I believe being educated as a graphic designer is not only about developing a body of work, but a collection of knowledge. It is about learning how to truly see the world, the space in which we are designing for. The work comes when knowledge is acquired.

Being a student of graphic design and hopefully a future professor of design, I have become interested in design pedagogy. I believe that the following ideas combined with current design pedagogy will generate a more sustainable network of learners.

- Emphasis on Graphic Design History, Criticism, and Research
- Bring culture through liberal arts into the studio curriculum
- Social Design
- Empowering and encouraging informal education outside of the classroom
- Environmentally friendly design and ethical practices

I would like to further investigate the importance of social and environmentally friendly design. They are two areas in which I have found very relevant to my current and future work.
I am currently involved in an initiative called “Committed to Community.” I have been working to develop awareness through a website and printed promotional pieces which are being launched at the start of next school year. A focus for me has been the application of design thinking in order to develop a way to engage students and to created a platform for action just not good intentions.

An upcoming project at the University of Hartford is “Our Campus, Our Planet.” It will be launched as a full day of activities at freshmen orientation and hopefully move forward as a brand for all environmentally friendly projects at the University. I will be collaborating with another student to develop the identity and logo for this.

TEDxBloomington (based on the TED conference) is another project that focuses on developing a community and forming a dialogue with them. The theme is the “Wisdom of Play” and the exploration of how play is relevant to our work. I am working on several collaborative projects, and recently introduced the website, which will act as the center of the community until the conference in May 2011.

My education has been greatly aided by AIGA, it is an organization and community that I am honored to be a part of. Last year I was welcomed as the student Representative to the AIGA Connecticut board and I currently lead the AIGA Student Group at the Hartford Art School. One of the things that I am most grateful for is that we have had AIGA for almost one hundred years, that I am part of it now, and for that future that our design community will create together.

I am grateful for the opportunity to go to school for four years and in doing so be able to mold a sustainable lifestyle for myself based around using design to make a difference and have a positive impact!
On my first day of school in the United States, I was flabbergasted to learn that entire portions of the day were devoted to things like playing with clay and learning music. I was born in Kenya and spent the early part of my childhood in a rural school outside of Nairobi. In a school system that operated under a British prescript, we were taught fundamentals with the goal of producing students who would be prepared to apply for selective secondary schools. There was very little attention given to arts, and when I left Kenya and started school in the States I was understandably amazed at the sudden artistic freedom I was given.

I embraced it fully, quickly developing an aptitude for art that I practiced constantly both in and out of school. When I wasn’t completing projects for class I was creating fonts on my notebooks or obsessively collecting bits and pieces of appealing color and type from magazines. Art gave me confidence and allowed me to express myself and understand others in a way I had not known possible. It also gave me a chance to be involved in my community and participate in projects such as beautifying local parks, hospitals, and playgrounds. I joined virtually every arts-related club and community service activity my schools offered.
But while I thrived, I noticed that I was often the only minority in those groups. Students of color were virtually nonexistent in the arts, and no effort was applied to including their culturally diverse perspectives. It was peculiar and sometimes discouraging not to encounter peers or role models who could reflect or relate to my own life experiences or heritage. Despite my feelings of relative isolation, I continued to explore my creativity. I was encouraged by supportive teachers to pursue art and other interests. In college I met a wider spectrum of people whose backgrounds were similar to and divergent from mine and whose practice of art was refined and passionate.

My decision to pursue a graduate education was influenced by these experiences but also by my intense desire to formalize my talent and give to others the support that was given to me. I have worked as a math and reading tutor and recently began volunteering with 826NYC, an amazing organization whose aim is to introduce urban students to creative writing. I’ve been inspired by renowned designers such as Michael Bierut, who recently spearheaded an initiative to renovate failing school libraries across Brooklyn and, with the help of talented artists, create colorful, welcoming places for underprivileged students to learn and grow.

I believe there is a long list of urgent social initiatives that need creative attention from skilled visual communicators. I am keenly aware this would not have been an option had I stayed in Kenya, and am motivated by the prospect of starting a career and being in a position, both as a mentor and employer, to pass on my experience, knowledge and support to those who might not otherwise have the opportunity.
My name is Abara Ijiomah. In the Nigerian dialect of Ibo, my name means “binding strength,” in reference to the cords of a drum. It struck me as more than just a coincidence, when I realized my life’s ambition parallels the meaning of my name. I want to, and will, be a force that links people together in a way that brings about social fairness and environmental respect.

Growing up in a physically and mentally abusive household left me with scars that for so many years I tried to ignore. When I was 14 my father was deported for his crimes against our family. I hoped that out of sight would lead to out of mind, or at least peace of mind. In time it became obvious that I’d have to confront him. As fate would have it the same month I drafted a letter to send to him, he passed away. With so much left unsaid I had to find a way to make peace with my past. I needed to learn how to love and believe in myself. I found my peace of mind and heart in photography.
Through photography, I have had many wonderful experiences, met interesting people and discovered strengths within myself. As I develop a stronger purpose for my art, the true thesis of my efforts and aspirations become clear to me; I want to be a catalyst of social and environmental awareness in my community. There are in this world so many talented individuals like myself, that if given the right assistance and exposure can bring about real positive change in the world. The educational path I have chosen will put me in the position to cultivate a marketplace based on ethics and sustainability.

Photography is an integral part of who I am. I want to apply my artistic eye and creative mind to other fields of study. I have enrolled in a program that fits in complete symmetry with my goals. It’s a Business degree constructed to include two minors. I have selected Industrial Design and Sustainable Design. My desire is to bring to the table the full range of skills from the design and development of environmentally responsible products all the way through socially responsible financing, and marketing. It is vital that as an artist seeking change, I make myself knowledgeable in how to navigate the tumultuous landscape of the business world.

I have tapped into a deep internal well of meaning and motivation. I know what I want in life, and I know what I need to do to achieve it. My mother has my three younger siblings to take care, one of whom is in college, and mounds of debt my father left her. The entire financial burden rests on my shoulders. I believe that where there is a will, there is a way. I have the will. I’m asking for your help with the way.
I was born in a small farm town of Hue, Vietnam. My parents immigrated to the United States when I was two. They wanted their children to have a better future than they had growing up. Moving to a new country wasn’t the easiest way to achieve this goal. I grew up on welfare, food stamps, and just about every other kind of government-assisted program possible. Though my parents had no formal education, they knew that school would be the way their kids could make something of their lives.

