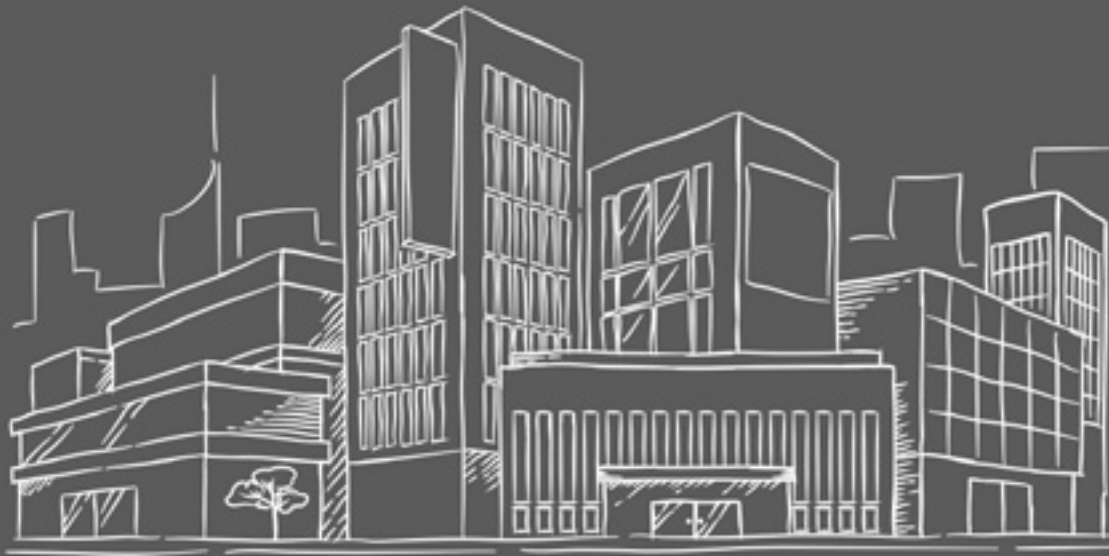




2021-2022



STORIES

from City as Lab

Part-2





“Stereotypes”

Part-2

STORIES

from City as Lab

2021-2022

Preface

In Dec 2021, an unusual Bollywood film was released - about falling in love with a trans woman. Whether the audience liked it or not is somewhat irrelevant. The point of the movie (we assume), as is the point of our theme this year, was to educate, spread awareness and create empathy for people who are discriminated against for simply being themselves.

Merriam-Webster defines 'Stereotype' as forming "a standardized mental picture... that represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment (about a group of people.)" Stereotype most frequently refers "to an often unfair and untrue belief that many people have about all people or things with a particular characteristic."

Story-telling is a powerful medium through which students can explore how stereotypes affect the lives of people around them. These six stories, presented in various formats across two books, are all true - researched, written and illustrated by students who participated in the CaL story project this year. They interviewed the protagonists to learn more about their lives and gave voice to their life-stories through picture books, graphic novels, first person narratives or feature stories.

Be it gender, sexuality, professional choices, disability, birthplace, cultural differences or simply the way one looks, these stories have pushed our student participants to dig deep, to truly understand how stereotyping can affect someone's confidence, psyche, ambition and identity, and to check their own privilege.

We hope they do the same for you.

CaL Team



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Diti Nandurbarkar, Kashipra Waghmare, Sara Brahme, and Tvishi Khorate

Mentor- Monisha Abhyankar

Wheeling to Success

M.S.B Educational Institute

Aliasgar Plasticwala, Huzaifa Soni, Insiya Lakdawala, and Taher Halwadwala

Mentor- Raziyah Amravatiwala



Rationale

Student 1 (Aliasgar Plasticwala):

Many times walking on the streets, I would see beggars who had missing limbs or were blind. I felt sympathy and wondered that do all disabled have to go through the same difficulties and problems.

It made me wonder that why was there a majority in the number of beggars which are differently-abled.

Student 2 (Huzaifa Soni):

I believe no matter your disability, it's entirely possible to overcome the challenges you face and enjoy a fulfilling life. My Dadaji had lost his full eyesight but was our inspiration as he used to do all his work by himself, basic things like moving around by himself, operating mobile, and his sense of hearing was good.

Student 3 (Taher Halwadwala):

I have a friend who has a learning deficit, although he is highly skilled in arts. He is looked upon by everyone, I want to change this taboo of people who think that people who are weak in learning or have learning deficits are misfits in society. I believe if they get a chance, they can prove themselves and rise above the situation. When I spoke to my mother about our Research Project, she told me about the protagonist of our story. I was really inspired to know that a disabled lady is running a full-fledged business and this spurred me to gather more information about her. Thus, I spoke about her to my friends and we decided to take up her story for our research.

Student 4 (Insiya Lakdawala):

When I was small, we lived in Vikhroli. My parents used to take me to the Helen Keller deaf, dumb and blind school nearby. I loved being there and had my birthdays celebrated at the institute. We used to distribute snacks, cakes and many more things. They were good at making things and did their work on their own. This interaction with the differently-abled has created a special place for them in my heart.



