



To the Class of '55:

I am writing to express my sincere gratitude for the scholarship which afforded me the extraordinary opportunity to take POL 330 Women and Politics in India! My name is Aubrey Kohl. I am currently a junior at Cornell. I am originally from Davenport, IA which is only an hour drive away. I am a History and Politics major with a Spanish minor. After Cornell, I intend to go to law school. Aparna told me about this course last year and encouraged me to think about it. As I talked with her more about it I realized that this class was not only relevant to my line of study but would allow me to gain a broader perspective on the field of political science. Aside from academic advantages, the course would allow me to step outside of my comfort zone. Both of these were aspects that drew me towards the class and fueled my desire to take this course.

Throughout the two and a half weeks I was in India, I definitely was outside of my comfort zone and experienced unimaginable personal growth. One manner this occurred was through hearing the stories of all the incredible women we met who live in India; they were truly inspiring. I learned not only about India—its history and culture—but about myself. I learned that I want my life to be measured not in material wealth but on the positive impact that my life has on the lives of those around me. This trip further reaffirmed to me (after being able to hear about the impact of the work of Majlifs Legal Center in Mumbai) that the legal profession is the

right path for me. Majlifs is a non-profit that provides legal counseling to women by licensed female legal professionals, counseling that can mean the difference between being forced to stay in a violent domestic relationship and safety from this violence.

This trip has placed me one step further towards my career aspirations. The key in the legal profession is being able to communicate with and relate to other people. I cannot speak Marathi, so other forms of communication became critical in interacting with others. Not only is nonverbal communication important, but perspective also plays a fundamental role in one's ability to effectively communicate with another person. It is important that when speaking with diverse audiences, as legal professionals often do, not only to recognize differing perspectives but also know where they are coming from. Often this involves evaluating one's existent or nonexistent societal privileges in life. While in India, I was confronted with privilege in a very personal way. In this I mean I saw the stark contrast between the lives of the slums to the high rise building of the Mumbai skyline. In the villages, there was a similarly stark contrast between those of the higher caste and those of the lowest caste (Dalits). I couldn't help but feel a sense of gratitude for the way in which I am able to live and an obligation to utilize this privilege to enhance the situation of those who do not experience the same privileges that I do.

Ultimately, I could never sum up this experience into a short letter; however, what I can say is that it has changed the way I think forever and left me with experiences that are unforgettable. As I look to my future after Cornell, I now do so with a purpose towards practicing law in order to assist those in need. I hope to inspire others as the women I met in India inspired me. Ultimately, I feel as though I could never fully express my appreciation and gratitude in adequate words. Thank you does not seem to me to be enough. It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words thus that is why I chose one to send along with this letter. This picture was taken by a classmate of mine while at a market in Pune, India. The smile on my face is an expression of my gratitude for your generosity.

Sincerely,

Aubrey Jean Kohl