Early in my education, my teachers recognized a creative energy in me. I took this encouragement and went to an art magnet high school, where I focused on drawing, painting and design. When applying for colleges, the only school for me was the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) in Baltimore. My parents are really conservative and didn’t like the idea of me going to an art school. They thought the only way I could be successful was to pursue a career in medicine or law. So, with no support from my family emotionally and financially, I had to figure out a way to fund my own education. I began to research organizations that helped students fund degrees in the arts and this is how I am funding my education today.
I never knew what graphic design was until I came to college. For my entire life, I was surrounded and influenced by design without realizing it. Now, as a designer, I have the power to affect the way people perceive things and reach a broader audience. A new passion for visual communication is emerging, and it is up to me to use it in a way that has impact.

I am now into my junior year of college and working at my second internship. I currently work at a local design firm, doing publication design for nearby universities. Clients for this design firm usually request annual newsletters or mailers. As much as I love designing beautiful things, this internship really makes me question the role designers play in the grander scheme of social responsibility. Are we only using our innovative thinking and problem-solving skills for corporate benefit, or can we have a greater impact on society? This question led me to explore different classes and causes that bring a new perspective to my role as a designer.

I am now part of MICA’s Design Coalition. We are dedicated to helping the citizens of East Baltimore find resources to help sustain services for their community. We work directly with the Men and Families Center to re-strategize their brand identity so they can develop more funding to help former inmates in need. This kind of design is not only satisfying, but is design for the greater good. Coming from poverty, I know what it’s like to live in a community where you feel like a stereotype and can’t escape from the circumstances you were born into. I am proof that dedication and hard work can get you where you want to be. Art education and design thinking have encouraged me to pursue my passions and I am committed to doing the same for others. I will continue to work with design organizations to strategize development for low-income communities like East Baltimore.
As a young woman of color with diverse interests and friends of various backgrounds and ethnicities, I have observed that major magazines either ignore or distort the image of people like me. I am not a stereotype nor am I a victim. That awareness has motivated me to strive for a career as a graphic designer of a magazine geared towards the interests of diverse youth. I want to design the covers, the style of it and pages as well as edit the images using my own flair. I want to be in a field where people could look at a magazine and it would bring out a feeling in them as well as draw them into the images and words that it would contain. My goal is not just to paint a “pretty picture” but to send a message out there to the world through the works I create. A message not only restricted to fashion and urban flair but serious issues going on in our society such as double standards, the negative effects of drugs that could kill and the unsafe consumption of alcohol or cigarette smoking and the effects global warming could have on all our futures. What would make my awareness pieces stand out from the rest would be my unique eye and way of going about what I do in a different way than what has been done in the past.
When I look at a blank canvas, screen or image, the first thing I see is the potential it has to be something more. I see a beautiful work of art in the making, or the endless possibilities it has to be an inspiring piece of work through color, a serious message or eye-catching phenomenon. I have been passionate about the arts for as long as I can remember; and when I see colors, pictures and words integrated together, a type of euphoria comes over me fueled by wonder and amazement. This creativity that runs through my veins is what causes the inspiration to express myself and affect others in the process. It is the world around me – people and life’s gifts that motivate me on a daily basis to know I can speak without saying a word, just by creating an impactful picture. Most importantly, touching individuals through my work is what really hits home for me. I aim to invoke some type of emotion in all of my viewers, whether it is happiness, humor or sorrow depending on what I choose to create.

What makes my work stand apart from others is that my perspective is different from the average graphic artist. Every image, color spectrum and theme I see I change to reflect my unique eye. Just as I transform images, one of my goals in life is to change how individuals view the world – one picture at a time. I am determined to have others feel an emotion unique to them concerning a magazine cover or even an advertisement that I design; as long as they feel something.
I have always pushed myself to grow artistically by enrolling in several design-related college courses while attending high school. Although I enrolled in many design courses, enrollment into the two-year graphic design program at the Center of Applied Technology North was first to show my ability for designing with type. In my first general design class at the Center of Applied Technology North, I stood out with my mature and simplistic approach to design. Successfully completing the Center of Applied Technology North graphic design program inspired me to learn more about design, especially typographic design.

Independently researching the power of color, type and almost every other aspect of design eventually influenced my decision to apply to the Maryland Institute College of Art pre-college program and Anne Arundel Community College jump start program, both of which fostered my artistic growth. After taking several design courses, I then set out to find real-world experience.
At first, it was very difficult finding internships. I sent my cover letter and résumé to many print and design agencies, but was told I didn’t meet the qualifications because of my age. Sometimes, a response was never received. Since artistic talent often appears at an early stage, no artist should be restricted from receiving real world experience based on their age. Because I was denied so many internships based on my age, in the future I will offer design internships that will foster high school students’ passion and commitment for artistic creativity. Also, another goal of mine is to guide minorities, particularly African Americans, towards a successful career in art and design. I plan to be the guiding light for many artists who wishes to express themselves through creative work.

Overall, my artwork clearly thrives to make a difference. Over the past two years, I have volunteered my design services to non-profit organizations and small businesses to raise awareness about AIDS, teen suicide and teen pregnancy. Although I’ve helped encourage social change through my creativity, there is still more to accomplish. That said, I will continue my career path of leading the 21st century as a green designer who advocates for minorities and social issues.
Perhaps my mother knew from the minute I was born that I was going to be quite the talker. She nicknamed me Gaby, a name that has caused a good amount of teasing due to my talkative nature. I have always loved to communicate with others, connect with them, inform them, and encourage them to see things from my and others’ point of view.

