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INTRODUCTION

Imagine you are the curator of a new history museum. Imagine you are a journalist. Imagine you are preparing to record a podcast. Imagine you are interviewing yourself. In first-year courses across the curriculum, students are being asked to take on new writing identities, to speak to real-world audiences, and to use language, images, and songs to act. While first-year students are undoubtedly learning writing skills that will help prepare them for college writing tasks, the projects submitted for the First-Year Writing Prize demonstrate that students are becoming so much more than good college writers. They are narrators, journalists, curators, podcasters, scholars, and policy makers. Whether they are writing a script, a proposal, a narrative, or a literature review, students are using their imagined writing identities to shift their—and our—perspectives on British pop music, water management, inequalities in STEM education, the cultural implications of family dinner, and so much more.

Like writing itself, writing genres are fundamentally social creations, made and unmade by the social actions of writers. When we engage with genres, we learn them, and we contribute to them. Both the cover letters and submissions by this year’s finalists vividly demonstrate that “good writing” is not a static category, nor is “good writer” a single identity. Rather, students are joining real-world writing communities, engaging with genres that act in the world, trying on and taking up new writing identities, and in so doing expanding and contributing to what it means to be a good writer in our community and beyond.

Like writing itself, the First-Year Writing Prize is a process rather than a product, and we could not do it without the dedication and labor of many in our community. Thank you to Joe Mink, Kelly Payne, and Daniel Schonning for your care and thoughtfulness in selecting this year’s winners. Additional thanks go to the Writing and Rhetoric Department, the Center for Teaching and Learning, and the First Year Seminar Program for their support of this prize and commitment to creating a vibrant culture of writing at HWS. We’d especially like to

thank Will Hochman '74 whose celebratory spirit inspired this prize and Suzanne Rutstein '95 whose generous gift makes this prize possible.

We close by offering our thanks and admiration to all of the students who submitted essays this year. Reading your work, seeing you *be* writers, was invigorating and inspiring. We can't wait to see what you do next!

