



Rashad Nimr is a Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations major from Southport, Connecticut. In high school, Rashad founded and led a safe, supportive, social network for the LGBT+ high school students of his area where he facilitated monthly meetings and helped build a community from the ground up. Further, he spent summers in Amman, Jordan visiting family where he volunteered with organizations such as Save the Children and SOS Villages. Rashad is passionate about the intersections of political and social injustice, and wrote his high school senior capstone about the unique and overlapping hardships queer Palestinians face in the West Bank. At Penn, Rashad has been active with Students for Justice in Palestine since his freshman year, and has led the organization in the last two years, successfully planning actions and educational events. Rashad helped to develop the Greek Life diversity initiatives while serving as Political Chair on the United Minorities Council. Rashad has also worked hard furthering the vision of the Civic Scholars Program, helping to found the Civic Scholars Advisory Board and strengthen community bonds. Outside of Penn, Rashad has worked to document human rights abuses with Human Rights Watch in their Middle East and North Africa division, has written grant proposals with Arabian Business Consultants for Development in Amman, Jordan, and helped to resettle refugees in Philadelphia with the Nationalities Service Center. Upon graduation, Rashad will be pursuing his Masters in International Development and Humanitarian Emergencies at the London School of Economics.

## CAPSTONE PROJECT

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### (RE)NEGOTIATING IDENTITY IN THE FACE OF *MITHLOPHOBIA*: QUEER DEPICTIONS IN LITERATURE BY ARAB AUTHORS IN THE CONTEXT OF A POSTCOLONIAL HUMAN RIGHTS DISCOURSE

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Queer Arab identity in the context of a postcolonial, neocolonial world is negotiating within itself to bring to its center a struggle for acknowledgement and acceptance. This identity is formed because of and without the parameters of a broader discourse of international queer rights, morphed by the globalization of consciousness and articulated often through different mediums, languages, and terminologies. Recent literary works by queer Arab authors show that queerness has become increasingly understood as an identity rather than pathology in the Middle East and North Africa. Through the themes of post-colonialism and the postcolonial predicament, internal and external conflict, and gendered violence, this identity is expressed, argued, and resituated. A distinct and altogether unique queer Arab voice has taken form and is gaining traction through this newfound medium with positive implications for future activism, advocacy, and change.