M.S.B EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE

Wheeling To Success



Authors:
Aliasgar Plasticwala
Insiya Lakdawala
Taher Halwadwala

Illustrator:
Aliasgar Plasticwala
Huzaifa Soni
Insiya Lakdawala
Taher Halwadwala

Mentor:
Raziyah Amravatiwala



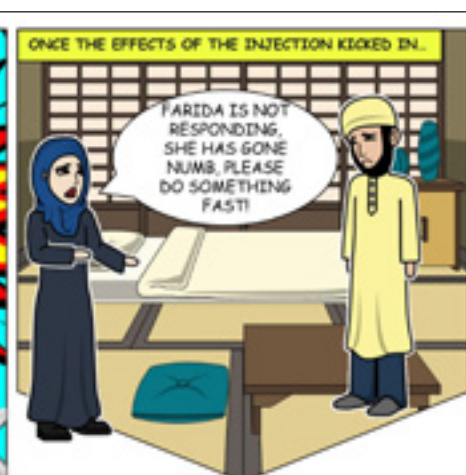
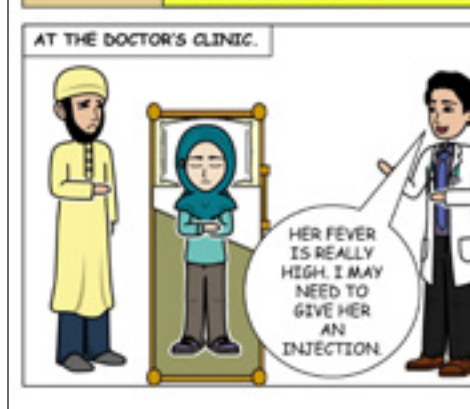
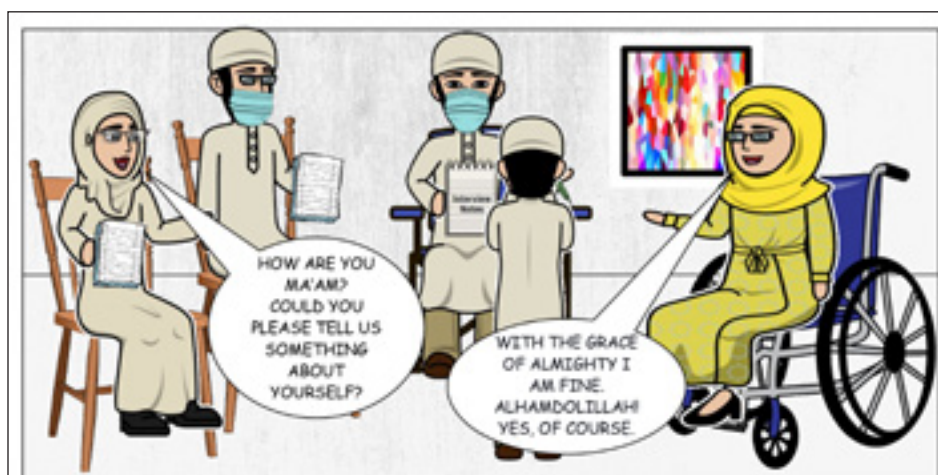
Reflections of students

Insiya Lakdawal

"This assignment gave me exposure to interact with individuals outside of my inner circle. I met with wonderful people who would care for me even though they had not known me for long. While this was an enriching experience, I encountered a few challenges along the way. I had hardly read any graphic novels, so making one was not on the cards. But that was solved by the confidence instilled in me by my mentor and teammates."

Huzaifa Soni

"The story project started, and I was teeming with excitement to do my bit. At the onset, I worked on the project daily. Although, as days went by, I could not put that much effort into my given tasks as the workload from school and tuition started increasing. Thus, I missed many meetings due to the tuition classes. Timings kept clashing as my teammates were free at the time of my tuition class. I also faced family pressure for my upcoming exams. However, my mentor and teammates were very supportive and, it became easier for me to manage my timings and cope. My task was to illustrate, leading to increased screen time and eye strain. The thought of Farida aunty and her inspiring story boosted me to complete my work"



26 से 31 जून

पोलियो का कोई इलाज नहीं दो बूँद हर बार है नवाब सही

پولیکو کا کوئی علاج نہیں دو بوند ہر بار ہے نواب سہی

AND SO, I WAS IMMEDIATELY OPERATED.

SPENDING MONEY

I WAS OPERATED A SECOND TIME IN A HOSPITAL AT HAJI ALI.

IT IS DIFFICULT FOR ALL OF US TO LIVE UNDER ONE ROOF.

WE ARE FACING A FINANCIAL CRISIS.

AT OUR NEW HOME...

THAKKARBAPA SLUMS.

LOW INCOME AND RISING EXPENSES LED TO DEPRESSION. FATHER WAS GOING THROUGH A ROLLERCOASTER OF EMOTIONS.

