

## Sahar Joakim Diversity Statement

My parents met, married, and left Iran for America within four months. Being born into a household speaking only Farsi proved receiving homework help challenging. During middle school, my father left my mother who then diverted her full attention to our family income.

The trajectory of my life changed only after a trusted high school teacher gifted me with a book by Simone de Beauvoir. Inspired, I enrolled in a philosophy class at my local community college. Teachers spent countless office hours providing me with feedback on how to improve my work, and I began to value my education. I managed to transfer to UCLA where I continued as a philosophy major and also continued to receive ample support from professors.

I am an Iranian American woman with community college roots and a family of origin with no taste for academia. I would not be defending my doctoral dissertation in May of 2020 if it were not for the teachers who repeatedly went the extra mile mentoring me. Seeing the powerful impact that teachers have, I planned to be an educator.

From 2007-2009, I helped start a Peer Mediation Program at University Senior High School with the support of the Asian Pacific American Dispute Resolution Center. For my work on this initiative to help minority students work through their conflicts on campus, the Office of the Assessor for the County of Los Angeles awarded me a scholarship. During 2013-2014, as the Vice President of Philosophy Club at UCLA, I helped organize the 1<sup>st</sup> Undergraduate Philosophy Conference. At Saint Louis University, as the President of the Philosophy Graduate Student Association, I organized the 1<sup>st</sup> Undergraduate-Graduate Philosophy Mixer during which students mingle over prospects of philosophy as a minor, major, or career. During 2019-2020, as the Chair of the APA's Graduate Student Council, we are focusing our session at an upcoming APA on thriving graduate studies in philosophy as a first-generation or minority student.

I am dedicated to mentoring students in my community and providing extra attention to nontypical students who wouldn't normally know the questions to ask or about the aid available. I participated in a workshop on how to mentor effectively with a focus on diversity and inclusivity, and I learned the importance of possessing student-specific information before offering advice. Inquiring into the student's personal life requires that the student-teacher relationship goes, respectfully, beyond the syllabus. As an instructor, I never make anyone feel as though they are unable to succeed in philosophy or with their goals beyond my classroom. I fight whatever implicit biases I may harbor; in the classroom, for example, I grade essays via university number and without knowing the author.