HANNAH DICKINSON

*Associate Professor of Writing & Rhetoric
Director, Writing Colleagues Program*

INGRID KEENAN

*Assistant Director
Center for Teaching & Learning*

AMY GREEN

*Co-Director, Writing Colleagues Program
Writing & Rhetoric Department*

JURORS

FACULTY & STAFF

PROFESSOR HANNAH DICKINSON

Department of Writing and Rhetoric

PROFESSOR AMY GREEN

Co-Director, Writing Colleagues Program

PROFESSOR SUSAN HESS

Assistant Director, First Year Seminar Program

INGRID KEENAN

Assistant Director, Center for Teaching and Learning

DR. JOE MINK

Assistant Dean, Hobart College

DR. KELLY PAYNE

Assistant Dean, William Smith College

PROFESSOR DANIEL SCHONNING

Department of English

PROFESSOR MAGGIE M. WERNER

Department of Writing and Rhetoric

WRITING FELLOWS

LITZY BAUTISTA '23

WILLIAM KOEPP '23

IRINI KONSTANTINOU '23

GRACE MONGEAU '22

McKAYLA OKONIEWSKI '22

JULISSA RAMIREZ '23

BLAIR REILLY '22

SOFIA SCHULLER '22

LINDSAY STELLJES '22

ELLA STIER '23

*WINNER OF THE 2022
FIRST YEAR WRITING
PRIZE*

SOPHIA MUGHAL

*“Examining the Israel-Palestine Conflict from the ‘Moral’ Point of
View”*

Written for REL 274: Zionism, Israel
and the Middle East Conflict

Nominated by Professor Michael Dobkowski

HONORABLE MENTIONS

LYDIA BURNET

Nominated by Professor Tara Curtin

NEVE CAWLEY

Nominated by Professor Rob Carson

MILLA CHUNTON

Nominated by Professor Ben Ristow

ANNABEL ZISKIN

Nominated by Professor Nan Crystal Arens

FINALISTS

J. T. ANDERSON

Nominated by Professor Susan Pliner

HANNAH ANGELICO

Nominated by Professor Tara Curtin

FRANCES DEPKE

Nominated by Professor Susan Pliner

RACHEL DUGGAN

Nominated by Professor Robinson Murphy

MACKENZIE ELDRIDGE
Nominated by Professor Susan Pliner

ALBERTO GARCIA DE LA PUENTE STANLEY
Nominated by Professor Sherri Martin-Baron

SAMANTHA GOLDBURG
Nominated by Professor David Ost

ALEXANDREA HAYWARD
Nominated by Professor Brielle Fischman

S. MUHAMMAD A. JAFRI
Nominated by Professor Sherri Martin-Baron

MARGARET MULVANEY
Nominated by Professor Nan Crystal Arens

ELLIE PEDONE
Nominated by Professor Donna Davenport

MAURA SMEADER
Nominated by Professor Clifton Hood

ELSA TARIQ
Nominated by Professor Sherri Martin-Baron

TATE TOWER
Nominated by Professor Nan Crystal Arens

SOPHIA MUGHAL

LETTER

When first looking over the Final Paper prompt for REL 274: Israel, Zionism, Middle East Conflict, I felt an immediate sense of immense challenge. After reading the prompt over again and again, I ruled out several of the potential points of view I could adopt. I found myself stuck between two final contenders: “The ‘Moral’ Point of View” and “The ‘Pragmatic’ Point of View”. Initially drawn to the moral argument, I hesitated to follow this inclination because the careful expression of ambiguity in a moral argument is difficult, and I felt a deep obligation to write a balanced paper. On the other hand, I thought the pragmatic view limited my ability to veer from strict centrism. After spending a considerable amount of time weighing my options, I ultimately decided to choose “The ‘Moral’ Point of View”, however, not without caveats. In this paper, I set out to use the evidence at my disposal to construct a moral argument with elements of pragmatism woven throughout.

Further, my goal was to write a concise, fair paper on an extremely nuanced and contentious issue. Confronted with this seemingly Sisyphean task, I had numerous considerations that informed my decision-making process and influenced my writing. Firstly, I felt that it would be counterproductive to take a purely moral stance— because, in a multi-faceted issue such as the Israel-Palestine Conflict, decisions made by governing bodies are not based solely on moral grounds; there are competing interests and narratives that sometimes supersede this consideration. Therefore, I attempted to make a moral argument that then prompts an action that is not rooted in abstract, unattainable, aims; but an action that, under the current conditions, is feasible. However, I must admit that my judgement of what is feasible, and what would be appropriate is from an outsider’s point of view, and this is a significant factor in the formation of my opinion. Perhaps, my political position and estimations of feasibility would be far different if I were “on the ground” or possessed one of the identities of the conflicting

parties. This was another one of my hesitations, as I often questioned my authority to make a concrete judgement. Despite these fears, I felt confident in the nuanced and balanced examination of sources shaping my stance: literature from across the Israeli political spectrum, Professor Dobkowski’s informative and insightful lectures, and the generous and impactful personal testimony provided by Israeli young adults, who are taking a gap year before their service in the Israeli Defense Forces, and Mohammad Yassin, a Palestinian Hobart student, both of whom visited our class.

I conclude my long-winded preface with my hope. I deeply hope that I achieved my goal; or came as close as possible to writing a balanced, nuanced, carefully written paper that examines and considers the merits of each argument and ultimately makes a judgement. In addition to my obligation to be fair and open-minded, I consciously attempted to avoid providing a springboard into “whataboutism”, in which discourse surrounding contentious issues such as this often descend. Lastly, I hope this paper is an informative and engaging read for both the individual who has a great interest or concern regarding this topic or one who is not familiar with it.