I CAN'T TAKE THIS ANYMORE!

STAY VS LEAVE

Medical Bills	
Medicines	₹550
Tests	₹650
Operation	₹1700
Room	₹500
Food	₹200
Total	₹3600

HE LEFT, LEAVING US ALONE.

WHERE IS ABBU!

BETA, HE LEFT!!

MASI OUR GOOD SAMARITAN.

MASI HAS SENT US MONEY BUT WE WILL NOT ACCEPT IT.

AMMI WHAT IS IT?

MOM'S PICKLES BOUGHT OUR BREAD.

SHOULDN'T WE HAVE TAKEN THE MONEY THAT MASI SENT US?

ALMIGHTY IS OUR PROVIDER, BETA ONE SHOULD BE SELF-DEPENDENT.

MY FIRST VEHICLE TO SCHOOL, A PRAM WHEELED BY MY BROTHER. I WAS THE ODD ONE OUT.

HEEI! HEEI! HEEI! HEEI!

I REALLY HOPE THIS CHILD DOES WELL IN SCHOOL.

YES, POOR CHILD! IT WILL BE DIFFICULT FOR HER WITH HER DISABILITY.

SCHOOL

STEREOTYPE

CRUTCHES BECAME MY THIRD LEG AND TRAIN, THE MODE OF TRAVEL.

OH GOOD! THE TRAIN IS ALREADY HERE, LET'S GO.

***BOLD AND ITALIC TEXT REFERS TO A STEREOTYPE IN THE STORY.**

5

A TRYST WITH FAITH I ALMOST MISSED AN ACCIDENT.

AREE JALDI! SOMEBODY HELP THE POOR GIRL SHE IS DISABLED AND HELPLESS.

THE GUARD MY SAVIOUR, HE WAVED TO STOP THE TRAIN.

STEREOTYPE

MY FRIENDS AND OTHER BYSTANDERS HELPED ME UP AND I BOARDED THE TRAIN.

VERBAL ABUSE, BULLYING, SYMPATHY...

HA! HA! HA!

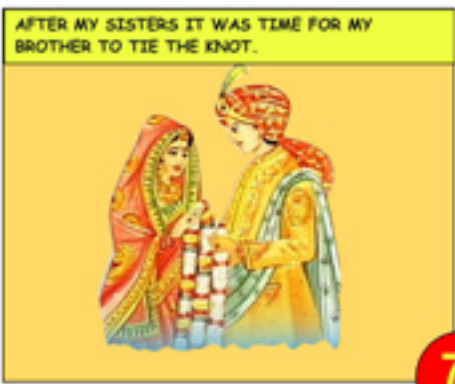
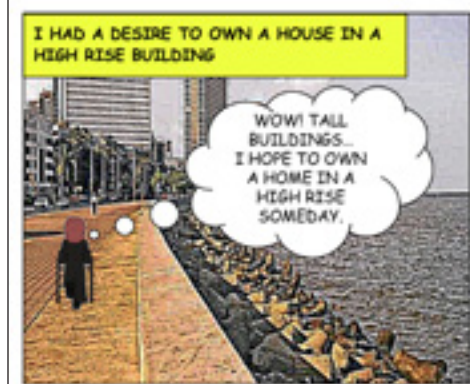
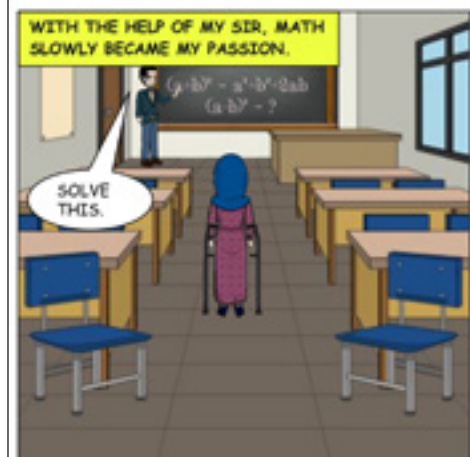
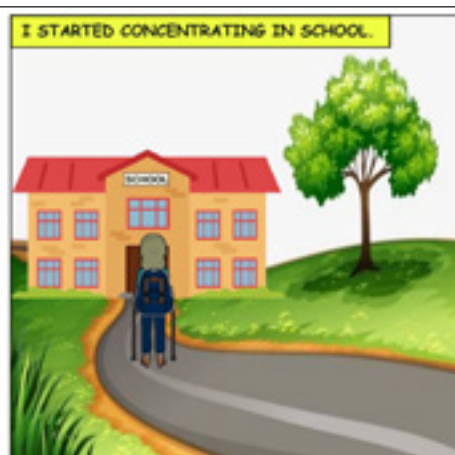
AREE MAN! YOU HAVE A LANGGE AS A FRIEND?

HEY! WHAT DID YOU SAY?

