



## ***A Cross-Continental Lesson: Africa, Israel, and Birmingham***



Thank you to Ms. Jahan Berns for visiting our seventh and eighth grade Israeli History Class. Jahan, a Uganda native and now a Birmingham resident, talked to our students about her journey as a supporter of Israel, friend of the Jews, and attorney at Sirote and Permutt. Jahan began the class explaining the realities of growing up in a war-torn nation, from her struggle to get her education at points to her family's abrupt change in status. She explained the complexities of the Ugandan dictator in the seventies' feelings towards Israel. She also explained to us how her own father, a regional military and community leader, stayed devoted to Israel throughout his life.

After describing the complexities of her childhood in Africa, Jahan reminded our students to "love your school, and love your education." Hearing from her paved the way for a discussion about the privilege of education we as Americans enjoy.

Jahan then explained to our students how she ended up in Birmingham and involved with the Jewish community. She became an attorney in Birmingham and shared her inspiration with our students--a resolution honoring Morris Sirote, founder of the law firm Sirote and Permutt, a Jewish immigrant. Not only did Jahan have this connection to the Jewish people through her professional life, but also she developed a deep admiration for the Biblical stories of the Jewish people when she was a child in Uganda. Her relationship with the Jewish people and her father's devotion to Israel all fueled her own connection to Israel. She concluded the discussion describing her recent (and first) trip to Israel. She shared stories of the compassion and heart of the Israelis she met, and we thank her for sharing her unique journey, educating the class about Uganda, and inspiring the students to persevere.