ESSAY PROMPT

In the final essay for *REL 274: Zionism, Israel, and the Middle East Conflict*, students were asked to critically analyze and support one of the Messianic, Pragmatic, Nationalist, Spiritual or Moral points of view on the Arab-Israeli conflict, with reference to the insights of Yaacov Lozowick, Amos Oz, Daniel Gordis and Yossi Halevi, as well as the comments of Israeli and Palestinian students who spoke with the class.

ESSAY

EXAMINING THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT FROM THE “MORAL” POINT OF VIEW

In *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel*, author, Ari Shavit, presents the question of “whether Israel will end occupation or whether occupation will end Israel...Will the Jewish state dismantle the Jewish settlements, or will the Jewish settlements dismantle the Jewish state?”¹ He then concludes that there are four outcomes from this juncture: “Israel is a criminal state that carries out ethnic cleansing in the occupied territories; Israel is an apartheid state; Israel as a binational state; or Israel as a Jewish democratic state retreating with much anguish to a border dividing the land.”² Shavit believes that most Israelis still desire the fourth path, it is unclear, however, if Israel has the political courage or will to engage in disrupting the status quo. Further, the power dynamics in this conflict place the onus on Israel to initiate the process by which peace and dignity can be cultivated for both sides. Of course, this does not absolve the Palestinians from making the necessary compromises to sustain such an agreement, but by the nature of their current conditions, it would be misguided to place the burden of great concession on them as the weaker party.

In order to move forward in a manner that is conducive to a lasting peace, Israel must consider Zionism’s inaccurate presuppositions regarding Arabs in the area. From this misstep, the seeds of the conflict were sown. Early Zionists failed to seriously and critically consider the Arab inhabitants of the land, and therefore failed to consider how the significant Jewish immigration they desired would peacefully coexist with their neighbors. Shavit describes this as an unwillingness to “see”, and in his analysis of his great-grandfather's actions as an early Zionist, Shavit concludes that he, “[did] not see because he is motivated by the need not to see. He does not see because if he does see, he will have to turn back.”³ This erroneous view was not only confined to Shavit’s

¹ Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2013), 398-399.

² *Ibid*, 399.

³ *Ibid*, 13.

great-grandfather but was the reigning view for many Early Zionists; as Gordis notes, Israel Zangwill, a prominent Zionist, wrote articles stating that Palestine was a “land without a people, waiting for a people without a land.”⁴ This fictitious notion held by many influential Zionists, was then disseminated to the wider population, misguiding future settlers and clouding the true conditions of the region. Despite their lack of a cohesive national movement, as Gordis states, “there were people living there; the land was not empty. There were several hundred thousand people in Palestine...”⁵ In order to move forward in a productive manner, Israel must first recognize this critical oversight, and then must look to rectify this misdeed.

This lack of consideration of the Arab population in Palestine would continue to challenge the Jewish settlers in their movement for self-determination. When fighting the 1948 War of Independence and securing the borders agreed upon in the UN Partition Plan (although it is important to mention that the Palestinians rejected the Plan), the Yishuv made defining military and political decisions vis-a-vis their relationship with Palestinian-Arabs. Firstly, the implementation of the Dalet Plan instructed the Haganah to drive enemy civilian populations to areas outside of the borders of the Jewish state (as drawn in the UN Partition Plan), if the villages were, “strategically positioned, essential for communication, or could be used as enemy bases”⁶. In fear of impending Jewish forces, approximately 300,000 Palestinian-Arabs fled, marking the beginning of the problem of Palestinian refugees that continues today. Another significant event during the 1948 War, which Palestinians refer to as the Nakba, or “Catastrophe”, was the massacre at Lydda perpetrated by Jewish forces. When examining the events in Lydda, Shavit uncovers that a motivation for the decision to conquer Lydda was that “the Jewish state about to be born would not survive the external battle with the armed forces of the Arab nations if it did not first rid itself of the Palestinian population that endangered it from

⁴ Daniel Gordis, *Israel: A Concise History of a Nation Reborn*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2016), 67. Quoting: Hani A. Fairs, *Israel Zangwill's Challenge to Zionism*, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 4, No.3 (Spring 1975), 81.