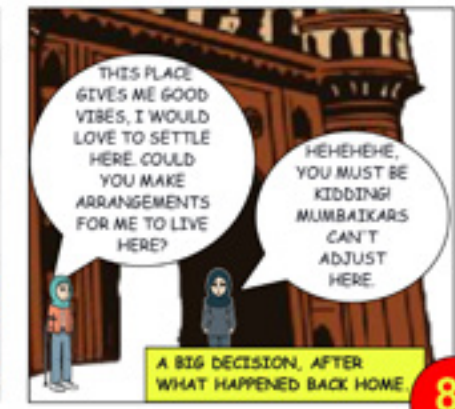
WHAT'S BOTHERING YOU MAN? ARE YOU UPSET THAT YOU DON'T HAVE A GOOD FRIEND LIKE ME?

STEREOTYPE

6



7



8



A NEW CHAPTER IN SECUNDERABAD BEGINS...



AMMI AND I RESIDED WITH MY FRIENDS PARENTS FOR A YEAR.



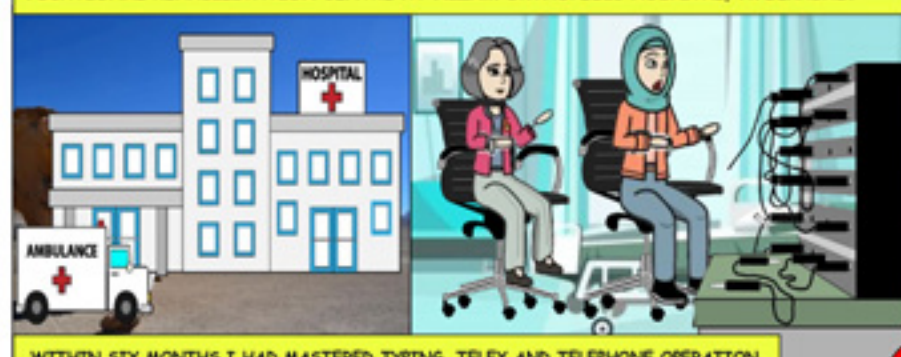
AFTER SIX MONTHS OF TRAINING I STARTED OPERATING A TELEPHONE BOOTH.



RESELLING IMPORTED DRESS MATERIALS FROM MUMBAI IN SECUNDERABAD.

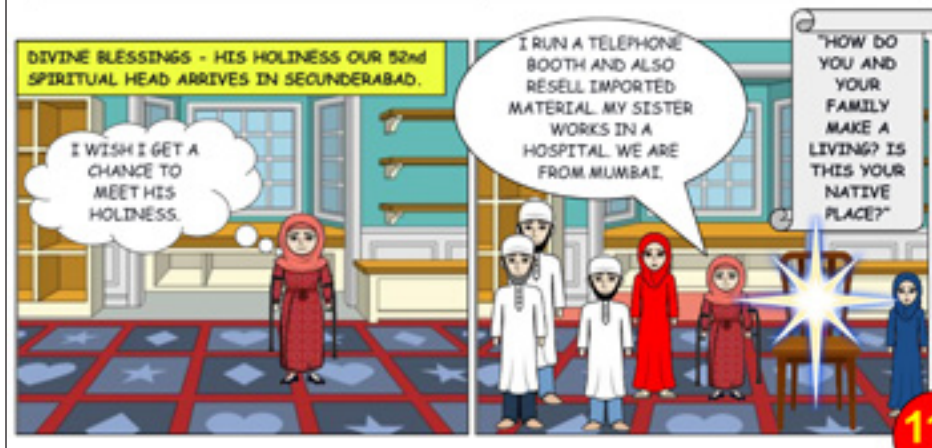


VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CENTRE AT NIZAM ORTHOPEDIC HOSPITAL, HYDERABAD.



9

10



REUNITED WITH MY FATHER AND BROTHER, THEY BECAME MY SUPPORT SYSTEM AND HELPED ME IN MY MOTHER'S ILLNESS AND BUSINESS.



I DESIGNED T-SHIRTS AND MASALLAHSI*



MY CUSTOMISED KITCHEN AND WARDROBE, MAKES IT EASIER TO MANAGE DAILY TASKS.

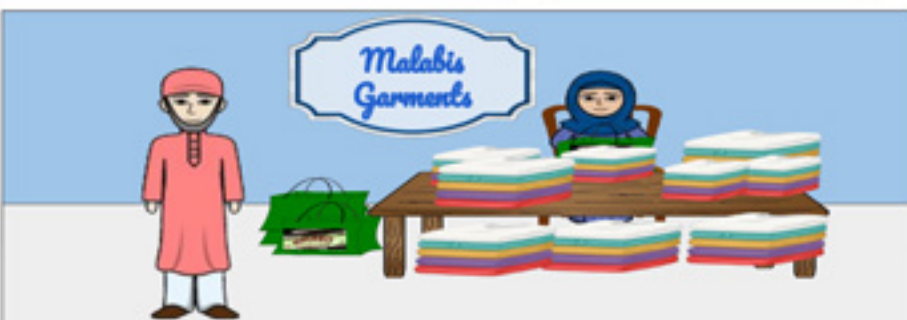


DAWOODI BOHRA EXPO

COME ONE COME ALL

VENUE : WORLD TRADE CENTRE
TIME : 11:00 AM - 10 PM

DO VISIT OUR STALL
MALABIS GARMENTS



TO PROMOTE MY BUSINESS I PARTICIPATED IN VARIOUS EXHIBITIONS, IT GAVE ME RECOGNITION.

