

Meet Alfredo Torres, Jr., Fulbright English Teaching Assistant at Oranim

Alfredo Torres, Jr. sees learning a language as a way to hear people's stories. He came to Oranim from the United States in order to help others learn language and improve his own language skills as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant this past year.



Oranim College was pleased to welcome Alfredo Torres, Jr., as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant for the academic year 2017/2018. English Teaching Assistants help teach English and share their knowledge of the United States, while increasing their own language skills and knowledge of their host country. Looking back on his year at Oranim, Torres describes his experiences and what he learned from them in this interview with the Oranim International School Newsletter.

Why Israel and Oranim?

As an undergraduate student at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, Torres studied linguistics and international studies, and took courses in Hebrew. He also studied abroad at Tel Aviv University as part of his undergraduate studies. His Hebrew studies inspired him to focus on the Middle East and conflict resolution, leading him to apply for a Fulbright in Israel following his graduation from college.

Fulbright matched Torres with Oranim. He was thrilled to live in the north of Israel for the first time. He was surprised by the North's multiculturalism and diversity, and excited about the opportunity to hear different narratives. He was also happy to practice and improve his Hebrew.

Teaching English at Oranim

Torres enjoyed teaching in Oranim's English Department, where he assisted with several courses over the year. He co-taught the courses, created assessments, and did grading. Torres offered office hours for students and provided one-on-one tutoring. He was pleased to develop relationships with the students and see significant improvement in their English writing skills over the course of the year.

The English Department welcomed Torres, and by the end of the year his colleagues there felt like family. The English faculty invited him to their homes, asked him advice, and in general created an environment of mutual respect which Torres appreciated.

In addition to his work in the English Department, Torres assisted in two courses in the Early Childhood Education Department in the first semester, helping the students with material in English. He also did important work at the International School, translating campus maps and signs, and Oranim course titles, as part of Oranim's continuing effort to make international visitors welcome.

Bridging Culture Gaps

Torres explained that his experience at Oranim showed him the importance of bridging culture gaps and gave him models for doing so: *"It has pushed me more towards bridging the gap of culture that exists. I*

have students from various different backgrounds, who speak various different languages, and they still manage to communicate with one another, and I think that that's a skill that needs to be widespread. More people need to see the value in communication and meeting the other halfway. There's still a long way to go... That empathy, that willingness to communicate with the other, and not expect them to just come to you, that is really important. I see my students do that every day."

Torres said that the relationships between students of diverse cultures, including Jewish and Arab, that he sees at Oranim are in stark contrast to what Americans see about Israel in the news: *"We see headlines every day – there is a picture of Israel, of what is happening here, and that is not what I am living. I send back pictures home and I tell people these stories, because they're so important."*

Looking to the Future

Torres' year at Oranim strengthened his interest in academia and his chosen field, linguistics. He is interested in studying what language tells us about who we are, and how language shapes multicultural encounters and conflict resolution. He is currently applying for graduate programs in linguistics.

2018/2019 English Teaching Assistant

Building on Torres' successful year at Oranim last year, Oranim is pleased to welcome a second Fulbright English Teaching Assistant this year, Juan Pinto.