

URLA Application Essay: A Woman's Manifesto

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A Manifesto for Women was created as a visual documentation of research which has provided data for decades which proves the degradation of women's views of themselves is a result of the ideals set by society. The University of Notre Dame's online library catalogues, center for digital scholarship, and Remix online resource guide provided meaningful evidence and support for which an artistic demonstration of gender studies research could be made.

My introduction to the plethora of resources available was through a workshop ran by English and Digital Humanities Librarian, Daniel Johnson. Daniel presented me with methods of which would introduce me to the most efficient methods of finding relevant information for the research I hoped to conduct. He initially directed me to the "refine your research" tab, which allowed me to narrow my "gender issues" topic to three main segments: how women's objectification is encouraged through media, how societal ideals project on women's emotions, and biases against women within education and the workforce. From this point, I was able to use the "library guides" to narrow down research articles to the topic of anthropology, where I was able to find several studies on each of the three main points I hoped to project. Daniel then recommended I do my media research through the Center for Digital Scholarship, which I proceeded to utilize throughout many parts of my research.

In the preliminary steps of forming my creative agenda, I knew I would need some form of visual material of which I would be able to edit to artistically articulate the research data I had been finding. Initially, I believed this would be impossible to find, but after meeting with Daniel again, I learned about the extensive audio-visual material database we are given access to as Notre Dame students. The Visual Resource center became integral to this next step in my research, as I began searching through the public domain material for sexualized images that were found in studies to be the most objectified parts of women, and the parts society most emphasizes in its beauty standards. Additionally, my discovery of "Remix" escalated the speed of which I could complete my project and provided me a direct outlet to the best material for my project type. Once I had selected "public service announcement" or "media-rich presentation", I was guided through how to search through the material and how I could gather the best quality videos for usage.

Once all visual material was collected, I needed to edit it together in a way that would further emphasize the biases towards women in society. As someone who does not have a budget to purchase Adobe Creative Cloud, it was a relief to learn that this is a resource

the library provides on their computers for students. Now that I had access to Adobe Premier, I was able to edit images together in a way that would emphasize the sense of urgency and drama, in order to bring out the points of the research in an artistic way. Furthermore, many of the video clips were edited to be pink, or were edited in such a way as to emphasize the “traits of beautiful girls” as studied by so many researchers in the articles I had found.

When I had finally maintained a “final product”, I was still not quite happy because I felt there was still something missing, and a big disconnect from the primary research to the art. For this reason, I kept searching for means of which I could improve my project. A couple weeks later, I remembered Daniel’s suggestion to utilize the Center for Digital Scholarship and the new “One Button Studio”. I visited with peers from my writing class, and was officially introduced to the One Button Studio, which spurred the idea to project the researched material on to a screen, and on to my face. I realized at this point that the one thing I had been missing was women. While I knew the One Button Studio was a green screen, and not a projector, I proceeded to seek out resources in which might be similar. I then found that Notre Dame has a digital resource “cage” in DeBartolo hall which is available to all students. I was able to borrow a projector for a few hours and recorded my *final* product.

In the end, I became very happy with my product, for when I would ask my fellow students for their interpretations, they almost all drew on the same three main conclusions that I was working to project by turning the data into art. As someone who has participated in scientific research all throughout high school, and am continuing to do so now, I was surprised to find how effective this new means of communication could be in projecting the technical details in a universal manner. Notre Dame’s research resources have allowed me to encompass a creative, unique, and effective approach to research and conveying new ideas.

I will continue to utilize the resources I have recently learned about, for I have become aware of how accessible raw data is for Notre Dame students. Although I plan to do more traditional methods of research throughout my time here, I think it is also very important that research as I have done is encouraged because it radiates the very essence of research in that it draws conclusions in a slightly different way of which will hopefully inspire others to think more deeply about the topic and the issue at hand.