*PRAYER MATS.

13

BY THE END OF 1997, I STARTED MANUFACTURING MY OWN PRODUCTS. EVENTUALLY, I BECAME A MAJOR SUPPLIER OF HOSIERY MATERIALS IN SHOPS IN THE LOCALITY.



AS MY BUSINESS EXPANDED I NEEDED SOMEONE TO ASSIST ME TAKE IT FURTHER. I ASKED SHABIR BHAJI TO JOIN AS A PARTNER. IT HAS BEEN 8 YEARS AND WE HAVE NOT LOOKED BACK SINCE.



MAKE-OVER OF BHENDI BAZAR. MY DREAM IS FULFILLED I OWN A HOME IN AL SA'ADAH TOWER AND SOON WILL GET MY SHOP IN THE AL SA'ADAH COMPLEX.



Before → After

14

THE WORLD WAS CAUGHT IN THE STORM OF THE PANDEMIC IN 2020. WE MUMBAIKAR'S WERE AFFECTED TOO. BUT WE SAILED THROUGH IT.



THE DOCTOR WAS ABSOLUTELY RIGHT, ONCE I RESUMED GOING TO MY SHOP, I WAS BACK TO NORMAL.



WE USED TO VISIT THE SHOP EVERYDAY AFTER THAT WITH THE SHUTTERS DOWN, AND ARRANGE ALL THE ITEMS AND TAKE STOCK.



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The Silent Struggles

The Cathedral and John Connon School

Agastya Mundhe, Priyal Shah and Rohan Udani

Mentor- Mrs. Kanika James Tucker



Rationale

We want to tell the story of people from different regions of India who have faced stereotypes based on their cultural differences and looks. People who move to big cities such as Mumbai from villages and other rural parts of India are often stereotyped based on their looks, accent, culture, caste, e.t.c.

Adapting to the contemporary lifestyle of Mumbai is not an easy task for someone who comes from another place. Despite being Indians, these people are often judged and treated differently based on their birthplace and cultural differences. All humans should be judged based on their abilities, but instead are judged based on their differences. We want to spread awareness about the lack of equal opportunities to people from rural parts of India. These people are also rejected socially due to their cultural background.

North eastern India is disconnected from the rest of India, and its traditions are unique. A common misconception is that they are from China because

of their looks and culture. So, people disrespect them assuming that they are from China even though they are from a part of India. This quintessential change can only be made by spreading awareness about this injustice.

While we sulk and complain at every unfulfilled wish and hiccup of our life, we fail to look at the bigger picture. The struggles faced by migrants from north-east India are often overlooked. These people are demotivated by rude Mumbaikars and often fail to keep their hopes up. Not every struggle ends in a success, the harsh words of Mumbaikars often tarnish the dreams of hardworking migrants; who leave their hometown for a brighter future.



