

FROM THE EDITOR



As college students face young adulthood with fresh eyes, they learn quickly that they have to develop strong independent decision-making abilities at the personal, academic, and professional level. The Newcomb Scholars program asks these students to consider the skill of decision making, which is integral to successful leadership, through the lens of the women who have come before them. Women and gender minorities face further difficulties when navigating decision-making at the institutional level, facing gender bias from their peers, their superiors, and, sometimes, their nations at large.

By reading through the case studies of female leaders who had to weigh immensely complicated decisions, students gain perspective and knowledge that they can apply to their own lives and leadership styles. By writing case studies of their own, these authors have explored the characteristics needed for successful leadership through deep engagement with source materials.

The cases in this issue all engage with the influence of gender bias on the decisions that these protagonists have made within their professional institutions. Kate Alley sets the scene more than 50 years ago, unpacking how institutional sexism followed researcher Dr. Lois Jones as far as Antarctica, placing limits on adventure, exploration, and scientific advancement. Elena Rengel unpacks the intersectional biases of the Nobel Committee in the early 20th century through the experience of theoretical physicist and mathematician Emmy Noether. Vishali Sutharsan details Dr. Mitu Khurana's tireless fight against the female feticide movement in India, during which she had to weigh the immense personal cost of her battle with her desire to fight for her daughters and nation. Ava Attia follows the intertwined stories of Waris Dirie and Safa Nour as they battle Female Genital Mutilation in Djibouti, weighing the impact of investing in the futures of individuals against the benefits of broad-scale interventions when resources are stretched thin. Lila Duarte explores the multidimensional decisions that indigenous political groups in Mexico were faced with when presented with the opportunity to engage with institutional politics on the level of the presidential election in 2014. Finally, Olivia Sam brings the reader to contemporary politics and public health, unpacking the unprecedented hurdles that Tsai Ing-wen faced as the first female president of Taiwan during the international COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout history, across borders, and between disciplines, how have women pushed the boundaries of what leadership means? How have they made strides towards improvement within institutions that seemed designed to work against them? What lessons can we, in the 21st century, take from these women about life and leadership? These are the questions that these authors skillfully and thoughtfully ask of their readers.

It is with immense pride that we, as editors, share the work of these authors with you. I hope you learn from them, I hope you learn with them, and I hope you follow the exceptional leaders that they are already becoming.

Sincerely,
Sydney Soganich
Newcomb Scholar
Class of 2026