⁵ Daniel Gordis, *Israel: A Concise History of a Nation Reborn*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2016), 68.

⁶ *Ibid*, 157.

within.”⁷ The massacre was not premeditated, or in other words, included in the original plan, but the deportation of the surviving inhabitants of Lydda, supports the thesis that Arab-Palestinians needed to be expelled for the burgeoning Jewish state to survive. This strategic policy of removal of the Arab-Palestinian populations to then integrate cleared land into Israel as a national entity, was seen as necessary means to an end; that, however, does not make it any less egregious. In consideration of these actions by Jewish forces, directly or indirectly causing the widespread displacement of Arab-Palestinians, it seems that the request of a “right of return” by Palestinians would be reasonable. This, however, would be an extremely complex issue to resolve as it implies that Palestinians would return to their former homes, which are now a part of the State of Israel, making them potential citizens of Israel and under Israeli jurisdiction. That request, if granted in its pure form, would make Israel a bi-national state, innately undercutting its demographic characteristics. This request would also be out of line with the two-state solution, which seems to be the most feasible peace solution for both parties. In premise, the “law of return” makes sense, but in implementation, it would be difficult and unlikely; therefore, an alternative should be pursued as a moral obligation to right past wrongs.

One major point of contention between Palestinians and Israelis is the issue of settlements. It is the primary, driving concern of Shavit relating to the fate of the State of Israel as mentioned above. After the Six-Day War in 1967 and the Yom Kippur War in 1973, Gush Emunim and other similar movements of messianic Zionists were established with the objective to build settlements in the post-1967 territories. This encroachment and virtual annexation of Palestinian-Arab land by settlers is a dangerous precedent and is politically counterproductive if Israel wishes to engage in the peace process with Palestinians. If an agreement is to be reached, Israel will undoubtedly have to withdraw from territory obtained during settlement building. It seems that the Israeli Government’s indifference, and at times, support for the settlement movement, suggests a disinterest in a potential peace agreement, even if this is not the case. Writer Amos Oz, sees the settlers’ religiously based justification for this action as a form of

⁷ Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2013), 110.

zealotry, “The settlers and their supporters say, ‘We have the right to all of Eretz Yisrael.’ But in fact, they mean something different: to them it is not just a right but a duty, a religious obligation, to possess every corner of the biblical land.”⁸ The movement of the messianic perspective out of the fringes and into the mainstream political paradigm has legitimized what is a morally and politically unjustifiable practice that is intrinsically in opposition to peace. Shavit describes the predicament caused by this movement as “[placing] Israel’s neck in a noose. They [settlers] created an untenable demographic, political, moral, and judicial reality.”⁹ Israel, if it is unequivocal in its desire for peace, has no choice but to withdraw from the land captured by its settlers. Further, if Israel is to be a good-faith negotiator, it must not use withdrawal as a bargaining chip or leverage in peace talks and must unilaterally retreat.

Another major point of contention in the Israel/Palestine conflict is the security measures that have been implemented by the Israeli Government, such as the wall in the West Bank and numerous checkpoints. These security measures were taken in reaction to the Second Intifada, a period of Palestinian resistance, which on occasion manifested as acts of terrorism. The Israelis see these measures as necessary security, while Palestinians view it as an attempt at further annexation, as the wall is beyond the green-line, or the pre-1967 borders. Further, Palestinians see measures such as checkpoints that restrict and obstruct their freedom of movement as a violation of human rights. As a result of heightened security in the wake of the Second Intifada, the Palestinian reality has deteriorated significantly; and, in his testimony to the class, Mohammad Yassin, a Hobart student, powerfully relayed his experiences as a Palestinian who lived in Ramallah, a city abutting the wall. When asked if he had any interactions with Israelis, Yassin said that, “I’ve been searched many times...” he then said that he was not sure if that counted as an interaction. He also recounted a story of when an IDF soldier pointed a gun at him when he reached into his pocket for a key. Yassin first realized that his situation as a Palestinian was not normal when he

⁸ Amos Oz, *Dear Zealots: Letters from a Divided Land* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018), 116.

