



The Muslim Jewish Conference (MJC) is proud to support the *Integrationswerkstatt*. The MJC is a participant-driven dialogue and leadership organization, bringing together important representatives and young leadership from Muslim and Jewish communities and beyond. The MJC's main activity is our annual conference, where 70-100 participants come together to discuss topics of concern for young Muslims and Jews. We work to provide the next generation a positive outlook for establishing intercultural relations and sustaining Muslim-Jewish partnerships, through the exchange of ideas and experiences and the search for courses of action and jointly planned projects in our Projects Committee

At the MJC 2017 in Sarajevo, Zachary Gallant and Riad Alhamad represented *Integrationswerkstatt* in the Projects Committee. In my capacity as Chairman of the MJC board, I issued a challenge to the committee: the project best pitched to me personally would receive \$1,000 in funding. I was later so inspired by the work of the committee participants that I upped the ante: if the lucky project raised a matching \$1,000 within a month, I'd match the match. At the Conference's closing ceremony, Mr. Gallant and Mr. Alhamad told their stories, of Mr. Alhamad's life in Aleppo and his years as a refugee (just one of 300 such stories in Unkel and millions throughout Europe), of the friendship between their families, celebrating holidays like Pesach or Eid together, and of co-founding *Integrationswerkstatt*. The founding team recognized that, in improving the lot of refugees, they could broaden their activities slightly and help the whole town, and that to keep Germany welcoming to refugees they must do so, and so they brought in local administrators and churches. Their project makes Unkel "Stronger Together" (MJC's motto). They also discussed the loneliness of being migrants, the threats of disillusionment to EU security, the need for integration and parallels to Jewish refugees a century earlier. They focused on creating a prayer space for all faiths in their workshop, supporting community, deradicalization and integration, as the project element MJC money would support.

Needless to say, they took the prize. They hadn't just spoken to me, but to the spirit of the conference. Within days, MJC participants from 12 countries across 5 continents had matched my \$1,000. And the MJC network has brought support for *Integrationswerkstatt* worldwide: fundraisers for the project have been organized in Berlin, and Imams and Rabbis from across Europe have committed to performing blessings over, and services in, the space. MJC members have also supported the *Integrationswerkstatt* outside of the MJC, bringing Mr. Gallant and Mr. Alhamad to Paris to represent the project at the MJC-supported Connecting Actions symposium, where they worked with interfaith actors and the OSCE to build a European coalition of interfaith organizations. MJC participants have also brought them to speak at the London School of Economics, an interfaith conference in Sweden, and to take part in the Joint Distribution Committee's conference in Bulgaria, where they worked to build a coalition among Jewish practitioners of social justice similar in nature to that of Connecting Actions. The international support they have received since Sarajevo shows the viability of this project in the broader global context.

Mr. Alhamad's and Mr. Gallant's tale is exactly the kind of hopeful story we wish to see as the norm, not the exception, for the Muslim-Jewish relationship, and the *Integrationswerkstatt* is a project, and a model, that the MJC, both as an institution and in its individual members, is proud to support and assist.

Sincerely,

Daniel Pincus