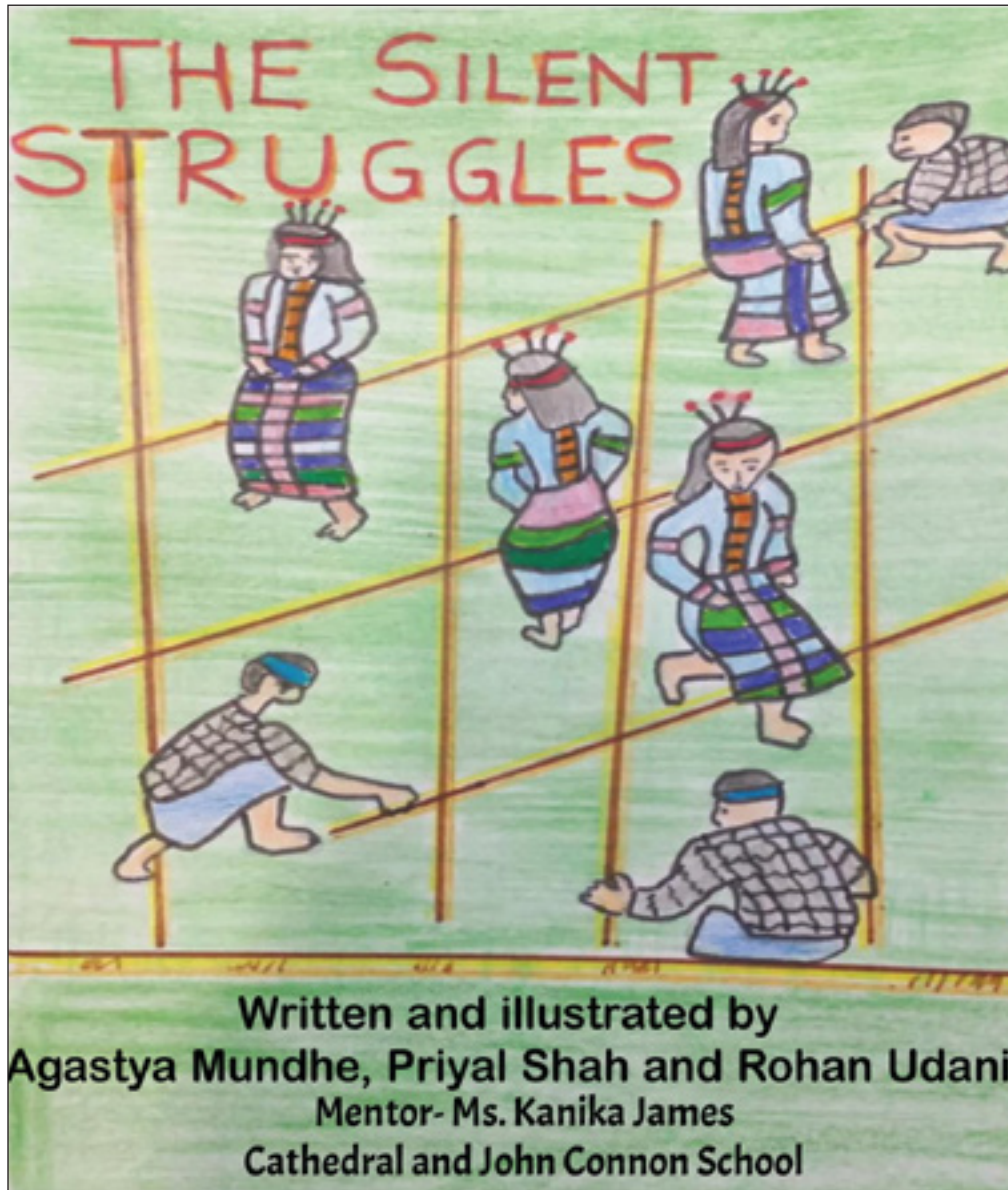
Reflections of students

Priyal Shah

"Choosing a topic that highlights a known yet ignored stereotype, meticulously working on it for three months, finding an appropriate prospect for the interview that would fit the story, the illustrations to perfectly complement every event from each page of the story, the title selection to create an element of surprise and curiosity to know more about the book, the choice of the cover page and mainly complete coordination of our team in terms of hard work and dedication has made this book a beautiful reality that we will cherish for a lifetime."

Rohan Udani

"Cal has truly been an educational and enriching experience for me. Life is a journey, not a destination. I have learned many valuable skills throughout the process of planning, writing, and illustrating this picture book. I have enjoyed compiling this picture book as I believe that every human being must be judged based on their abilities, and nothing else."





Story- The Silent Struggles

Oof! That was a close one. Zo **barely** managed to dodge the car just ahead of her on her way to a grocery store. Navigating the roads of *Mumbai* wasn't easy for a **young girl** who had moved to Mumbai from her **village in Mizoram**. She continued driving, and just as she thought she was getting better at it, a **POLICEMAN** approached her. The **POLICEMAN ORDERED** Zo to stop and asked her name.



It's **Zo Sangzeli**, sir

Jho What? You look **CHINESE**.

Z-O S-A-N-G-Z-E-L-I, sir.
I am from **Mizoram**.



The policeman asked Zo to show her **Indian Driving License**. Zo **reluctantly** handed it over.

Zo reached the grocery store, *low on self-esteem* after her encounter with the policeman.



Zo realised that a few basic items cannot cost so much. With *no other choice*, she handed over the money.

Zo then **STRUGGLED** to find a job in Mumbai. She
hairstresser at a salon, and a salesperson at a

applied for a receptionist position at a hotel, a
clothing company.

Impressive resumé
Zo but I **don't think**
you will be the **best**
fit for the
receptionist
position.

Sorry Zo, but we
have **already**
chosen another
candidate for this
post.

Sorry we **did not**
find you very
convincing. We
will let you know if
there is something
meant for you.

Even though her job application was denied for different reasons each time, she realised that there was one underlined reason. She looked like a CHINESE. This was extremely disheartening for Zo, but she decided to move on.

Zo **finally** managed to find a job as a waitress in a restaurant. She also rented out an apartment.
Zo started to **get used to** life in **MUMBAI**. Zo decided to *pursue her dream of opening her own salon.*



Where is a good location to start my own salon?

What marketing strategies can I use?

One evening, Zo was watching the news when she heard about **COVID** and its **Chinese origin**. She realized that **HATRED** towards Chinese people was going to increase, and life was going to become **much harder** for her since she looked similar to a Chinese person.



Suddenly, the bell **RANG THRICE**. When Zo opened the door, she saw her neighbours **growling angrily** at her.



It is because of you **reckless Chinese**, that my daughter is in the hospital, down with COVID. I can't even meet her.



