

MERCER STREET

CONTRIBUTORS

Isabela Acenas, '21, is an Environmental Studies student on the pre-law track at the College of Arts and Science. Born and raised in California, Isabela was brought up by parents who fix vacuums and value life's simple pleasures. After spending two summers by herself in the Philippines, Isabela began researching her people's roots in the farms of Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands, and California. Agriculture became the heart of her desire to elevate such communities, prompting her to explore the intersection of humanities and sciences as a full scholar at NYU. Isabela's essay seeks to validate indigenous voices in the scientific community. This piece served as the starting point of Irrigate Elevate, a social venture she created for young indigenous entrepreneurs in irrigation technology.

Jennifer Agmon, '21, is from Los Angeles, California, and is majoring in Nursing and Global Public Health. She is inspired by people who slash binaries and fight against socially-created defaults for identity and expression. Jennifer's essay, "Gender Hysteria," has allowed her to explore current research about gender, read personal experiences of people in the LGBTQ+ community, and reaffirm the importance of language. An aspiring pediatric nurse, Jennifer intends to continuously advocate for the health and overall well-being of children. Outside of school, Jennifer volunteers as a Crisis Counselor for the Crisis Text Line and spends her free time writing.

Cheongho Cho, '21, transferred from the Tandon School of Engineering to major in Interactive Media Arts at the Tisch School

of the Arts in hopes to further explore the interaction between human subjectivity and the mechanical world. His dream is to mechanically translate the phenomenon of the mind to understand the human condition and create a universal “language of mind.” He believes in the existence of a commonality in all human experiences, holding a conviction that all human opinions and actions can be understood when observed sufficiently. Coming from the gun-free society of Korea, Cheongho had his values profoundly challenged in the United States. He explores these challenges in his essay.

Shivali Devjani, '18, studied Finance at NYU Stern while pursuing the pre-medical studies track. Born and raised in Long Island, she is a native New Yorker, but has been fortunate to study abroad in both London, UK, and Sydney, Australia. Her time in Sydney and in NYC as a Cohen Children’s Medical Center volunteer spawned her interests in nutrition and chronic disease prevention. Influenced by her experience as a part-time tutor at NYU Metro Center College Prep, she hopes to work with children and use her business acumen to run a successful pediatric clinic and perhaps even develop a healthcare startup. Her essay, inspired by her passions, explores the mystery of large price disparities between fruits/vegetables and meat/dairy and considers their implications on our health.

Lynn Fong, '21, is a Film and Television student at NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts. She moved to Orange County, California from Taipei, Taiwan, as a young child and has lived there ever since. Her love of filmmaking stems from its ability to convey ideas applicable not only on an interpersonal level, but also on a national or even international one. Hoping to eventually work in children’s animation, she is passionate about art’s ability to change a person’s perspective on the world. Her essay on *Moonlight* is both an analysis of the film’s artistry and an exploration of how the film uses that artistry as an exercise in the groundbreaking power of empathy to change minds.

Carolyn Ford, '21, studies English and Gender and Sexuality Studies at the College of Arts and Science. Originally from Glen Ellyn, a small suburb of Chicago, Carolyn’s interest in political activism began

as an effort to build a community with other queer kids in their hometown. Their essay, “Broken Rules, Broken Silences: Audre Lorde and the Power of Language,” is an investigation into the uses of writing and speech as dynamic tools that can ignite movements, propel ideas, and enact lasting political and social change. At NYU, Carolyn’s work with the First Year Queers and Allies program encouraged them to use their love of literature and language to vocalize the needs of and issues within the vibrant LGBTQ community in New York City.

Adelia Gaffney, ’21, was raised in Toronto, Canada, and currently studies Biochemistry at the College of Arts and Science, with the goal of conducting research in the field of evolutionary developmental biology. As a young woman hoping to enter a STEM profession, Adelia has been aware of the male-dominated nature of her field of interest from an early age. Instead of deterring her from pursuing her interests, this imbalance continues to serve as motivation to contribute to the academic conversation in her field. In her essay, Adelia explores the obstacles that have historically prevented women from assuming the same roles as men in academia, as well as the importance of having the freedom to maintain their feminine identities when assuming these roles today.

