

2007/08 Worldstudio AIGA Scholarships

Honorable Mention



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Film
Sophomore
Stanford University

An aura of Persian food pervaded the dining room. The circular dinner table was occupied by my family, who comfortably sat discussing various topics. I was seated next to them, my head barely visible above the table. "We have high expectations for Kayvon..." my dad began, speaking in Farsi, "one day he will make us proud with his picture on the cover of TIME magazine." This night sticks out more than most others in my memory; I was ten years old.

School used to be like solitary confinement for me. I spoke little English and had few friends. My dress was often regimented by my parents, sweater-vests and turtle-necks every day. I stuck out like a sore thumb, yet I felt invisible. This isolation was further intensified by my father's pressure on grades; anything but A's was unacceptable... I was only in Elementary school.



This led to a transformation which caused me to form relationships with teachers, and immerse myself in learning for learning's sake. I took classes that were challenging and insightful, not necessarily the ones that would give me an extra GPA point. Taking the Academy of Integrated Humanities and New Media (AIM) is a testament to my transformation; especially since I struggled in deciding to take it versus a bundle of AP courses.



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Film

AIM was the most meaningful experience in my life—it taught me to think, discuss, care and apply. In one project, I questioned the effectiveness of No Child Left Behind. I assessed the legacy of Brown v. Board of Education through a case study of an Oakland school threatened for closure due to low test scores. I spent weeks speaking with students, teachers, and administrators questioning whether or not NCLB (and the closure) was consistent with Brown’s goal. I attended community meetings and discussed a way of educating others about my subject. I created a documentary investigating the repercussions of the intended closure. Expressing what I’d learned in a film allowed me to transfer my passion to others. For example, most of the parents had no idea that schools just across the Bay Bridge don’t have the support to provide their students with libraries; they were outraged.

This film won 5th place at the BestFest San Diego film festival. Since then, I won 1st place with another documentary, I won the California Student Media Film Festival, and I’ve received two student Emmy’s from the National Television Academy for Best Regional Student Documentary for other films. Educating others and promoting change through film was an incredible experience. I had never been so passionate about a school subject; I had never had the urge of wanting to make a difference.

I am continuing to pursue my interest in film and my desire to create social change. Over spring break, I traveled to South Africa to create a documentary about the power of music as a language. This project is just one of the passions that I am undertaking while at Stanford.

I’ve made it a long way since that night in the dining room. My dream is to continue utilizing the diverse and intellectually vibrant community of Stanford to make a difference, whether or not it’s through film. I want to have a successful life by paving a new path for myself, and maybe by doing so I’ll land my picture on the cover of TIME.

