

Connor Detrick (QST '21)

This I Believe

Growing up in the Holy Land, New Jersey, I was very rarely forced to examine differences. My friends were Jewish in the same way I was Jewish, and while there were people of other faiths, they were always distant, and I only knew them in an abstract sense. But coming to BU immediately threw me into the deep end of spiritual diversity. I was negotiating my own crisis of Jewish identity while I was also trying to navigate the intricacies of religious life on campus. For a while I completely retreated into the Jewish community, and I would have been content staying there. But fortunately came World Interfaith Harmony Week.

I was invited to read this verse from the Book of Malachi, "Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? Why do we break faith with one another, profaning the covenant of our ancestors?". It is a verse that speaks of our shared humanity, our duty to one another. But after four years at Boston University, I see that it glosses over our complexities. If I could read a different verse it would be this one from the Book of Micah, "For all the peoples walk each in the names of its gods, we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever". And though each of us walks in the name of our own God, at BU we also walk hand in hand, separate individuals with unique identities reaching out in the name of love.

On October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018, eleven beautiful lives were lost at the Tree of Life Synagogue, the hands reached out, and hundreds of people came to Marsh Plaza to surround the Jewish community with an outpouring of love. I cried at the sea of candles. It was only months later on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019, when fifty-one beautiful lives were lost at the Al Noor Mosque and Linwood Islamic Center in Christchurch, New Zealand. It was my turn to extend a hand to my Muslim siblings, to embrace, to comfort, to

encourage. The vigils came and went, grief is exhausting and that could have been the end of my interfaith involvement, but why should we only come together in times of tragedy?

It was through the Boston Interfaith Leadership Initiative that I learned this did not have to be the case. There I created space and friendships with people from every background and creed. This was an interfaith community that came together in celebration. The hands that uplifted me from the depths of sorrow were the same ones propelling me to the heights of joy. There were tough discussions, theological, moral, and political, but that never stopped us from walking, hand in hand, each in the name of our own Gods, towards a future of appreciating difference, no matter how drastic. If I can leave BU only having learned one thing, it's that if I don't yet see the face of God in each person I look at, I pray that I can at least see a face as human as my own. This I believe.