Haorui Guo, ’20, studies Mathematics and Computer Science at the College of Arts and Science. He hopes to solve real-world problems mathematically and beautifully. After transferring from Beihang University in China, it took him a while to adjust to his first English writing course. As he gradually broke down the language barrier, he was able to engage in the analytical process of deepening an essay. In his writing, Haorui explores the unique characteristics of photojournalism which separate it from other forms of photography, and he offers a novel approach to capturing a beautiful photojournalistic image without compromising its initial function: representing reality.

Jessica Ji, ’21, is a Film and Television major at the Tisch School of the Arts. Born in Rockville, Maryland, she became interested in the arts at a young age and began making short films and documentaries in middle school. After volunteering at and attending various enter-

tainment industry events and panels, she developed a passion for diversity and inclusivity in media and entertainment, noting a lack of representation of people like herself in much of the media she consumed, both on screen and behind the scenes. This realization inspired her to explore in her essay representation of Asian Americans in film and television and the different perspectives on what representation looks like and should look like.

Isak Jones, '21, studies Philosophy and Comparative Literature at the College of Arts and Science. As a white male raised in Bologna, Italy, Isak was immediately surprised and a little intimidated by the social issues at the heated forefront of American discourse. However, his inquisitive spirit and open curiosity drove him to face such issues by interacting with the literature surrounding them. In his essay, he explores the topic of feminism and hopes to communicate his newfound disenchantment with classic gender dichotomies by reevaluating his upbringing in Italy through the lens of the texts he has discovered.

Olivia LeVan, '21, studies Journalism and Politics at the College of Arts and Science. Raised in York, Pennsylvania, she has always had a desire to make an impact on the world by educating herself and others on less commonly known subjects. As a feminist who has been surrounded by strong female role models her entire life, she is especially interested in tackling women's issues. Olivia was inspired by the #MeToo movement to delve into the issue of sexual harassment both within and outside of the entertainment industry. By looking at it from multiple perspectives, she hopes to shed light on the intricacies of the problem and to inspire a demand for change.

Tracy Ma, '21, studied Computer Science at the Tandon School of Engineering during her first year at NYU and intends to study Integrated Digital Media starting her second year. This change was prompted by a period of self-reflection, during which she recognized her undying urge for creative expression and her reliance on technology as an artistic medium. As a creator who utilizes the Adobe Creative Cloud to merge imagination with reality in photo and film,

Tracy began to wonder whether such artistry tarnishes the reliability and truthfulness of these mediums. In “The Truth Behind Photoshop,” she examines the ways in which Photoshop shakes the foundation of photography as a form of documentary, and explores the human need for truth through both a historical and philosophical lens. Born and raised in Manhattan, New York, Tracy hopes to one day be able to paint the rest of the world using her camera and creative vision.

Paul Mapara, '21, is from the Bronx in New York City and was born in Berlin, Germany. He is currently pursuing a double major in Philosophy and Politics at the College of Arts and Science. Paul is a member of NYU's Policy Debate team and is interested in politics and creative writing. Additionally, he is an avid film enthusiast and first became interested in the subject of his essay—selfhood, how it's formed, its potential transience—when he saw the Swedish film *Persona* in his junior year of high school. By revisiting this film and putting it in conversation with texts by Zadie Smith and Roland Barthes, Paul managed to reach a deeper level of insight into the notion of selfhood in the Information Age.

Erik Oliver, '21, studies Cinema Studies at the Tisch School of the Arts, and hopes to figure it out from there. Since his early adolescence in Madison, Wisconsin, Erik has fostered an accidental obsession with David Lynch, originating with the initial run of *Twin Peaks* but evolving with Lynch's increasingly abstract, diegesis-dissolving work, as well as his own shifting tastes in cinema. Particularly in an era of confused semiotics, breakdowns in individual communication, and general societal angst, Erik finds Lynch's purposefully disorienting work increasingly resonant with the tumult of the times, as well as oddly reassuring in its occasional moments of transcendence. Erik believes that aesthetic and cultural analysis can help us better understand our everyday experience. With consideration of cultural hegemony and lots of caffeine, he aims to use art as a lens for better living.

Dylan Palmer, '21, is majoring in Social and Cultural Analysis and minoring in both Film and Music. He is a Martin Luther King, Jr.

Scholar. As a mixed-race individual born and raised in the whitest major city in America (Portland, Oregon), he became entranced with concepts of race and identity at a very young age. This fascination has fueled Dylan's involvement in social justice, which remains an important part of his life at NYU, where he was a member of the Social Justice Stream in the Goddard Residential College. His essay, written in association with this program, employs Jordan Peele's film, *Get Out*, as a tool to expose enlightening connections between horror movies and the lived experiences of black folk in America.

