

As a college student, I'm privileged with a great deal of opportunities. I will be graduating later than expected since I am pursuing three minor degrees in psychology, business, and journalism along with my Media Studies major. It is a sure fact that my experience at Queens College allowed me to be exposed to different faiths, cultures, and fields.

Off campus, I started working with the Three Faiths Forum in which I go speak to high school students about how we should be accepting of each other and different faiths. I want to expand something similar in Queens College after coming back from the ILDME program.

I want to create an annual forum for college students, from prior ILDME participants. It includes reuniting ILDME alums to speak about their experiences, answer questions, and assist students who are interested in the program. In Queens College, I attended events from clubs such as The Center for Ethnic, Racial, and Religious understanding (CERRU), became a member of Amnesty International at QC, and a participant in the Places of Pilgrimage/Doll's House Remix workshops to discuss life experiences of Middle Eastern Women. These connections would happily sponsor this event and help make this forum possible. Not every student gets the opportunity to participate in ILDME, therefore this event would be the on-campus version of it.

Relatively, since I write for the college paper, my editor recently assigned me to a beat covering different faiths on campus. This was a decision he made based on my previous articles. Upon coming back from the Middle East, I will start working on that beat and offer to have my own column. The knowledge I will gain from ILDME will allow me to dig deeper in thought about news regarding different faiths and cultures. This is especially due to the fact that QC has one of the most diverse student bodies in CUNY. Having been exposed to different viewpoints and Arab states through ILDME, I will be better equipped to answer questions and give information sessions about issues such as the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict. Especially since there is a wide number of Jewish and Muslim students on campus. Hence, there needs to be more focus on the Middle East. An ILDME forum and my own beat and column will be one of many steps I take to achieve this goal.

WISE is an NGO that stands for Women's Initiative for Self-empowerment. It is a non-profit organization in New York that was started by a young Muslim women after her Hijab was pulled off in public by an older male. It focuses on teaching women self-defense, spirituality, and strength. In the future, I want to start a WISE in The Middle East with the help of its founder. Females of the Middle East continuously face sexism, lack basic rights, and are exposed to male supremacy. When I go to WISE events, I remember Egypt, how helpless I used to be, how my friends would get harassed when simply walking in the streets, how much I want to put an end to it all. During my cultural workshop in QC, I wrote monologues about how tough it was being a female who lived in these circumstances. I worked with women who did the same, all while holding back our tears. This made me think of expanding an NGO like WISE.

When asked what's the greatest lesson a woman should learn? Rupi Kaur said "That since day one, she's already had everything she needs within herself. It's the world that convinced her she did not." And now we're the ones doing the convincing.

Professionally and academically, I emphasize the importance of an unbiased news industry. I plan on studying media and journalism after I graduate and considered other fields such as law and business to implement into my life. I will enhance my Arabic language in order to be able to report in it. This will then lead to me working more in news organizations including Arabic ones. I want to visit the unfortunate parts of the Middle East to report its news in a fair

and correct manner. I am looking into fellowships and want to directly start my PhD. The topic will be biased media focusing on places such as the Middle East and ILDME will prepare me for these aspirations ahead.

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