

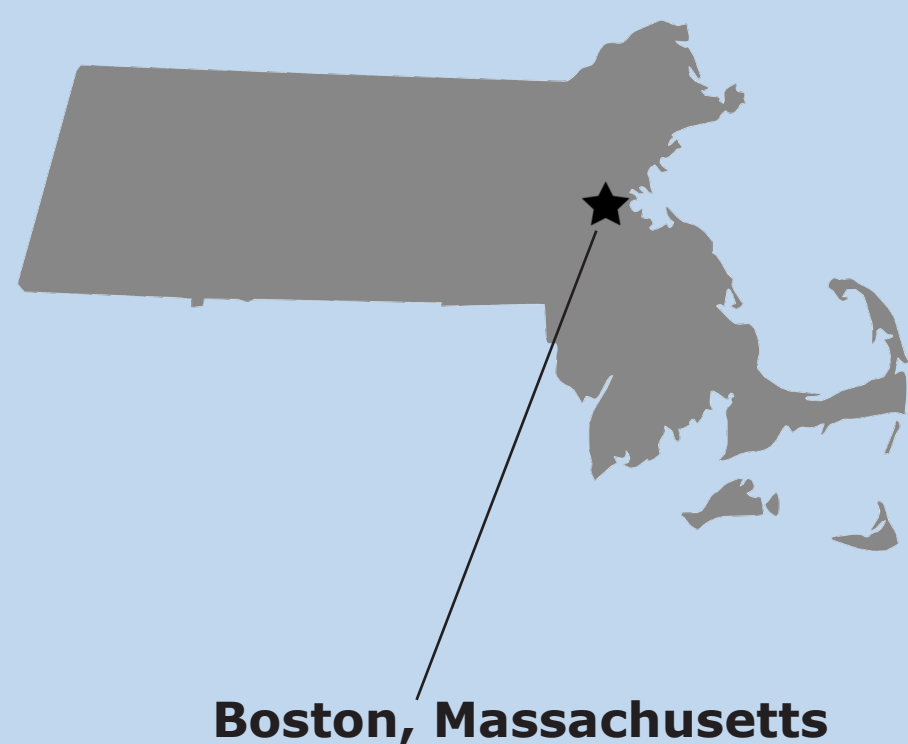
Isabella Reiss



Class of 2019
Decatur, GA

For my Burch Fellowship, I planned to work with Soccer Without Borders (SWB) in Granada, Nicaragua to use soccer to inspire social change and empower young girls. In April, I realized that the project I proposed would be impossible, due to ongoing violent protests of Daniel Ortega and the University prohibiting student travel to Nicaragua. Thanks to the flexibility of the Burch Committee, I pivoted, creating a summer project out of logistical rubble. I maintained my

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Boston, Massachusetts

IT'S NOT ABOUT THE SOCCER: SPORT FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

relationship with SWB and traveled to Boston to work with a newly-immigrated community of young girls needing similar support.

I worked as an intern at the SWB National Office in Cambridge and as a



girls' soccer coach in East Boston. As an intern, I learned about SWB's program model, partner organizations, and history. I compiled resources for coaches and helped with data collection and entry. As the U18 girls' coach in East Boston, I facilitated practices, games, and off-field activities. After the season ended, SWB Boston lacked programming for girls through the summer, so I decided to organize pickup soccer games twice weekly for middle and high school girls. I



also coached at McKay Elementary School's summer camp. I was responsible for 40 3rd through 5th graders, which was exciting,

and a practice in developing my own patience.

At SWB, I came in contact with some of the most intense adolescent hardships related to family trauma and the realities of being a newly-immigrated teenager in the US. Many girls I coached didn't speak English. Most worked, took care of siblings, or were behind in school. These

girls were my first friends in Boston, brightening my days and convincing me that home can be made in the company you keep. Before embarking on my Burch Fellowship experience, I thought it was the actual soccer that served as a catalyst for social change. I found in Boston that it is not about the soccer but rather about the growth, love, comfort, and power that comes with being part of a community.

This summer, as a newcomer to Boston myself, I found soccer to be crucial to my own community integration. Playing and coaching, I made friends and shared meals. I found moments of comfort in the familiar physicality and friendly face of competition. Soccer connected all components of my Burch Fellowship experience, but



the implication of my work was much larger than that. Sport requires us to embrace all that we are, we believe, and we do, to work with teammates towards a goal. Like life and my initial fellowship plans, sport requires



flexibility when things fall out of our control.

I am forever grateful for the Burch Fellowship, the generosity of Mr. Burch, and the deeper understanding of myself, and my relationship to the world that this summer afforded me. Thank you, Mr. Burch, for the chance to grow as a student, as a teacher, and as a citizen of the world. I will cherish these memories forever.