

PEAK Trail-Blazer Award Selection Committee  
Office of Undergraduate Research and Fellowships  
Northeastern University

January 16, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Maria Rossi and I am currently a sophomore at Northeastern majoring in International Affairs, with minors in Sociology and Arabic. My academic and professional interests revolve around Women's Rights. Following my recent co-op experience with Jane Doe Inc. (Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence), I am particularly committed to reducing violence against women around the world.

I am writing to inform you that I intend to submit a full proposal to the PEAK Trail-Blazer Award tentatively titled "It's My Revolution Too: Violence Against Women During Egypt's Arab Spring." My project seeks comparatively to investigate the issue of violence against women in the context of political transition. It will have a particular focus on Egypt, where traditional and legal restraints on violent behavior have progressively faded as a result of the revolution, while new ones are struggling to emerge.

Paradoxically, the expansion of civil and political rights appears to have coincided with a decrease in Egyptian women's freedom from violence and abuse. The case of journalist Lara Logan, who was sexually assaulted while covering President Hosni Mubarak's resignation, first raised international awareness about the dangers women faced during Egypt's revolution. Last summer Human Rights Watch reported that, since the January 2011 uprising, women in Egypt have become increasingly vulnerable, facing new risks and threats of violence including sexual assaults by extremely large groups of men. I suggest that Egypt's situation is not unique, but it replicates a pattern common to societies experiencing political transformation.

I propose to complete my project in two phases. During phase one, I will identify successful solutions to the problem of violence against women that matured in comparable transitional contexts (e.g. Argentina, South Africa, Serbia, South Korea, etc.) In phase two, I will travel to Egypt and -- working closely with local women rights organizations such as the New Woman Foundation, the Nadim Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence, the Nazra Foundation for Feminist Studies, the Egyptian Women's Issues Foundation, and the Egyptian Family Development Foundation -- I will investigate their potential application in Egypt. Northeastern considers Egypt a "high-risk" travel destination, and I have begun the necessary consultations for filing a petition for permission to travel from the International Safety and Security Assessment Committee (ISSAC).

My mentor for the proposed project will be Prof. Brian White (Department of Political Science), who specializes in the study of democratic transitions in the Middle East.

The Trail-Blazer Award funds will go toward financing my travel and accommodation in Egypt, as well as various administrative expenses in connection with my project.

Thanking you in advance for your consideration of my proposal. I remain at your disposal for anything I can provide to help in the review process.

Sincerely,  
Maria Rossi