⁹ Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2013), 220.

visited family in Jordan. For the first time, he was able to move from city to city without being searched.

Relating to the experiences shared by Yassin, writer Amos Oz describes and evaluates the condition of Palestinians in the West Bank: “Millions of Palestinians in the territories live a life of constant humiliation, enslaved and denied their rights. Their human and national dignity trampled, their property forfeited, and their very lives under Israeli rule are cheap. About a third of the West Bank’s lands have been robbed by Israel, and the robbery continues.”¹⁰ From an Israeli perspective, the enhanced security measures implemented during the Second Intifada are justified; however, with the time that has passed and the great toll it has taken on Palestinians, the need for these measures must be re-evaluated. If an agreement is to be reached, it seems likely that the wall will have to be disassembled, and at the very least, pushed back to the green-line in areas that encroach upon Palestinian land.

The complexity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot be understated, however, by examining the treatment of the Palestinian people both in the past and present, Israel has a moral obligation to engage in the peace process. Further, as the stronger of the two parties, it must actively work to create the conditions that are conducive for peace. The actions outlined above: acknowledging a lack of consideration of the Arab inhabitants of Mandatory Palestine during Jewish Aliyah, consideration of reparations to Palestinians in light of displacement and the dispossession of property, the return of annexed land in the West Bank, and a re-evaluation of the need for security measures implemented during the Second Intifada, have the potential to create peace and break the cycle of violence that plagues the country. If Israel fails to act on this front, another, less desirable of Shavit’s paths will be taken, and this decision will call into question the morality of the state.

¹⁰ Amos Oz, *Dear Zealots: Letters from a Divided Land* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018), 115.

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Honorable Mentions

LYDIA BURNET

ICE STUPAS: THE SACRED STRUCTURES SYMBOLIZING CLIMATE RESISTANCE IN LADAKH

Nominated by Professor Tara Curtin (FSEM 144)

In “Parched: Past, Present, and Future of Water” students composed creative, factual articles that taught their readership something new about water, complete with an informative title, illustrative images, and careful sourcing.

FROM THE ESSAY

Rumbling down a dusty Ladakhi road, I sat in the backseat of a taxi studying mountains I would soon be trekking through. Aside from the heap of backpacks haphazardly piled atop the van, a heavy weight of uncertainty traveled with me. At 16, I was the youngest student to join Where There be Dragons, a program committed to education and responsible travel, to the rooftop of the world. The low rhythmic hum of Punjabi on the radio and blur of passing landscape served as the perfect distraction from this emerging anxiety.

The picture of the Himalayas I had curated in my head for years, a range of ruthless peaks submerged in snow, starkly contrasted the view I was fixated upon now. Not long after leaving the bustling city center of Leh, rugged ridges rose beside us; brown, barren, and beautifully drab. I struggled to understand how my previous understanding of this landscape, a tundra of water, ice, and climatic extremes, had drastically contrasted the reality I now experienced.

FROM LYDIA'S LETTER

Writing Like a Traveler:

Things won't always go to plan. Your backpack might get lost between a series of layovers, causing you to arrive in an unfamiliar country without any of your belongings. You may feel yourself going down a tangent, lost in the depths of your keyboard and drifting away from your destination. No matter the predicament, obstacles are unavoidable and adaptation is key.

At times, you may get lost in translation. Things that made sense in your head don't translate to your paper or conversation as smoothly as you hoped. Disoriented and discouraged, you may pause and step away, regaining confidence before you attempt again.

