



**Interview with Matthew Leung, recipient of
The Leroy F. Aarons Scholarship Award of the
National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association**

DVLF: How did you initially get involved in the LGBTI community?

ML: During the summer prior to my freshman year at Vassar, I was in the process of picking my freshman writing course. I was scanning the long list of courses when the name “Queer Alphabets” caught my eyes. Until that point, “queer” had only been an abstract concept to me, which I barely knew the meaning of. Hence, I decided to take the class. When I arrived at Vassar and was purchasing books for my classes, I noticed that I was suddenly owning books with bold titles like “The Gay 100” and “Boys Like Us: Gay Writers Tell Their Coming Out Stories.” What was I getting myself into?! But it was an empowering feeling, and from that point on I became comfortable with being out. I started attending LGBTI events and even started working as an intern at the LGBTI center of Vassar, Blegen House.

DVLF: What are your career goals? How is the scholarship helping you achieve them?

ML: I have several career goals. My primary goal is to be a multimedia and broadcast journalist covering the high-tech industry. Through my journalistic work, I also want to continue my involvement in LGBTI advocacy by giving voice to urgent issues in the LGBTI community. Also as a philosophy major, I want to continue to explore it in my own style. I believe that philosophy in academia is interested in developing labyrinthine systems of thought. It’s in a race to be just as technical and systematized as math or science. I have an impassioned vision that there is a way to explore deep philosophical topics like the authenticity of life and deconstruction without taking on winding intellectualizations. I see an unexplored path in philosophy where thought is concrete and visceral, and I want to pursue this conviction.

This is an encompassing scholarship for me because I see all the different parts of myself represented in this scholarship, the different parts that at first seem unrelated. I am a native of Hong Kong and learned English as a second language when my family and I immigrated to the U.S. twelve years ago. I am also a first-generation college student. I believe that my background, along with my developments in LGBTI advocacy, journalism, technology and philosophy, have synergistically prepared me as a journalist to consider multiple angles of a story and grasp subtleties often unexamined by the mainstream media.

The Leroy F. Aarons Scholarship has not only financially supported my liberal arts education, but also opened a world of opportunities for me in journalism. This scholarship has made a significant difference in my life, and I am very grateful.

DVLF: Why did you apply for an LGBTI-community-focused scholarship?

ML: I applied for this scholarship because I was ready to make a commitment to journalism, but in an unconventional way. I did not want to be a journalist who merely reports; I wanted to be a journalist who affects positive change to the LGBTI community and who advances LGBTI visibility through fair and accurate coverage. These two noble values are lacking in our society, but journalism can make a positive change. I believed that these values are central the Leroy F. Aarons Scholarship as well, so I knew the scholarship was a fitting match for me.

DVLF: How do you feel you are carrying on the legacy of the scholarship's namesake, Leroy F. Aarons?

ML: Actually, I am riding on the train right now to attend the NLGJA convention in DC! By attending the NLGJA convention, I am sharpening my own journalistic skills and furthering fair and accurate coverage. I also bring what I learn back to my community and my campus newspaper. By striving to bring truth and objectivity to my readers, by upholding myself and fellow journalists to a rigorous and ethical standard, by giving balanced representation to all stories newsworthy, I feel that I am carrying on the legacy of Leroy F. Aarons.

DVLF: How do you feel journalism can be used to advance the LGBTI community?

ML: When there is prejudice in our society, it's often caused by centricities such as heterosexism, sexism and ethnocentrism. In a loose analogy, it's like when people believed that earth was the center of the universe. It was the fair and accurate information from math and science that dispelled this illusion. A similar phenomenon occurs with journalism. Objectivity along with well-balanced coverage shows our society that no particular group, culture or practice is the absolute center of the universe. Centricities in our society need to be deconstructed. I am convinced that journalism holds the key to deconstructing prejudices through fair and accurate coverage.