

# **Guide to the Barnard College Essay Contest Records BC36.02**

**Finding aid prepared by Marcia Bassett and Stephanie**

**Mannheim. Finding aid updated by Alice Griffin.**

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This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Barnard Archives and Special Collections

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	Barnard Archives and Special Collections
<b>Creator</b>	Barnard College.
<b>Title</b>	Barnard College Essay Contest Records
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1991-2003
<b>Extent</b>	1.67 Linear feet ; 4 document boxes
<b>Location note</b>	This collection is stored offsite and advance notice is required for access. To use this collection, please contact the Barnard Archives and Special Collections at 212.854.4079 or archives@barnard.edu.
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	This collection consists of correspondence, publicity, financial information, and programs related to the Barnard College Essay Contest, as well as the winning essays from each year.

### Preferred Citation

Barnard College Essay Contest Records, 1991-2003; Box and Folder; Barnard College Archives, Barnard Library, Barnard College.

## Historical Note

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The Barnard College Essay Contest was created in the fall of 1991 in order to “highlight the voices and literary talents of a broad spectrum of young women” (“Barnard College Essay Contest: A Brief History”; 2003; Essay Contest; box 4, folder 51: Barnard College Archives, Barnard College). Female 11th graders at any of New York City’s public high schools could enter the competition, and each entrant was told to write an essay of 500 words or less on a woman she admired. Essay contest winners were selected by members of Barnard’s English department and Barnard alumnae writers. The top four winners received unrestricted cash prizes of \$1,000, \$500, \$300, and \$200, respectively. The first place winner’s high school English department also received \$500. Approximately 25 other notable entrants would be given certificates of merit each year. A day of writing and college-related workshops was provided annually for the top four winners and certificate of merit recipients in their senior years of high school. Until 2001, the New York Times (which helped sponsor the contest) often published the top four essays in its Op-Ed section on Mother’s Day, helping gain publicity for both the contest and college in addition to honoring young writers. Beginning in 1998, the CBS Foundation provided funding for the Barnard College Essay Contest as well.

The New York Times stopped providing funding for the contest in 2001, ceasing publication of the winning essays in the paper’s Op-Ed section as well. Despite this major publicity loss, the Essay Contest remained popular, receiving 716 entries in 2002 (its highest volume of submissions at the time). At the same time, however, Barnard shifted its focus toward improving young writers through workshops rather than competition. The Young Writers Conference—a day-long event featuring writing workshops for high school sophomores and their teachers—later took the Essay Contest’s place. The exact year that the essay contest ended is unknown, but the records housed in the Barnard College Archives run through 2003.

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## Collection Scope and Content Summary

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This collection consists of essays and entry forms from the top four winners; essays and entry forms of merit certificate recipients; receipts, correspondence, and financial reports related to annual expenses of the Contest; organizational correspondence; and publicity materials and press clippings from newspaper and magazine articles related to the Barnard College Essay Contest and/or its winners. Many years include copies of the New York Times op-ed pages in which winning essays were published.

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## Collection Arrangement

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This collection is arranged chronologically.

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## **Administrative Information**

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### **Publication Information**

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### **Access**

This collection has no restrictions.

### **Publication Rights**

Permission to publish material from the collection must be requested from the Barnard Archives and Special Collections. The Barnard Archives and Special Collections approves permission to publish that which it physically owns; the responsibility to secure copyright permission rests with the patron.

### **Reproduction Restrictions**

Photocopies or scans may be made for research purposes.

### **Accruals**

No additions are expected.

### **Acquisition Information**

The acquisition date and source is unknown.

### **Processing History**

This collection was processed and the finding aid written by Marcia Bassett and Stephanie Mannheim in July 2011. The finding aid was updated by Alice Griffin in July 2015.

Descriptive Rules Used: Finding aid adheres to that prescribed by Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Encoding: Machine readable finding aid encoded in EAD 2002.

Finding aid written in English.

## Controlled Access Headings

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### Genre(s)

- Correspondence

### Subject(s)

- Barnard College
- College-high school cooperation
- Contests
- Creative Writing
- High school girls
- High school juniors
- High school students' writings
- Public schools--New York (State)--New York

## Collection Inventory

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	<b>Box</b>
1991-1994	1
1995-1997	2
1997-2001	3
2001-2003	4