Perhaps it is the creative streak that runs through my family – from writers to painters to musicians – that influenced my lifelong love for art. As I watched cartoons, read picture books, and visited art museums, I learned to appreciate anything creative, and attempted to be creative myself. When I joined my school’s yearbook staff as a designer almost three years ago, I found a way to combine my love for communication with my love for art: graphic design.
During the past three years, I have applied my artistic abilities to a new, digital medium, with different standards and purposes than the paintings and drawings that I had, until then, thought that art was. I’ve worked with other creative individuals to create cohesive and informative spreads, and as Design Editor of the yearbook this year, I have learned to direct the design of a massive project and to lead a team of individuals who love design as much as I do. It’s a challenging position that has allowed me to discover what I want to do for the rest of my life: be a graphic designer, and later, the art director of a design or advertising firm.

In addition to pursuing a career in the digital arts, I also plan to inspire others, specifically other young Hispanics. I volunteer in the Art Room at ReStart, a homeless shelter. Many of the children I work with are Hispanic, and looking into their eyes and hearing them speak my language, I see them as small versions of me – only with a more difficult and unpromising childhood than I had. They are fascinated by my plans to go to college, and I, in turn, am fascinated and inspired by their determination to have a better future. In my culture, a career in the arts means a career as a homeless, starving artist; it was difficult for me to convince my Panamanian family that I was taking the right career path. I want to open both young and old minds to the possibilities of applying art in this communication and technology-driven century. The digital arts are the perfect combination of technology and art: it makes traditional art contemporary through web design, interactive media, and motion design. I plan to inspire young Hispanics on a personal level through continuing to volunteer at ReStart Art, and by example through becoming a successful graphic designer, with my culture and these children’s determination as my inspiration.
2010/11 Worldstudio AIGA Scholarships
Coyne Family Foundation Award

BREON WATERS II
Graphic Design
Sophomore
Art Center College of Design

A recent experience that has influenced my creative work was being a Peer Mentor at my school. Peer Mentors help new students adjust to the transition of going through the first term at Art Center. The first term can be a bit overwhelming, so it is nice to be able to hear from people that have already experienced what you’re going through. This helped me realize how much of a community design really is. There are always people that you need to learn from and your responsibility is to share that knowledge with others. Being a Peer Mentor also made me realize that I need to collaborate more with others in my work. Collaborating not only with graphic designers, but illustrators, photographers, product designers, environmental designers, and transportation designers would be fun to do. It would be interesting to see what people from different disciplines could come up with.
In the future, I see myself contributing to the community by using my skills to help in any way that I can. As designers in the 21st century, there are a variety of challenges ahead that we must face. Problems like sustainability, access to healthcare and an ever-changing economy are just the tip of issues facing the U.S. and the world as a whole. I would like for my work to be able to educate and play a part in being a solution to some of these problems. Solving these problems will take a new approach and way of thinking. I would like for my design to open minds and be more than just aesthetically pleasing. I plan to donate some of my time to take on work for non-profit groups that can’t afford high quality design. Design that communicates to the masses should be accessible to everyone.
College has become expensive for even some of the wealthy to afford. I would be financially unable to attend the Art Institute of Atlanta without the help of scholarships such as this one. I have worked hard throughout school in order to attend a good college, and want to take full advantage of any opportunities. I can’t say that I deserve this scholarship more than the next person, but I can state and prove why I need this scholarship. The things that I am the most passionate about in my life is family, education and art. When I was three years of age my mother, two sisters and I were in a deadly car accident; me being the only survivor. I was then raised by my father. When I turned eighteen I received a trust fund from the death of my family, thinking that that would cover tuition, housing, books and personal care, until I graduate. Unfortunately, it didn’t. I’m unable to pay for all of my future college expenses. Even though I’ve received some grants and scholarships through FASFA, it still isn’t enough.
I deserve this scholarship because I’ve worked hard. I’ve been on the Dean’s, President List and Honor Roll most of my semesters here at the Art Institute of Atlanta (I even earned a 4.0 GPA in Fall 2008). I’m also applying to become a Student Ambassador and will be the only one in my family to attend and graduate from college. I’m under so much pressure that if I don’t get more financial aid I’m afraid I’ll disappoint my family, community and church. I need and deserve this scholarship! Education isn’t always attained in the classroom. I have learned, through watching my family, with hard work and sacrifice, a goal can be reached, no matter how many times you fall. I would like my family to see me as I see them; an inspiration to succeed! This scholarship would be the pavers on that road to success.
I began my career as a designer at a young age. While most girls begged their parents for the dolls they saw on television, I made my own. I created dolls out of found objects, like yarn and empty toilet-paper rolls. I made outfits too. And since every doll needs a place to live, I constructed elaborate shoebox mansions. My parents always told me that I would grow up to be a designer. They were right.

I attended Syracuse University. After a year of foundation I entered the Communication Design program. It was an extremely challenging and emotional experience, but it was far more creatively rewarding than my first year. As juniors we choose our own projects based on personal interests. As a result, our portfolios were a true reflection of ourselves. I was most interested in user-centered design.
For a junior project, I developed a program to help promote colon-cancer screening in the African-American community. I organized a collaborative workshop for artists to teach and learn in different mediums. I also designed a resource about adoption for gay and lesbian couples. There was a clear pattern to my work. I was designing for a better world.

If given the option, why not choose to do something that might make a difference? I chose to focus on topics that could improve lives. I wanted to challenge existing frameworks and create new ones. I love the challenge of solving problems – big, complex issues rooted in human need. I believe that designers need to understand user behaviors and needs in order to create truly meaningful experiences.

I designed Clare, an online prescription management system for individuals taking multiple medications. I want to explore more projects like Clare – projects that make a meaningful difference. Interaction Design is about exploring “the strategic role of design in shaping everyday life and aims to increase the relevancy of design to business and society so designers can make a difference.”

I want to contribute to a better world through design. After I complete my degree I will work to realize the ideas I have explored in school. I will become a leader in my field and contribute to the social causes I have already taken an interest in, like better health, gay rights, and support for the arts. I will have a positive influence on the next generation of designers and teach other minority students about the incredible power and influence of art and design.
2010/11 Worldstudio AIGA Scholarships
Target Award

ALLAH EL HENSON
Interactive Design + Motion Graphics
Junior
Academy of Art University

My name is Allah El Henson and I am a twenty-two-year-old student attending the Academy of Art University in San Francisco. I have lived in Oakland, California, all my life and graduated from Castlemont High School in 2006. My dream has always involved art. I have been homeless at multiple stages of my childhood. My home and belongings came and left, but my desire to succeed as an artist never strayed. Being homeless for years inspired me to draw the rugged outdoors, vegetation and unusual individuals I came across.

