

My name is Jessica Silverman, I am taking a gap year(s) from a psychology-philosophy degree at UVM to chase the whims of adventure. These dreams that have captivated me from such a young age, are becoming closer and closer to being a reality. Over the past year I have stood in places I've never thought I would stand. My skis have ridden down slopes I assumed I'd only see in pictures. I've summited peaks, traversed ridges, looked out upon jaw dropping scenery- the type of experiences that make you question your own perception of reality. The mountains have an uncanny way of taking the surrealism of dreaming and nuancing it into reality. Whenever I am in the mountains I feel like I am in a dream. I've spent much of my time this past year, oscillating between such dreams in the mountains and such realities in society, as I attempt to fund my lust for adventure. The mountains are a place for making the impossible, possible. They are somewhere that bring us to the brink of our human capability, somewhere that breathes life into our spirit, and connects us to ourselves in the most raw form. It at these times that I am most in sync with the limitless possibilities of adventure. I find though that when I leave the mountains, I begin to lose touch with this as the limitless possibilities of adventure become constrained by topical and flimsy notions, such as money. This is the reason why I am applying for this scholarship, though I am sure you guessed that based on its nature as a scholarship. I am writing to the Flyin Ryan foundation specifically because I know that Ryan lived to perpetuate these notions. Although our paths never crossed in person, I feel deeply connected to the spirit Ryan lived with and the legacy he left behind. I think that being alive doesn't mean you are living. The distinction between life and death is biological, however the distinction between living and existing is something that taps into something much deeper. Ryan was a person that truly lived, something that many would regard as one of the rarest commodities in the world. I think that I resonate most deeply with this core principal of his; living life in the moment and living each of these moments to its fullest.

This past year I have spent traveling, taking my passions for the mountains to the Rockies, Tetons, Himalayas, and Southern Alps. I have progressed in the backcountry, both in the art of ascent and the art of descent. My continually developing mountaineering and ski skills have brought me to remote mountain ranges, unique lines, and jaw dropping scenery. However, now at the forefront of this call for adventure lies the most formidable goal yet; skiing the quintessential lines of backcountry Alaska. Come mid march this year I will be going to the Chugach Mountains of Valdez, Alaska for a 10 day ski touring adventure. This trip combines everything I love about the art of skiing, it's raw, it's intense, it's high consequence, and it's completely untouched by the fingerprint of society. When I started chasing winter I said that I wanted to take this sport to the apex of human potential and to the ends of the earth, and Alaska is just the place to do that.

I have both personal as well as communal goals for this trip to Alaska. This season I have partnered with Coalition Snow. They are an all female ski company, whose mission is to ignite a revolution of female skiers and riders to stand up and break down the shrink-it-pink it paradox that has plagued the ski industry for far too long. Part of going to these remote mountains, and skiing these big lines, is to see if I can do it, but the other part is to show other people that they can too. Female skiers and riders are subject to a marginalization in ski culture, that isn't necessarily as present for males. Since the beginning of big mountain skiing and riding, the sport has been a breeding ground for masculinity. It perpetuates character traits like heroism and risk taking, and attributes these desired traits to the male persona. The mountains are an immense, calamitous dominion and the ski industry takes this concept and shows us that the force who can reckon such high consequences and unpredictability is the male energy. I don't know if any human is a match for the mountains, but women are just as adept to take them on as men are. Females that are in the mountains doing the same things that men are doing, just as well if not

better are considered the exception not the norm. The goal of this trip specifically, and going forward in general, is to build camaraderie amongst women, to empower women to believe in themselves and trust each other. I will be going to AK with fellow female shredder. It'll be the two of us in the mountains, choosing our own routes of ascent/descent, reading topos, testing the snowpack, making decisions. Through this, we hope to inspire other women to trust themselves and to trust each other. The mountains, in all their glory are inherently equalizing. When we stand in them it does not matter who we are, where we came from, what gender we identify with, we are all entirely subject to the whims of mother nature's most daunting beast. I will also be skiing in honor of a good friend, Lucas Sven Halgren who passed away a few weeks ago in a motorcycle crash in Mt. Cook, New Zealand. Sven was one of the best skiers I have ever had the privilege of riding with. His passion for skiing was absolutely infectious, he could make just about anyone laugh hysterically, and he sent it bigger than anyone else on the mountain. In the wake of his tragedy we have coined the term, "Svend it" as Sven was renowned for these type of antics. Sven was a very important mentor to me, he introduced me to the freeride community, and taught me everything I know about taking risks and committing to them.

Everything I am as a skier I can attribute to the friends and mentors I've been lucky enough to have in my life. Through my travels, drifting from mountain town to mountain town, I've met some pretty phenomenal human beings. These people have taught me, inspired me, accompanied me, and been integral in making our expeditions successful. The backcountry is a place that necessitates partnership. I have been so lucky to have spent time out there with partners that I can not only rely on, but partners that I am completely in sync with. Partnerships that delve way deeper than being on the same beacon frequency, but coexisting on the same wavelength. These people, are so ingrained in my existence and I am forever grateful for all my mentors that have helped me get into the mountains, and the lifelong friendships that have ensued from being in the mountains.

I began my financial independency from my parents when I moved away to college at 18. I supported myself through college on a soccer scholarship at UVM. Two years later when the crave for adventure became too strong, I quit the sport I loved and began taking odd jobs in order to fund my travels. I've waited tables in Burlington, Colorado, and now Jackson. I've cleaned bathrooms, and worked on farms in New Zealand. My parents are always good for a place for me to go back to, listening ears for my stories, and a homecooked meal and cold beer, but as far as funding my bucket list, I am on my own. Unfortunately I have an expensive taste in adventure. If awarded this scholarship I would put it towards covering some expenses for Alaska. Some of these include, airfare, van rental (for driving and accommodation), snow safety course, etc.

Skiing means the world to me, and I know it did to Ryan also. I think it means something different to each of us, yet being skiers we are all brought together on one common ground. Skiing is a conglomeration of each riders unique style and passion. For me skiing is what breathes vigor into my life. When I am skiing, the whole world is vivid, every sensation is intensified. Skiing provides an intense thrill for my corporeal being yet the most visceral understanding of my own existence. There is a curious paradox that happens when I clip into my skis at the top of a line, every cell in my body is on edge yet I'm simultaneously at peace, I am proud of myself yet also humbled by the immensity of the mountains. It's beautiful insignificance as its best. It would be an absolute honor to carry out the Flyin Ryan legacy this winter in the renowned Chugach mountains of Alaska.