

▶ A MINUTE WITH ...

Roxanna Azari '10

One year later, the impression that Roxanna Azari '10 made at the Women's History Month luncheon lingers like an unforgettable song. At the annual gathering, the award-winning spoken word performance artist let loose one of her poems that touched upon her Iranian heritage and sexism. **POETIC JUSTICE:** "That poem is called 'Seen Not Heard.' It was written in response to a man who told me and my friends in the movie theatres in New York City that 'women are supposed to be seen not heard.' I compare this incident to another incident in Iran when another man told me and my cousin that our pants were too far above our ankles. I intertwine these two experiences of being a woman in different countries to point out that sexism is still prevalent no matter what part of the world one comes from. I wrote this piece to address the struggle of being a woman in the world today." **RHYME AND REASON:** The English major has been writing poetry since she was 7 and has deep roots in the art form. "My grandmother is an amazing poet. She used to write all the time and I used to just listen to her. She would write in Farsi and although I am fluent in the language, the poetry was very hard to understand. But with time, I was able to understand little by little." **POETRY IN MOTION:** In 2006, Azari won both the New York Knicks Poetry Slam and the Urban Word NYC Poetry Slam, beating out more than 500 others. "Spoken word is written from the heart. There are no restrictions; you make your piece what you want it to be. That is why I like it so much. It gives me space to break rules and write outside the margins that often restrain my thoughts." **SPEAKING UP:** The preceptor and social justice intern in the Office of Service, Spirituality and Social Responsibility this year founded iSpeak! at Wheaton, a spoken word poetry club. "In my old high school we had a group called the Live Poets Society. We met every week, and it was just a beautiful thing. I found my voice in that club. Believe it or not I was extremely shy in high school. We're talking never-raised-my-hand-in-class-once-type shy. But this club helped me." 📍