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27 September 2016

To Whom it May Concern,

Please accept this letter in reference to Anton Iorga. I met Anton last year as I was doing a guest presentation at an Amnesty International reunion on campus, during which I highlighted an ongoing case of a criminalized Muslim youth being accused of terrorism. This 15 year old had been forcefully removed from his family and siblings and placed in a youth detention centre, then in a psychiatric facility, and was facing serious criminal charges for having posted what was deemed to be an anti-Israeli video on his Facebook. Anton and his former student Meghan Vallee, who was then Vice President of Amnesty on campus and now current President, immediately offered their assistance and decided to come to court to represent Amnesty in this case. When they arrived there and people were made aware that Amnesty was interested in this court case, the authorities reconsidered the charges, dropping accusations. Anton stayed in touch with the youth and his family that summer to ensure they were effectively supported beyond the incident.

Following this incident, Anton joined our Youth Action Project on Poverty. He has been active in this initiative and helped to frame recommendations to the Mayor and Council in their End Poverty Edmonton strategy. YAP met together at iHuman headquarters for 3 hours a week to do art workshops, engage with community activists as well as discuss prominent poverty issues in the city. The team of young people then presented recommendations to the City which addressed pressing issues of social concern, such as sexual exploitation, police brutality, and the criminalization of homelessness and mental illness. Anton personally drafted the recommendations on mental illness, as he suffers from schizophrenia and bipolar disorder and this is an issue close to his heart. He also offered a poem which he wrote to the mayor about his role in bringing significant change in Edmonton with his progressive initiatives. Of the total eight recommendations made to City Council through this initiative in the past two years, all have been incorporated into City policy and practise and recently, the Government of Alberta has passed Bill 9 thanks to the advocacy efforts made by the City as a result of the Youth Action Project. Another example was the development of iHuman's UNCENSORED program to develop a specific session to train EPS and other law enforcement on criminalization and poverty.

In the last year Anton has also created a worldwide artistic youth safe space collective titled Mutant Akademy, (<http://www.revolt-motion.com/mutant-akademy.html>) based on very similar principles to iHuman, and has worked to build relationships with several organizations in the city for his work, including CEASE (the Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation), Youth Development Project (Young, Diverse & Proud), Amnesty International and many others, as well as many more he will be collaborating with such as the Boyle Street Community Centre and iHuman. Anton is a young man that is actively engaged and making positive change in the community through innovative social initiatives.

Sincerely,

Renée Vaugeois
Executive Director



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