

The Queer Foundation Scholar

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With the Queer Foundation about to enter its fourth year, we are launching an electronic newsletter that will be sent to former scholarship recipients, to donors and potential donors who wish to receive it, to QF Advisory Committee members, and to others upon request.

Our immediate intent is to inform our donors and potential donors of the continuing achievements of Queer Foundation Scholars, and to allow Queer Foundation Scholars to keep each other informed about what they are doing to promote the goals of the Queer Foundation.

Please contact Joe Dial at threepennynovel@gmail.com if you wish to be added or deleted from our mailing list.

To learn more about the Queer Foundation, to read the essays of the Queer Scholars, or to contribute to the scholarship fund, see <http://queerfoundation.org>.

The 2008 Queer Scholars

It was again a pleasure this year for me to interview the QF scholarship finalists and their individual references, even if only briefly. All three possess the qualities of a good **communicator**: they are good writers, good orators, and good listeners. They are all self-motivated, eager to learn, and “a delight to teach.” Yet, what they share in common most of all is their willingness to be themselves, and to do so with optimism.

Their essays are now posted on the QF website: <http://queerfoundation.org>.

On the following pages, I provide a brief and very incomplete introduction to the three recipients of the 2008 QF Essay Competition. I also invited updates on their activities of former Queer Scholars, and I include here as well that submitted by Zachary Harrington. Hopefully, this first issue will motivate other Queer Scholars to update us on their activities.

Ray Verzasconi, editor
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● **Ericka Sokolower-Shain** graduated from Berkeley (CA) High School. She was an active participant in the school's GSA, serving as co-president. In her senior year she was also invited by her English teacher to talk to freshman English classes about queer issues.

She was involved as well in protests against allowing military recruiters on campus and against certain proposed immigration reform measures. In the process she further honed her coalition-building skills.

Ms. Sokolower-Shain has already established her credentials in the queer/indie film world. Her most recent film, Something, which she wrote, directed, and edited, deals with the life and relationships of a teenaged lesbian. The film, which has been shown at several film festivals, can be viewed at

<http://blip.tv/file/910595/> .

Her interest in cinema will take her to Wesleyan University where she will major in Film Studies.

● **Geoffrey Mino** lives in Newtown, PA, and graduated from Solebury School in New Hope, PA. The two towns, he says, are radically different, with residents of Newtown being very conservative, while those in New Hope are accepting and supporting of queer people.

He is an excellent scholar, evident by his being a National Merit Scholar finalist. His teachers praise his writing and his oratorical skills, along with his ability to listen to and work with people with

divergent points of view.

Mr. Mino will attend Brown University in pursuit of an interdisciplinary degree in Communications. He hopes to be a writer, but has not ruled out the possibility of entering politics.

● **Christopher Chavez** graduated from Metro Tech High School in Phoenix, AZ.

He expresses himself in writing and in speech with a warm sense of humor, confident in himself, his friends, and his family, and he sees himself going forth in "a brave new world dripping with promise, possibility, and risk."

As his co-scholarship recipients, he rejects facile categorizations and views his sexuality as only a small part of himself.

Excelling in math and science, Mr. Chavez has also won several speaking competitions in Arizona. He also postponed his high school graduation for a year by spending that time studying in India.

He will attend the University of Chicago, majoring in political science.

With the aid of the Queer Foundation, I arrived at St. John's College in Annapolis on the 22nd of August. I smiled for days, maintained scattered contact with my family and friends back home, and quickly made many new, beautiful friends. Then I disappeared. Crawling down into Homer, Plato, and Aristotle, I stepped deeper and deeper into the Program – in the depths, the walls are made of Ancient Greek paradigms, the shadowed ceilings of fragments drawn from Heracleitus and Sappho, and the often musty floors of well-marked pages torn from Loeb's. I lost contact with the outside world altogether. "The outside" became a distant myth, far detached from the firm realities of Alcibiades and Herakles, from the epic hexameter of my inward life. English script became increasingly difficult to scribe, my hand being far more accustomed to the bold lines of Greek. So deep did I wander that I struck water and began to drown. Long nights and early mornings began to submerge my then-firm belief in the great-souled man, and the lights of the library became increasingly aqueous as the logoi grew deeper and deeper.

I saw, in the darkening hours of my self-imposed isolation, that living alone in the midst of books (no matter how great they may be) is not enough, that without the dry light of the foreign sun and the help of human hands my life would slowly be dissolved by the acidity of the earth until nothing remained but the barest trace of a being once human. So I began to swim. I joined the Pink Triangle Society, St. John's equivalent of a GSA. I volunteered at a Christmas party put on by HAVEN, a local group devoted to improving the quality of life of those living with HIV/AIDS. I attended student-run seminars on sex and sexuality. Each of these was a stroke closer to the surface, a renewal of my interest and interaction with the

outside. My old studies re-emerged – I began to re-read Benjamin, I returned to Derrida, and I began to merge my new learning of the ancients with the old problems of today's world.

And now school is out. Summer is shining on the old bricks of Annapolis and I am still here. I live here with my friends, and we work and cook and eat together, and at night we read out-loud and listen with widespread awe like the children we recently were. And my studies continue. The summer is a chance for Latin and German as well as Greek, and I hope to translate the Gospel of John before the school year begins. But I am no longer isolated. I am in contact with my family and friends. I am the new archon of the Pink Triangle Society. I work for Starbucks. This summer, I am volunteering for the Epigenesis Program, the brainchild of St. John's students designed to help Annapolis cope with the rising tide of youth violence. We will be working with local high school students to develop leadership skills and to provide them with the tools necessary for them, the youth of Annapolis, to confront the problems they see. The volunteers will be in an odd position, imparting as foreigners what we can to those familiar with the native terrain. We will have to live in the delicate balance between the inside world of the college and the outside world of Annapolis and beyond. It will be difficult, but I now believe, after a year of struggle, that it is both possible and necessary to live both inside and outside. And now, with the sure light of the sun on one side of my face and the welcome glow of library lamps on the other, I am leaning into the first days of summer and the rest of my life.

Zachary Harrington
Queer Scholarship Recipient, 2007