I began my studies as a 2D animation major in spring of 2007. The belief my mother and father instilled in me encouraged me to work very hard to not only pass each class but to learn and understand the subjects I was being taught. The instructors and staff soon discovered the extraordinary skills I possessed as an artist. The confidence they all had in me made me feel at home at the University.
In the spring of 2008 my father passed away. The man my siblings and I once came to for advice, inspiration and encouragement was taken away from us before he got the opportunity to see us graduate college and accomplish our goals. But I tried my best to not allow that to affect my performance at school. I persevered and gave it my all each semester and continue to do so today. In the future I see myself as the director of an animation studio like Pixar. As the director, I would create feature films with a team of animators and story artists.

Ideally I would also start an after-school program, which will be a classroom-like environment with 10–20 computers. The computers will have 3D animation and compositing software. Also a projector and chalkboard for note taking and lectures. The program will be for dedicated youth in my hometown. They will be taught basic drawing principles such as perspective and anatomic structure along with covering the steps taken to complete an animated feature film. The first step they will learn is writing a cohesive story or script. Then creating visuals based on each important plot point of the script. The next step will be creating 3D characters and environments according to the storyboards, then begin animating. Lastly rendering the scenes and compositing all of the shots.

The youth of Oakland will learn to collaborate with each other and feel a sense of accomplishment. Not only that, they will feel more value with their existence as artists. The wonderful feeling of self-value will ultimately diminish the violence and soon bring unity to my community which has been long overdue.
There are some moments in life that drastically change the way one views it. It makes you grow stronger and builds character. I believe that one of those experiences has occurred in my life and influenced my creative work.

Christmas was right around the corner. People were buying gifts and children were waiting for when presents appear under the Christmas tree. But, there were those who wake up and find nothing under the tree. I volunteered at my local church. The goal was to give out a present to every child who wanted but could not afford one. Most of the lower income families in Chandler are Hispanic. I was put at the front because I was able to translate. The moment I walked out, my jaw dropped in awe. There was a massive line. I saw hundreds upon hundreds of children waiting to be given some sort of toy. It was an amazing and beautiful sight once the gifts were distributed. I could just see the twinkle in their eyes and the feeling they got when
their fingers touched their one and only toy. I thought, how could all of this be happening? So many people who are in need and I’m sitting at home watching TV and getting on Facebook. I knew that I had to do something. I needed to help those who are in need and maybe I could persuade people to join me.

Creativity is such an immense and powerful tool. People say a picture is worth a thousand words, but I think a video is worth so much more. There is something glorious that happens when the audience connects with a video. The images tug on the heart at times, and with my passion for film, media, design, and graphics I could use it all to convey a strong message. A message of hope. And I have done a small part. I found an association that needed a video to give a message, a video to show that people with disabilities can work too. That someone with a disability is a person just like us, nothing different. Throughout the process I just kept imaging how my video can help someone else. And from that experience with the poor children, it really pushed me to make this video and keep helping with my talents.

I desperately want to help the lost, the homeless and hurt. Through the power of motion graphics I can persuade men and women to do their part and join me. But it doesn’t have to stop there! It can go so much further! I could definitely see myself in the many years to come, developing videos across the world. Telling everyone that there is a need out there, and we can all make a difference.
I believe that in order to plant seeds of inspiration in others, one must first be inspired to create. As a young girl, I spent much of my time reading in the public library because there was a special quality to the books I chose that provoked me to drink in the words and images on the pages. I especially treasured the stories written by Jan Brett; they possessed a fairy tale element that captured my heart with elaborate and expressive illustrations. I was determined to draw with the same beauty, but my unsteady, childish hands could not master control of my pencil.

Throughout my elementary and middle school years, all I knew how to work with was pencil, but once I entered under the direction of my art teacher, Mrs. Schulle, my skills expanded to include ink, Prisma colors, and acrylic painting. The introduction of color into my work brought my talents to a whole new level and set me on a path of experimentation to break past my limits. I decided to take up sculpting.
beginning with a bust in the Greek style, since it is a part of my heritage. Little did I know, my actions affected not only me, but someone who nobody thought would hold any interest in art. Mrs. Schulle told me that my decision to take up this project inspired a boy named Mark to sculpt a horse because he held a personal interest in horses, which are prominent in his Vaquero culture. When he saw my sculpture, it sparked a desire in him to create something that demonstrated who he was to the world, instead of allowing his image to be dictated by the judgments of others. If I could have that effect on a person, what impact could I have on the whole community? The country? The world? And this was not even the first time I had learned of my art’s effect on other aspiring artists. These experiences influenced me to consider a career in design and illustration in the media. Almost everyone has access to the media, whether it is television, the internet, or film, and if I could get my art and influence integrated into the media, there are endless possibilities. Of course I would not be alone in my venture; by taking on apprentices and teaching them techniques of art I would spread my influence and inspiration. Instead of keeping my talents and knowledge hidden from the world, I would share it with those who are willing, and that beauty and inspiration could live on through others even after I am gone.
Entertaining children is easy enough at first glance, but keeping them enthused can be very difficult. Last summer as an intern for the Chicago Children’s Museum (CCM) I learned that the real challenge is entertaining them by encouraging them to use their imaginations and express themselves. I believe that it is so important for children to hold onto these lessons and continue to think creatively.

Working at the CCM was an inspirational experience for me. I learned a lot about the creative development of children by watching them play. I also helped them learn important lessons about being comfortable expressing themselves to other people. I had the opportunity to completely transform a room into an interactive exhibit of my choice. I chose a fairy tale theme, and focused on the idea of storytelling and performance. I set up a stage, laid out costumes and toys and had a reading corner set aside just for the children and their parents. I even created a giant
storybook for the kids to document their stories and ideas. The whole experience taught me how learning, imagination and play are intertwined, and really solidified my desire to go into children’s book illustration after graduating. I believe that creative people have a tremendous power to change their communities and the lives of others. I want to have an impact on children’s lives by teaching them, through my art, the importance of imagination and expression.