If **your people hadn't eaten bats**, my husband would have never lost his job. We have to sleep on an empty stomach now.

I AM NOT CHINESE !



One day, when Zo was at **work**, she was called into her *boss' office*.

Zo, customers are *leaving* the restaurant because they think *you Chinese* are the *source of the virus*.
You can't work here anymore.

I understand Zo, but I have *no choice*.

But sir, I'm **NOT** Chinese. I am from *Mizoram*.

Zo received an **eviction notice** from her landlord, after this was only an **excuse** made by the landlord. She walked explained to the officers that she was **TERMINATED** from her job just because she was *assumed to be Chinese*.

many **complaints from the other tenants**. Zo knew to the police station to file an **FIR complaint**. She from her job without pay, and **EVICTED** from her



Being **JUDGED** because of her **LOOKS**, being **TERMINATED** without pay from her job, being **evicted** from her apartment, and now **NEGLECTED** by the police??? What had Zo gotten herself into?

Why did I ever move to Mumbai? I was a **care-free** girl in Mizoram. I enjoyed my **COMFORTABLE LIFE** there. I reminisce those days, where I worked in the tea gardens, **chatting** with my friends, and **MERRILY** strolling home at the end of a tiring day. Now, why should I be entangled in the midst of so many **problems, difficulties, and negativity**?



After a deep dive into her thoughts, Zo remembered that she earned Mumbai with the hope of **starting her own business**, and sending some

only ₹200, after a **LABORIOUS 8 HOURS** in the tea gardens. She moved money back home, for her family.

With **newfound motivation**, Zo chose to **FIGHT** her own **solon** and started renovating it. She faced **overcome every PROBLEM.**



back. She found a new apartment. She **rented out** many ups and downs, but always found a way to



Zo Sangzeli is a **successful businesswoman**. She owns herself as well as her family. There always are *long lines*

a **salon** in Mumbai and is able to provide for outside her salon.



Zo has one message for us: Diversity is the strength of our nation. People should not be *stereotyped* based on their *culture, birthplace, or looks*. We request all Indians to *learn more* about *other regions, cultures, and traditions of India* and *not discriminate* against anybody.



Shards of glass from the ceiling that she broke

Dr. Kalmadi Shamarao High school

Diti Nandurbarkar, KshipraWaghmare, Sara Brahme, Tvishi Khorate.

Mentor- Monisha Abhyankar



Rationale

Gender stereotypes are the beliefs that people have about the characteristics of males and females. A person's gender can have a massive influence on the type of work a person can be expected to do, due to the stereotypes that are associated with gender and race in our society today. Women have always been placed into caregiving roles and have been seen as someone who does not have enough physical and mental strength to be in certain professions. This limits not only the potential of women but also the community and the country as a whole.

But there are some women who have broken this stereotype and work in a profession which requires them not only to be physically fit but to have the ability to assess threats and to deal with unruly crowds.

Our story is about women who are working as bouncers. This story is important because these women bouncers are breaking barriers and gradually making inroads into a profession that is male dominated.

The reason that we want to share this story is because it inspires every female to understand their independent worth. It also provides an empowering message that tells females and young girls, that they are equally capable of doing everything that men do.

We are sure this story will have an impact on men and women alike, to understand that ,we are getting closer and closer to diminishing the age old belief that, women can't do certain things.

Currently, there are approximately 540 female bouncers in Pune right now (according to various surveys) and that number has significantly gone up in the last 5 years by almost 400. This means that a lot more females chose to be a bouncer. This has created a significant impact on the lives and the families of these women by providing them job opportunities. It has also impacted the women and females of this city, who go out for work or even enjoyment late at night or at any time of the day, as they now know that there are more females looking out for them, should the need arise. Women bouncers work tirelessly to make sure the customers' nights are fun and exciting. They spend much of their time monitoring and reading the crowd for possible problems as well as intervening in certain situations and extracting difficult customers.

Shards Of Glass From The Ceiling That She Broke



By

Diti Nandurbarkar

Kshipra Waghmare

Sara Brahme

Tvishi Khorate

Mentor - Monisha Abhyankar

Dr. Kalmadi Shamarao High School



Story- Shards of glass from the ceiling that she broke

“Help me! Help me someone!”, the shrill cry of a woman could be heard over the music blaring from the nightclub. Hearing her cry, Amita and her team of women bouncers rushed towards the origin of the sound. They saw a young woman crouching against the wall with four drunk males looming over her. The bouncers acted quickly and pulled the offensive men away from her. They resisted at first, but, by negotiating sternly, the bouncers got the girl to safety. This is a regular day in the life of a female bouncer.

This century has seen stereotypes of all kinds being broken, one of them being women demonstrating that, there is no job that they are not capable of. Amita Kadam, a young woman in Pune, illustrates this with her life. She is the proud owner of Swamini Bouncers and Security group, a company of only female bouncers, possibly one of the first of its kind.