Collaboration lightens your load. Mentors will surround you that suggest possible journeys to take, valuable insight into your process so far. Leaning into support from writing fellows, instructors, guides, professors, and peers can easily make your journey more enjoyable. Each perspective you encounter helps you see your journey in a new light and helps to lighten your load.

Each step of our journey is a learning experience. Reflecting on your personal process, navigating between works and what doesn't, will make you a better traveler and writer.

NEVE CAWLEY

SONGS FOR UNDERDOGS

Nominated by Professor Rob Carson (FSEM 011)

In “Brit-Pop: From Beatles to Brexit” students wrote a script for a podcast featuring five carefully selected songs, recorded by five different British artists, from at least three different decades, all organized around a central problem, question, or theme.

FROM THE ESSAY

[“Rock ‘n’ Roll Suicide] is a masterpiece; it narrates the impending failure of Ziggy Stardust, who let fame get to his head, through the use of melancholy, minor chords, sung over by a defeated voice. While the tone and production of the song are emotional and beautiful, my favorite part is the moment when Bowie shouts with about a minute remaining in the song: “You’re not alone!” [Play “Rock ‘n’ Roll Suicide” by David Bowie, 1:40-1:44]

Upon these words, the song transitions into one of passionate strings, drums, and horns, shifting the mood to hopeful, ebullient, and joyful. Though Bowie could be singing these lyrics to anyone struggling through hard times, I imagine him to be shouting these words to the queer community. Queer people have been going through inequality, violence, and feelings of shame due to centuries of social stigma; hearing a relatively famous, soon-to-be superstar, experiencing these same hardships, and standing in solidarity with you can be life-saving. Many people who are queer give thanks to Bowie for being himself. Singer Paul Rutherford says Bowie was “a gift from the Gods,”¹¹ guitarist Kid Congo Powers describes the star as “the perfect fantasy...for teenage gay kids,”¹² while vocalist Holly Johnson proudly exclaims “Oh, I’m bisexual, just like my hero David!”¹³ Bowie was more than a world-renowned musician; he was a savior to queer people in England, reminding them that in the darkest of times, they are not alone. [Play “Rock ‘n’ Roll Suicide by David Bowie]

FROM NEVE'S COVER LETTER

Even though a song can be three meaningless, bubble-gum, happy-go-lucky minutes of seeming nothingness, these minutes can also provide a sense of deep connection to some. Music is powerful, and it can infuse spirit, drive, and optimism into oppressed people and communities, groups I refer to in my podcast as “underdogs.” Music is versatile and tactical. It is a tool that has been used throughout history, from as early as World War II in banding like-minded, suffering people together, to the present, where oppression sears violently throughout our world. I initially thought my Britpop seminar would revolve around listening to and learning about music from the United Kingdom, but I also gained a heightened awareness of many historical and current issues in the UK that parallel our experiences in the United States. By breaking down different aspects of songs, analyzing the relationship of a singer’s tone to their lyrics, and researching profiles of artists and bands, contextualized within their historical landscape, I have come to see that the struggles we see in the US echo on a global scale. Whether we’re thinking about racism, homophobia, sexism, or the stigma surrounding mental health, these difficulties extend well beyond my home.

MILLA CHUNTON

PAPER CRANES

Nominated by Professor Ben Ristow (WRRH 100)

In “Writer’s Seminar” students drew inspiration from powerful narratives by Gloria Anzaldúa, Amy Tan, Jimmy Santiago Baca, and Martin Luther King Jr. to write narratives that capture how their own stories intersect with the world.

FROM THE ESSAY

The lights of cars passing by ooze through the wooden framed windows of the restaurant. Headlights, momentarily rushing by, blind me as they bounce off the reflection of the bar’s tiled backsplash and into my eyes. I feel as though I am in a fishbowl. Onlookers walking by outside experience two seconds of entertainment when they glance into the restaurant’s windows only to find a rollicking carnival inside. Waiters weave in and out of tightly-knit tables. Customers in shiny pearls, off the shoulder dresses, ties, and mauve dress shoes morph in and out of each other - everyone in their frenzy of social interaction on top of everyone else.