My initial interest in helping children and the community began at the Marwen Arts Foundation, a non-profit arts organization that is dedicated to providing free art classes for students as young as twelve. I’ve been involved with Marwen since 8th grade, taking classes, participating in the student advisory board and volunteering frequently. I continue to keep a close relationship with them and plan on becoming a teacher assistant this summer. My intention is to continue working with Marwen well after I am out of college, perhaps as a teaching artist, or even by using them as an example in creating my own non-profit arts organization elsewhere in the world.

The work I create now at RISD reflects my keen interest in things that are child-related. I created plush hats that are more like characters in a storybook. I created my own foam “creature” that was a costume. We went on parades and interacted with a variety of people. This included traveling to an elementary school and getting to be a first grader’s very own creature for a day. At the end of the day, the teacher told me that my first grade “owner” never smiles. In the short time I was with her, she was confident and happy. She led me around the school smiling and laughing and introduced me to different classrooms. I was able to experience firsthand the impact that creative people can have on the lives of others. I feel deeply honored to have been able to make this little girl open up to the others around her. My greatest hope is that she can do the same for others one day using her own creativity and imagination.
If you were to put a piece of paper in front of me and tell me to draw a picture, in a matter of minutes you would have something. But ask me to write an essay and it could be hours before the pen even touches the paper, at least to write. Ever since I can remember I have been making art some way or another. Every day I get an idea for another piece; sometimes when I already have one started. I probably have over a hundred half-finished pieces lying around my room. Some of them get finished and some get thrown out in a mad cleaning frenzy. That’s just the way I am, I am not very clingy with my artwork: if I don’t like it, I throw it away. If I kept every piece I started, I would have more than you can count. Sometimes when I am drawing in a sketchbook I’ll draw one line and if I don’t like it I’ll turn the page and start over. It’s not really a waste of paper because I’ll use it again soon after
but at that moment I can’t use the page. I have countless sketchbooks filled with pages that have what looks like scribble on them.

Art is my life; I can’t remember a day when I didn’t draw, even when I broke my left arm. Being left-handed I knew that if I wanted to keep drawing I would have to teach myself to use my right hand, and so I did. I then tried out for the Summer Institute for the Arts and got in using my right hand. It was that year that I realized just how important my art was to me. It had become something more than a hobby, because when I broke my arm I had to actually think about something other than art. But no matter how hard I tried to replace it with something else all I wanted to do was draw. It was at that moment when art changed for me. It turned into something that I am hoping to live off of and continue to do for the rest of my life.
The only reason that I even thought of trying to get into college was to better myself, create a future for me, and escape poverty. I asked myself when I graduate where I would be five years from now. In the area where I live one has high chance of falling victim to the streets, or even getting arrested. So I got a job, worked very hard and finally saved up enough money to escape the horrible situation I was in. Doing so gave me peace of mind, so that I may concentrate and fully focus on my education. I am still in the working process. It takes hard work and dedication when you want something in life. For most people opportunities don't happen very often. But in my case the opportunity for me getting in to Ringling College is the opportunity of a lifetime.
All my life I’ve had the talent to draw. It’s something I have a great deal of interest in. With eight brothers and sisters and me, my dad knew it would be a financial challenge. All I need is an inch in life and from that point on I would be persistent in taking the extra mile, in creating a better life for me and my family.

When I graduate I want to go further and beyond – the sky is the limit. I want to spread the way I view art to the world. In my artistic view, I express emotion, in a manner of complete visual and physical understanding. I believe my art has the power to target and heal emotions in an inspiring way. I am starting school with a very high value of imagination. I have the talent to be a great artist, because I’ve been accepted to the greatest art school in the country. That is the school that I am most confident will lead me into the direction I need to go in order to be the one that will make a difference.

People who know the way but don’t walk the path are bound to go in the wrong direction. But for those who know the way and make certain sacrifices to go in the right direction, they are going to succeed in life. I have the courage to stand up and fight for what I believe in. When I set my mind to it, I am going to be one of the greatest. When I leave this earth I want to leave behind a legacy of greatness. In every challenge that I face I strive with every effort I possess to become successful.

The most important and inspiring part of art to me is the way it communicates. It generates admiration within someone. It allows them to appreciate art in such profound way. Illustration is where I can develop the most of my ability to communicate. I always knew when I put my mind to something I am destined to pursue it.
I recently visited Peru, the country where I was born, for the first time in 18 years to volunteer with earthquake reconstruction. Seeing the tragic state of the people in Pisco, the city hardest hit in the 2007 catastrophe, was shocking. They still live in shanty towns due to lack of funds and infrastructure. My parents and I emigrated from Peru to Israel, and we lived there for almost four years, making Hebrew my second language and Spanish my first. We left Israel in 1991 during the Gulf War. I am so fortunate my parents decided to immigrate to California. I know it’s because they wanted the best possible opportunities for me, and I often think about making them proud, and inching closer to our common goal: my success.

I knew no other Peruvian immigrants as a child, my classmates always at first thought Peru was in Mexico, and being Jewish further separated me from the other Latin children. In high school I won awards in photography and became a student at Art Center College of Design.
YASMIN ALISHAV
Photography

After high school, while still developing my portfolio, I attended culinary school, which I completed, and it changed the direction of my photography forever.

I’m extremely fortunate to have parents as loving and as caring as I do, who encourage me to be an artist and admire my idealism. I’ve enjoyed my time at Art Center College of Design immensely, and the only obstacle keeping me from graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree is the deterioration of my family’s finances. My father’s business depends on new construction contracts, and in the current economic climate he might have to shut down altogether.

The circumstances of my upbringing and my experiences as a traveler have brought me to my unique worldview. The question of identity is recurring throughout my work. My photographs express my passion for child development in “Television,” a series that depicts children who appear to be static and catatonic in front of a screen. “Grotesque: Food in America” expresses my horror at the reality of factory farmed meat and dairy products, but on a tabletop. In the future I hope to work on campaigns that bring Israeli and Palestinian children together, and to change the way advertisements target children under the age of five. What drives me to photograph is the desire to question the status quo in a totally original way and inspire my viewers to change their minds. Thank you for considering me for this award.
Nineteen years ago, I was born into a family of four: two parents and two older brothers. Mom and Dad shared passions for dance, singing and art. They divorced while I was three; my family members became fascinated with art as a freeing outlet of expression. Within the next few years, I began dancing, playing the piano and saxophone and visiting art festivals.