Getting into this unconventional field dominated by men, was never an easy task for Amita and her team of bouncers. She was running a successful beauty parlor. The idea struck her when she visited a night club with her friends. She saw a male bouncer unsuccessfully trying to control a drunk woman. She wouldn't listen to him and according to protocols, he couldn't touch her to stabilize the situation. Ultimately some lady



guests intervened and took her away to her car. From then on, the idea of helping women stuck in Amita's mind. She had seen that the women in her neighborhood, who worked as maids and security guards, worked long hard days but were barely paid 700 rupees at the end of the month. Most of them had families to look after, children to feed, clothe and educate. Their monthly income was nowhere near enough to support even one of those bare necessities. She convinced them to join her in starting the organization of female bouncers whereby she promised them food and income security. These women had to endure severe opposition from their families, but, they persisted.

Amita too faced opposition from her family. Her husband, who supported her in the beginning, soon began to waiver in his support and this reached an extreme where he could no longer watch her succeed and made her choose between him and her career. She, after much consideration and a heavy heart, ended their marriage, understanding that, that was the best thing to do for her company, her team and herself. In the enlightened words of poet Maya Angelou, "Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possible, without claiming it, she stands up for all women". Her drive and commitment to her company also motivated a few other bouncers in the team to stand up for themselves when faced with similar opposition.

Lalita, a bouncer in Amita's team, says "We had to work hard to build our bodies, convince our parents and husbands, endure taunting from people around us, but, we were strong willed and determined, wanted to earn a respect worthy livelihood and that has made us successful today. Now society hails the work we do".

The bouncers go through rigorous training sessions. Amita trained all of them in martial arts which she excelled at as a teen, fire safety training and eye contact training among many. Regular workout with weight training and toning exercises are a must for her team. They follow a strict diet and never skip their meals, consisting of eggs, milk and chicken to maintain their fitness. "The demand for female bouncers has grown over the years. Not only pubs and bars, but they are needed in private parties, political events and high profile marriages too." says Amita, looking back on how job opportunities have changed for her in the last 5 years.

"The first event that I ever booked was a wedding ceremony. It was an experience that will always stay with me because that was the first time that I saw my dream materializing into something tangible that I could be proud of ", says Amita, reflecting on her career so far. When asked what her biggest events were, she said "I think one of the biggest events was the movie premier of Dabangg 3 at the Balewadi stadium. We have also booked other major events like the tour of Chala hava yeu dya(a Marathi comedy show)." She also added that some of her team was stationed at the Shivajinagar COVID center in recent times.

These bouncers sometimes face the issue of party crashers wherein some enthusiastic youngsters, caught up in the frenzy of getting into the party, complain to the police against being thrown out of the party by these bouncers. But Amita makes it clear that the police have always been cooperative and supportive and have never rashly filed any complaint against them without understanding the situation.



Such is the journey of Amita Kadam and her fearless team of bouncers. The story of an inadvertent feminist hero in an age where feminism is preached more oft than it is practiced. In a time where socially defined gender norms dictate everything, from the jobs that we can take up to the way that we live.

We asked Amita if there was something that she wanted to highlight about her journey and she said “I feel like a lot of hard work has gone into building up my company, from its very foundations. I did it all on my own, with very little support and a lot of opposition. It seemed almost impossible, but here we are”. Here we are indeed! Amita started 7 years ago with just 5 bouncers in her team, a number which has now crossed 100. She says “I’m proud of myself and my girls and I want to tell all the young women and girls out there that all your decisions are up to you. Make them with extreme caution, but they are your decisions.





Reflections of students

Diti Nandurbarkar

"My experience with CAL was different this year than it was last year. With everything changed, from the themes to my team members to the people we got to talk to, this was an alternate reality of a CAL experience. Similar to the last one, but also starkly different. This year's theme, stereotypes, enabled us to talk to a few people who've made a small but significant change to the community around them and to the city. It was wonderful to get to know them and their stories and it was fun to get to represent them in a journalistic feature with my team, guided by our mentor. This year's team was also a wonderful group of people to work with and I truly enjoyed the six months that I spent on long zoom calls with them. Although two years of living in the virtual world has equipped us with a little experience of communicating online, it was still a small challenge that we had to overcome in the very beginning."

Tvishi Khorate

"I truly experienced new things But the most important thing that I learned was listening. Respecting someone else's opinion."

Kshipra Waghmare

"The thing which I liked the most was building-up the draft for the story. This project helped me a lot to nurture my vocabulary and sentence building skills. I also noticed that I was able to express my emotions and feelings better. Interviewing different people for the story was a new experience for me. I really enjoyed working with my team."

Sara Brahme

"This year's experience with CAL was far more exciting and full of amusement. Having "Stereotypes" as our topic, we started by listing down the types of stereotypes. I'd briefly known about this concept, but having worked with but this six-month CAL project gave me an opportunity to prove my statement wrong; and I surprisingly improved a lot."



Thank you





@cityaslabindia

www.cityasalab.com

STORIES

from City as Lab