

Zulfiqar Mannan



“The things I care most about at Yale may be my current involvement in recent projects, but they are centered around topics that I have been grappling with my whole life.

People often look at domination as a way to approach human relationships, and think that if they manage to dominate another person, in their minds they will become successful– and there, this dynamic becomes an ideal. But the moment you call out power for being powerful, it collapses onto itself. Through my studies and conversations here, a lot of the anger and distaste I had for the world around me, about abstract and vague things, now started making sense to me. I feel more motivated now, because I know what I'm fighting for. I'm trying to change the ideal of masculinity and its perception as the path to success. I don't want fight it through anger, but through the joy and subjectivities literature has brought to me, so I can highlight the stories of those who are more often than not forgotten.

Women have been the only support in my life. Whenever I needed someone, God sent one to my rescue. A lot of people don't treat women as real people, even if they treat them kindly. The entire half of a population– the only reason I am alive, confident, and happy, are very much let down all the time. But even though women are so oppressed, they are at least allowed to be honest with themselves about their reality. Men are told to hide their emotions, and since they cannot be honest with themselves, they settle for being “unhappy, but successful.” And I cannot believe people are ok with never being happy.

Through my English major, I now have the opportunity to study race and gender through the lens of literature, for

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the purpose of human rights. For example, I wrote and directed a play last year where I took the tool of literature to talk about what the experience of the brown femme student at Yale is. Writing the play made me understand how I feel my brownness is perceived here, and where in the social stratosphere I stood as a gay, international man from Lahore. I know what I want– not what I have been told to want– and I now know who I am.”

-Zulfiqar Mannan '20 #HumansOfOISS

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