Dad granted me with my first camera on December 25, 1998; I was elated. Within the hour, I finished a roll of film. Not long after, Mom, who taught darkroom photography at a high school years earlier, enlightened me about the “tricks” and techniques of photography.

Dad unexpectedly passed away in 2001. Later that year, Mom discovered digital photography and bought our family a digital camera. Hour upon hour, I explored different aspects of photography: focus, lighting, shutter speed, and exposure. I spent days photographing my surroundings.
In middle school, I learned to utilize my talents for the well-being of others by volunteering. At Bible Camp, I encountered my first experience with printing pictures in a darkroom. This event opened my eyes to the wonders of photography. Although many people never personally develop their own black-and-white photos, I believe the darkroom contains one of the most fascinating processes in the world. In the darkroom, I decided photography needed to not only be my passion, it required my future. I decided to study art and communication design at Wartburg College. Much of my free time was also dedicated to shooting and editing pictures.

Every second of life is precious; each moment dissolves as the next ensues. Photography allows something not much else can: time freeze. Photography captures a moment as it is; nothing more, nothing less. Each photo encompasses overlooked beauty: precious smiles shared by two best friends, the union of two lives in love, a lovely flower in full bloom, the comforting embrace between a father and daughter, or simply the vision of grace in the eyes of a young girl. I want to help people of all ages and races gain positive self-images and embrace photographs as lingering, irreplaceable memories.

I remain completely overjoyed to be able to study an area so dear to my heart. After earning my bachelor's degree and gaining more work experience in photography, I plan to become an entrepreneur by originating a photography studio. One of my greatest goals in life remains to continue waking up with a smile on my face, ready to pursue my God-given life and purpose. My success in the area of art is inevitable because my desire to find true beauty remains prominent in the scope of my vision. Every day is filled with new zest and opportunities in the eyes of a photographer.
Experiences in my childhood led me to understand the world as a violent place. Art provided the first opportunity for me to transition away from a world of violence. My mother is a preschool teacher. I grew up spending time with the kids in her art program. This experience provided me with an understanding of art’s ability to heal. One of the students had been molested and was currently in therapy to cope with the trauma. We made puppets and acted out stories of positive domestic life. The stories helped both of us to reconcile with painful events. The time we spent did not undo a tragic experience. I do believe it allowed a temporary remission from painful memories and an opportunity to reflect on the beautiful things in life.

In my senior year at NYU, I took the course "Collaborations in the Arts.” We taught photography at the Harvey Milk, the first high school for gay students. We explored how photography can build relationships with family and their communities. One student was able to use the camera to rebuild a difficult relationship with her father. I learned the photograph has the capacity to cultivate more than just beautiful images.
These experiences led me to value art that incorporates social responsibility. I began a photo essay about an island disappearing into the Gulf Coast of Louisiana. It illuminates a range of social and environmental issues including poverty, global warming and coastal erosion. Isle de Jean Charles is a fourth the size it was when its oldest residents were children. Sixty water-damaged houses remain, more than half of them are empty. The road that leads to the island disappears underwater during storms. The island is facing an apocalyptic future while at the same time reflecting parts of a cycle of poverty. I have come to understand the importance of the photograph’s role in community activism.

I am enrolled in a class that explores the issues involved in the rehabilitation of the Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. I volunteer with children in the neighborhood to build community gardens. Together, we plant seeds and harvest vegetables. I have started to reengage with my early experiences with violence and how art has allowed me to process personal experiences.

In August 2009 I arrived in Louisiana for my first year of graduate school. I began to teach beginning photography. The experience offers reciprocal rewards. My experience undoubtedly enhances my own photography. I have made every effort to continue to see how art can both serve and affect the community. When I am not spending time with families on the island, I am in New Orleans working with the Urban Farm Project or in Baton Rouge in class sharing my knowledge with undergraduate students. I see a future for myself that will balance my own documentary photography with volunteer work and teaching others about the power of the image. I have found a balance that I hope to continue for the rest of my life.
I grew up in a quaint, ocean-side village called Saigon in Vietnam. Race was not an issue in my youth; I grew up surrounded with people that looked just like me. Everyone spoke the same language; nothing was foreign to me. When I gave a thoughtful goodbye to my class of twenty before leaving for America, I noticed a classroom full of monochromatic faces staring back at me. No thought was given to the fact of how different America was going to be. In Saigon there was no prejudice. This did not reflect the reality the plane waited to take me to.

Skyscrapers, city lights on every block: this was my perception of what I thought Garden City, Kansas, might look like—like an American big city. I may not have lived a cosmopolitan existence, but I sure did feel like a model off the runway when I first arrived in America. Needless to say, the first words out of my mouth were, “Oh barracuda, this cannot be right!” There was not one thing that made me feel comfortable about my new home. My expectations were so much greater. Where was this land that I fantasized over for years, the people I envisioned meeting?
Looking back I can see the clear distinction between my roots in Vietnam and the hopeless prejudice I encountered when immigrating to a white-washed Kansas. Despite the pessimism created by that experience, I was lucky enough to visit an oasis of tolerance and diversity here at Columbia College Chicago. As a sophomore in college, I am really ambitious. I’ve applied to every scholarship I can, tried my best in class, and worked on my own collection from home. After receiving the Worldstudio AIGA Scholarship last year, I have more ideas about how to help my community. I want to become a successful designer and help the next generation at what I am good at: art.

With the fashion design company that I plan on creating, I will try to help local students with an after-school program revolved around teaching the business as well as the technical design of the fashion industry. Vietnam is not a fashion country; I want to use my power to make it happen. It will be a big challenge, but I can do it.

