

ALUM
PROFILE

Alums Named to “30 Under 30” Lists

Innovators in education, media, enterprise technology, health care, and retail and commerce

By Ian Evans

Louise Baigelman has loved books since she was a child.

“Any walls that my parents could turn into bookshelves, they did,” says Baigelman (SED'11). But she also learned early on that many people didn't have the kind of access to literature that she had. In middle school, she volunteered each week at an elementary school or a day care center in inner-city Philadelphia and saw how children and mothers were held back by illiteracy.

“I was startled by the fact that 15 minutes from my house people were experiencing different realities,” Baigelman says. “That was my first spark that this was something that was interesting to me.”

She saw the same problems when she became a middle school teacher. Some of her students, especially ESL (English as a second language) learners, couldn't read the books at their grade level and they didn't want to read the first grade books that they could understand. “It's embarrassing, it's uninteresting,” Baigelman says, “and it's hard to get them to read—you can't really offer them anything they want to read.”

She decided to do something about it, and what she did landed her on the *Forbes* “30 Under 30” list in education. Two years ago, Baigelman founded Story Shares, a nonprofit that crowdsources



After seeing widespread illiteracy as a volunteer and then a teacher, Louise Baigelman founded Story Shares, which crowdsources books for students who read below grade level.

writers to create books tailored for middle school students who read below grade level.

The Boston-based nonprofit offers about 300 books online, free to anyone, and they can also be downloaded as PDFs. Many are paperbacks sold and shipped to readers. Baigelman says Story Shares is about to add hundreds more. To keep the books coming, Story Shares holds periodic writing contests. Published writers can get small royalties for their work—money that many choose to donate to the organization.

To date, Story Shares has reached students in 53 countries, 49 states, and 350 schools.

“We have been inspired by the feedback we’ve gotten,” Baigelman says, “teachers saying that students who were previously totally uninterested in reading, or refused, or just goofed off during independent reading time now finish a Story Shares book and ask, is

there another one like this for me to read?”

Also on this year’s *Forbes* “30 Under 30” lists are four other BU alums and a BU Academy graduate. