area talking about Israel. How do you respond if the audience heckles or they're pro Palestinian supporters being disrespectful, how do you respond to that?

>> Jasmine Patihi: Sure. So I want to make one note. Because I think this is just a very important like speaking tip.

If somebody is heckling me I would not call them pro Palestinian I would call them anti Israel. I think there's a strong pro Israel movement and anti Israel movement. I don't see a pro Palestinian movement if anything. The pro Palestinian movement is the pro Israel because the ones that care about the human rights about Palestinian not those who support Hamas using its own people as human shields. I want to make that note I think it's important we all make that distinction.

Thankfully I am not really heckled in the high school arena. It's quite a positive experience, 99.9% of the time because usually high school students are very, very open to learning and again usually I'm their first exposure to Israel. So thankfully I don't have heckling.

But my coworkers that work on the college level they seem to get heckled again sometimes on the college level. We have a program where we bring different Israeli soldiers to the college campuses and sometimes the soldiers will get heckled. Of course what they try to do is diffuse the situation. If they stand up they ask them to come speak their side very normally and calmly and the soldiers or the staff member will say what they have to say and they're happy to open the floor up to things that other people want to say and we want to have a dialogue. That's the point. It's not for me to shove information down your throat or owe workers to should have information down your throat it's to open a dialogue.

If the situation can't be diffused by the speaker, if people are getting violent or throwing things won't sit down just disrupting, usually on campuses they have campus police that are just on call, when any event happens. And the campus police will come and take those hecklers or rioters, people throwing things they'll take them out. So thankfully that's not something that I have to deal with on the high school level. It's a very positive environment.

>> Tamar Arenson: So if someone were to ask you how you define Zionism, what would you say?

>> Jasmine Patihi: I would say that Zionism is the most awesome thing ever. And I would say that Zionism is the national liberation movement of the Jews.

It's the Jewish right to self-determination in Israel that is historically and factually theirs.

>> Tamar Arenson: Thank you. Jasmine I wanted to thank you again for joining us today. It was amazing for me as a high school student to really delve into how I can play a role you know just little old me. And that it's really empowering feeling.

I think that being able to hone in on so many different facts and history really helps to promote what I want to say and it's an empowering feeling. So I wanted to thank you again.

I wanted to remind everyone that this session has been recorded. And as all of the past sessions have, and you can watch it alone, in a group as part of a unit program, and please share your feedback with us by completing the online survey. Your input helps us to create programming that is interesting to you and your communities.

You can continue the conversation at www.Hadassah.org/Zionism discussion and on Twitter using the #DefiningZionism. The next series will be on Thursday, January 22nd, speaking about progressive Zionism, the most important discussion for the next generation of North American leadership.

Additionally, if you haven't done so already, please register for the entire Defining Zionism series to receive updates about all of our future programs. Special thank you to the volunteers and staff who have been involved in Defining Zionism program, without whom none of these presentations would be possible.

Thank you again, Jasmine. It was incredible. And I hope everyone has a happy Hanukkah. Thank you very much.
[Applause]