Fashion might not be for everyone, so the program will be based around design in the community in addition to important life lessons such as achieving goals. I feel it is immensely important to give back to my community that has turned me into the man I am today. I hope to eventually fund scholarships for talented students to cover their tuition for college. I also want to return to Vietnam to promote the arts in Vietnamese education. I want to change the way Asians think so that they can appreciate inspirations the world provides and can understand and value their fashion statements. I want to help make my country a role model to others about fashion. In this way, I am able to express my pride for my heritage and home nation.
I am the son of a United States Army soldier and veteran. Moving from place to place and living through many moments in my life without my father has been extremely difficult. I have moved and traveled to over six states, and that has showed me that there are different people out there. I have learned about many cultures and how to embrace diversity.

So many years I can remember important moments – an educational milestone, birthday or holiday – without my father present. I understood he was gone serving America and keeping his promise to keep our country safe. Many people say that freedom is not free and I know firsthand what the sacrifices of freedom really mean.

My father was gone when serving in Desert Storm, Korea, Saudi Arabia and Iraqi Freedom. I had to learn how to be there for my mother and sister and be the man in the family. It was hard. I was still young and did not know what to make of the situation. However, when the time came for him to come home, it was like meeting a new person. The conversations were awkward at first, but after a while I could not be happier. The thoughts of him being in a warzone were gone and were replaced
with ones of love, support and knowing that he will always be there for me. Then, as if nothing before ever happened, he leaves for another deployment. The thing I feared the most was happening, the cycle started all over again.

Not having a father around made me frustrated, stressed and overwhelmed with all the issues I had to face. Art was my peaceful escape from this madness. It is what kept my mind from the thought that my father was out in a dangerous warzone and I might never see him again. I drew and painted to show what I was really feeling. I discovered a passion for photography. It allowed me show others my view and takes on life, and most importantly express myself. When I am behind the lens I am in my own world, which allows the stress and distress to temporarily go away. It allows me to focus both emotionally and physically on the image I’m about to capture and everything else seems to fade in the background.

In the future I plan to share the experiences I have faced, and spread the word of how the life of being a military child can be, both the ups and downs. Not everyone can experience having a member of the United States Military in their family, and they are unaware of what families like mine go through. It is my mission to spread the emotion and experiences through my artwork. Some things as simple as viewing the life of these people can change the community, such as more troop support, donations and family support groups. However, even though my experiences have been somewhat of an obstacle, it has taught me how to cope with situations, shaped me into the person I am today, and most importantly introduced me to the world of art.
I make art because it is a practice through which people become acquainted with culture. Through the lens of art, culture becomes diaphanous and can be dissected and analyzed in order to better understand its construct and composition. Through these dissections, the artist informs his audience of cultural experiences unique to the world we live in. As an artist, it is my responsibility to take part in the dialogue between an artist’s role in society and society’s role on art. I make art to directly account for these subjects, with the hope that progress and transcendentalism is provoked by a perpetual need to analyze and critique the cultural configuration of our society.

For me, a studio practice encourages and demands interdisciplinary activity. I find myself working without restraints, rejecting theoretical basis in favor of a complete openness towards materials and processes, as well as methods and forms of execution. I find it is important to astonish, seduce and confront my audience in order to
place the viewer in the middle of an experience that constitutes the dialogue between
themselves and my intentions.

My work employs a range of devices such as the figurative and representational, the
abstract and relational, as well as the contextual and conceptual. Pieces in which the
psychological aspect of the self is explored through self-portraiture are connotative
of an internal dialogue. Lately, my practice has extended towards the conceptual
where a performative method of execution has taken a prominent role. More specifically, in "$" (2010), a piece performed in Washington Heights, Manhattan, I address
my role as a Hispanic man living in a society where cultural assumptions and notions
directly involve my identity. The dollar sign shaved onto my head is used as a symbol
to emphasize the cultural associations connected with the actions and representa-
tions of the Hispanic male in the context of the urban environment.

At the Cooper Union, I have an enormous opportunity to work with very talented
and knowledgeable individuals. Working for the Saturday Outreach program lets
me extend my education to talented high school students who merit an intensive
program where their potential to create is nurtured and stimulated. I hope that my
role as a teacher’s assistant helps these motivated individuals by giving them the
resources and tools they need to become powerful artists.

Presently, my plans include further investigation into my artistic practice. I wish
to explore the cultural notions of identity and hopefully, this will help me better
understand my role as a Hispanic artist in the greater network that is the art com-

munity in the context of contemporary art.
I was born in New Jersey, lived in Georgia and then settled in the greater Chicago area when I was in middle school. Moving around allowed me to experience different ways of life and understand different viewpoints across the country, but my experience was still distinctly American. I lived in suburban neighborhoods and everything seemed to go according to a predetermined plan. Then when I was 16 my older brother died. He was barely 20 years old. He was not supposed to die. It was a heart condition, something that was unexpected and the experience made me feel very alone. Now, eight years later, I’ve learned how experiences like that do not have to be isolating, but can create connections to foster.

I believe there are basic emotions that link our individual experiences – even across different cultures and countries and our varied and unique cultural histories build distinctive visual lexicons that can be translated and understood like spoken language. In my work, I explore the visual cues that trigger these emotions and how a visual lexicon can be translated to create a common sensation.
In 2008 I worked as a resident intern at Caversham Centre for Artists and Writers in Lidgetton, South Africa, a non-profit arts organization mainly dedicated to facilitating community programs in rural South Africa. Most of my time was spent working with women, ranging in age from their mid-twenties to over 50 years old who all had very different life experiences than me. Despite the vast difference in our lives and a great language barrier, I was able to connect to these women on a deep emotional level. I could not fully understand their experiences nor they mine, but there was a level of empathy that I had never experienced before.

Since then I have expanded my studio practice to include a greater element of collaboration. It now involves a constant and evolving international conversation. I have been accepted to a printmaking residency in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where I will collaborate with printmakers to develop a body of work and install an exhibition. For this exhibition I will employ my visual vocabulary – taken from my memories, photos, objects and experiences – to produce a space in which the viewer can draw connections to events from their own life. My goal is to remove extraneous details from the specific locations and objects and find the essentials of an experience so that the viewer can understand how it felt and connect to that feeling.