Jesse Schanzer, '20, from New Rochelle, New York, studies Finance and Economics at the Leonard N. Stern School of Business. His essay, "In Thinking of Evil," is dually inspired by the story of his beloved grandfather, who was hidden as a child in France during the Holocaust, and by his relationship with his Jewish faith. Jesse was raised as an Orthodox Jew and the issues raised in his essay reflect his continuing struggle to reconcile his childhood learning, his continued family relationship, and his personal growth. Using Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* as a starting point, his essay explores the nature of evil in history, what it may imply for our present society, and how it influences his evolving perspective.

Paige Smyth, '21, studies Early Childhood and Special Education at the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development. As she cannot seem to choose just one field, Paige also plans to double major in Psychology with a minor in American Sign Language, a passion fueled by her love for the language and culture of the Deaf community. Her essay, "Signs of the Times," reflects all of her passions, examining a prevalent debate in the Deaf community through a psychological lens. In the future, Paige hopes to merge more of her interests through work with educational and assistive technologies to create more engaging learning environments for all students.

Akiva Thalheim, '21, is from Long Island, New York, and studies Psychology with a focus in design and human interaction at the College of Arts and Science. Resonating with Leslie Jamison's explo-

rations of her own pain and that of others in *The Empathy Exams*, Akiva was inspired to probe the relationship between the two. “The Empathy Lessons” presents the possibility that recognizing one’s own pain leads to greater discernment of the pain of others, thereby raising our collective empathic abilities. Reading Jamison’s essays prompted Akiva to explore the therapeutic benefits of writing, a message he hopes to share in his own work.

Christina Wang, '19, born in Flushing, Queens, currently majors in Chemistry on the pre-medical track at the College of Arts and Science. When she isn’t teaching organic chemistry review sessions or making posters on the chemistry behind coffee, Christina craves an opportunity for thoughtful discussion and creative thinking. She viewed her “Writing in Community” class as a channel for expressing opinions that would have otherwise remained unspoken in her science courses. In her essay, “The Case of Aziz Ansari: Bridging the Pleasure Gap,” Christina took the opportunity to express her views on the controversy surrounding Aziz Ansari’s sexual misconduct as well as society’s warped views on sex and, more specifically, female pleasure.

Emily Yan, '21, studies Marketing and Finance at the Stern School of Business. She grew up in Warren, New Jersey, a small suburb one hour from New York City. Moving to New York City inspired her to explore what the city represents to both outsiders and locals. Outside of the classroom, she tutored at a public middle school and delivered meals to a homeless shelter in New York City. Both experiences allowed her to witness firsthand the economic and privilege disparities between outsiders who move to the city, like herself, and locals who grow up there. Her essay, “Keep on Prowling,” examines, through the lens of photographer Bruce Davidson’s work, how individuals claim identity and ownership in urban shared spaces.

Wendy Yang, '21, studies Biology at the College of Arts and Science and plans to minor in Studio Art. Hoping to devote equal zeal to analysis of visual media and to her scientific pursuits and involvement in Asian cultural organizations, the Hangzhou-born student set her sights on deconstructing one of her birthplace’s most defining

moments on the international stage, when the opportunity presented itself. She was especially motivated to write about Tiananmen Square by the fact that her extended family had lived under an increasingly iron-fisted leadership decades after Tank Man supposedly ignited a pro-free speech revolution. She also sought to examine why the ensuing supportive international response changed little and fizzled out as quickly as it had initially gushed from the mouths of sympathetic onlookers.

Jen Khai Yew, '21, is a rising sophomore studying Comparative Literature at the College of Arts and Science. Jen's essay, "Language and the Self," explores the long-term impacts of colonialism on language.

Soyoung Yun, '21, studies Cinema Studies at the College of Arts and Science, and desires to make cinema the most accessible cultural space where people freely discuss gender, race, and social justice. Born and raised in Seoul, Korea, she has a passion for producing cinematic platforms that can lead East Asian cultures to be more knowledgeable and supportive of gender diversity and feminism. With an ardor for learning about LGBTQ+ and feminist studies, she focused on reading gender theorists during her first academic year. Especially inspired by Judith Butler, Soyoung contemplated how gender identity affects individuals and society. Her essay navigates disturbing revelations of poststructuralist gender theory, but ultimately it finds a way to internalize Butler's insights with enlightening positivity.