

I am honoured to be selected by Chair Paul Finn and the G.J. Cooper Scholarship Award Committee as the recipient for the 2018 G.J. Cooper Scholarship Award. I am humbled by the committee's recognition of my past experiences in academics and my work in the community.

I was born and raised in Ottawa and attended the Ottawa Jewish Community School (OJS) and Yitzhak Rabin High School. My family (2 older sisters and a younger brother) and my parents, in conjunction with my Jewish education, provided a foundation for Jewish values, academics, and the importance of finding your way to contribute to the community.

My academic journey led me to McGill University, where I commenced my Bachelor of Social Work Degree; additionally, I immersed myself into the student community. The McGill School of Social Work provided a platform and opportunity to work not only with my fellow students at McGill but also with McGill Board members and the Montreal community at large. I was elected as (VP) External, representing the Legislative Board of the McGill Student Society, where I volunteered on the Service Review Committee, researched and worked on the Sexual Violence Policies, and participated in various student clubs. Further, through volunteer positions at McGill University, I advocated for many resolutions to improve student life, specifically with a focus on my interest in assisting students with disabilities.

My involvement with the McGill community unfortunately also led to an unsettling experience of anti-Semitism. On February 1st, 2017 a fellow McGill Student Representative wrote a tweet wishing violence against those who identify as Zionist. His "Punch a Zionist" tweet constituted a hate crime against a historically persecuted people. I knew that what had happened was something I personally felt angst about. I made sure my fellow social work faculty understood the severity of his rhetoric, and in turn, they encouraged me to state my disapproval. With their support, I stood up for the Jewish community on campus, as well as for the community of students who are not Jewish but still identify as Zionist.

I alone stood up to my aggressor and to a gallery of BDS student supporters who were snapping and cheering for my impeachment. There I stood my ground, shaking with emotion, yet unshaken by their vitriol of hate. I am thankful and appreciated the countless messages of support from Federal and Provincial government representatives, Jewish community groups from Ottawa and Montreal, donors to McGill Alumni, members of the clergy, professors and Jewish/non-Jewish students on campuses globally. I was able to inspire others and help my community in ways that I never imagined. I hope my experience will be a call to action for individuals, university students and community leaders, to speak out against anti-Semitism, prejudice, abuse, and promotions of hatred/violence; and make their university, work, and community

environments a safe place to freely exchange ideas; no matter one's faith, views, or beliefs.

I am grateful for the generous George Cooper Scholarship Award, as it will assist me with my academic career in pursuing my Masters Degree at York University, School of Social Work and further it has increased my confidence that I am able to make a difference. I plan to continue to participate in communities at large and encouraging others to speak out for what they believe in, without the fear of retribution for having a different view. The following quote from the film Black Panther speaks to the path I have chosen to continue to pursue on behalf of my community.

"We all know the truth: more connects us than separates us. But in times of crisis, the wise build bridges, while the foolish build barriers. We must find a way to look after one another as if we were one single tribe" (T'Challa, Black Panther 2017.)

Todah Rabah !

By: Jasmine Segal