I would like this exhibition to travel and grow. It will involve other artists. I see this as a teaching tool within each community it reaches and as a productive way to maintain a dialogue and exchange ideas between countries and cultures. This is the type of project I would like to facilitate in the future, allowing me to work on my studio practice and contribute to cross-cultural conversations.
Growing up in a multi-ethnic household on the north side of Chicago, I experienced the contradictions of gentrification. My upbringing in the city was diverse, the neighborhood I grew up in was changing, and the gentrification of these spaces I frequented shaped my interests, experiences, and expectations. By the time I was ten my neighborhood had changed from a multi-ethnic working class community to a predominately upper-class homogenously white neighborhood. I grew up with family and friends who lived on the opposite side of the city in homogenously black communities. Having experiences and an awareness for these occurrences shaped my consciousness that is about black political/social awareness, being multi-ethnic and growing up middle class. After graduating from high school I attended Carnegie Mellon University, where I completed an interdisciplinary degree in Studio Arts and Social History, with an emphasis in painting and printmaking. During the summers of college I returned to Chicago to work, and interned at non-profit spaces – providing administrative and programming support to their exhibition spaces.
One way to bring diversity to the arts is to provide consistent and challenging resources that allow for the production of art, and provide discussion and the making of art across disciplines and experiences for economically disadvantaged communities. Between my undergraduate and graduate studies I was the Coordinator of Studio Programs at a non-profit visual arts organization in Chicago that provides free arts courses to underserved youth in the city. At Marwen I managed and developed educational programming and exhibitions for underrepresented artists and youth. I developed and taught classes and a one-week art residency opportunity, allowing students to experiment with unfamiliar media to further their artistic and personal growth. These experiences have increased my understanding of how to enhance socioeconomic and multicultural diversity in the visual arts. My experiences at Marwen have led me to consider how specific visual representations establish an audience. I don’t see a separation between practicing art and the everyday. I see the melding together of everyday activities and my studio work as potential opportunities to relate my experiences to challenge discussions about representation.

Given the structure of UPenn’s program I am able to refine my skills as an artist and explore new media to contribute to the expansion of my practice outside of the studio. Currently I am a teaching assistant and a lecturer at the Institute of Contemporary Art for their youth programs where I lead literacy-based activities that combine the observation of art and writing. After completing my MFA degree, my professional objectives include a combination of pursuing an artist residency through the CORE Program that is part of the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, teaching and initiating arts programming in academic and visual arts institutions.
I am a woman who does not play by gender rules. I am influenced by my mother—a Navy veteran who within her 25-year career fought to be treated equally, only to meet discrimination at the advanced levels of her career. At 17, I too stepped into the male world of the military. I joined the Army, where being a female was seen as a disadvantage. I countered this by running faster, carrying more, never saying, “I can’t.” Stationed at Ft. Hood, Texas, where female soldiers are outnumbered 3:1, harassment and advances were common from male soldiers of all ranks.

Entering college, I thought I was through being a minority. While most of the students were women, the ideas were decidedly male. The work of female students was dismissed as dealing with “women’s issues” and “feminist bull” manure.

Two years after college, I went to the Montana Artists Refuge in Basin, Montana, as an artist-in-residence. This set into motion life-changing events. It gave me a rela-
tionship with the dedicated folk at the Refuge, who have shown me the power of art. I presented a slide show and a workshop for the teen girls at Youth Dynamics, a center for at-risk students. I discussed the role that my gender plays in my own art and identity. I led them in a drawing/collage exercise where they created drawings of themselves and filled them with the labels and expectations of being a woman.

I moved to Montana and began to volunteer with the Refuge. I worked for the Refuge’s American Indian Artist Residency (AIAR) program. I recruited new members from the elders and prominent members of the Montana Native American and arts’ communities for the guiding committee of the AIAR. I also researched funding opportunities: writing grant proposals and donation request letters.

I have learned that I need to make a difference. I have an active studio practice. I exhibit fairly regularly. I sell sometimes. I used to think that was enough. I realize now that creating art, only to sell it as a commodity, is not what matters. What matters is the way those guarded teenage girls at Youth Dynamics opened up and talked about their experiences — because of art. What matters is to hear the Native American artists who come to AIAR say, “There is healing” because of art.

This is why I am going back to school. I am gaining new skills to pass to others. After my education, I will continue to be an exhibiting artist, but I will also found a non-profit studio that teaches printmaking to at-risk girls. Through art, I will teach them that being female is never a disadvantage.
"No" was never an option for me. "Can't" was not in my vocabulary. Motivation acted as the passageway to success.Growing up in a female-dominated, single parent home meant that my psyche was formed around this idea of achievement.

It did not matter that the town I lived in was in an economic crisis to the point where the education budget was cut dramatically. It did not matter that my mother had been evicted from her home of 10 years. It did not matter that my father had been incarcerated since I was 2 years of age. I had a responsibility to myself and to my family to create a better life. And I did.

My personal background played an immense part in my journey to finding myself artistically. With hard work and dedication, I attended a private high school in Boston where I explored this hidden aspect of myself.
High school allowed me to explore and fine-tune my artistic abilities. I was a minority in a privileged, upper-class, predominately white environment. The title "minority" was a new and difficult concept for me to fully grasp. I was later shaped by experiences of white privilege, racism and discrimination, and I slowly discovered what my artistic calling was. I knew I had to be that powerful voice that spoke for the voiceless. I needed to be that role model for those who came from a place like I did – where broken families, drug use, teen pregnancy and violence in schools were not unordinary. I wanted to speak for other minorities at private schools, who too went unnoticed at times. That discomfort I felt is the same feeling I want to evoke in my own art by portraying issues of race and discrimination that specifically the African-American community faces.

As a visual artist, I will continue to confront society by paying special attention to race and the impact it has on people. My strong investment within societal issues stem from my upbringing and my life experiences that have shaped me. I will encourage our community to become engaged in the world, artistically.

My art acts as that bridge between society and the imperfections of reality that are swept under the rug daily. Yes, it makes you uncomfortable to the point where you shift in your seat and nervously wipe your mouth in angst. It is my interpretation of my reality, my history, our history. It is a testimony to what one can do with sheer opportunity. It is a product of what a person can do when they have nothing to motivate themselves, but dreams.