Every table is full, so we sit at the bar. My feet dangle inches off the floor. I struggle to feel grounded. I extend my toes, straining to touch the linoleum floor. The smell of leather cranes my neck towards my dad. His jacket lays stiff on his chest. Fragile water droplets glide down his sleeve, eventually falling to the ground. I remember a night in the city when he drove me home in his orange Volkswagen Beetle. His obligatory weekend of government-mandated babysitting was over. Drops of water glided down the window; I traced their path with my finger, trying to predict which direction they would fall. The smoky smell of his leather jacket battled with his girlfriend’s aromatic perfume in my nostrils. Pressing my nose against the cool glass window, I tried to escape both scents.

Back in the restaurant, my eyes begin to water, but I will not let my tears touch the linoleum before my toes do.

FROM MILLA'S LETTER

I wrote this narrative essay as a reflection on my first encounter with my dad after not having seen him for so long. It was really intimidating to conceptualize the vulnerability, heartache, and hurt I felt, and compress it into a corner of a moment. The meal I share with him throughout the entire scene transforms into a moment of reckoning. Did I grow? Did my voice fall lower or higher since the last time he saw me – a little girl with purple sunglasses hunched over a hot fudge sundae in a McDonalds. I was not prepared for all the changes he too had undergone, but this story honors how some parts of us never change, and how do we come to terms with that? It is a story of learning to say hello again despite the fear of unfamiliarity, resentment, and even a language barrier.

I wrote this story in the hope that forgiveness can come six years later, when faces have aged, and bodies have moved; that a relationship between a father and daughter can be built over a warm bowl of miso soup.

ANNABEL ZISKIN

HOW PROFESSORS, PEERS, AND EDUCATIONAL DISPARITY IMPACT THE EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN AND PEOPLE OF COLOR IN ACADEMIA

Nominated by Professor Nan Crystal Arens (FSEM 117)

In “Who Speaks in STEM” students narrowed down a wide range of sources that examined the struggles of underrepresented communities in STEM to write a comprehensive literature review that synthesized challenges and proposed solutions to inequalities in STEM fields.

FROM THE ESSAY

Abstract: There are significant barriers facing women and people of color as they try to enter STEM fields. They are underrepresented not only as employed scientists, but also in faculty positions and as students at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Each group has significantly lower representation in their field as compared to their representation in the population at large. These fields have been historically dominated by white men, and changes in representation are not occurring fast enough. Many institutions employ a majority white and majority male faculty. This demographic makeup of faculty results in women and people of color having difficulty creating meaningful relationships with faculty members who cannot relate personally to their struggles. Many female and minority students experience negative stereotyping by their classmates based on their race and gender and therefore cannot form beneficial collaborative academic relationships with fellow students. Both peer and faculty relationships are primarily problems facing students at predominantly white institutions (PWIs). These stereotypes can also make students mentally and physically uncomfortable. Socioeconomic status and a student’s quality of education before college deeply impact a student’s ability to succeed in science. Wealthier school districts are able to provide a higher quality of resources and programs to prepare students for post secondary education in STEM. There is a significant problem in the

representation of women and minorities in STEM fields that require solutions to barriers with faculty, peers, and educational disparity.

FROM ANNABEL'S LETTER

In this paper, I explored several causes of the negative experiences in academia for women and people of color including the impact of educational disparity before college. I also focused on the impact of stereotyping by both professors and fellow students in the classroom. This piece allowed me to learn more about the inequalities minorities face in academia and take my writing one step farther by researching possible solutions as well.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to study this topic with Professor Arens, as it combined my interest in STEM with my own beliefs in social justice. The research used in my piece was also greatly impacted by my peers in this class, as every student contributed research on women and minorities in STEM fields, much of which I sourced in my own piec

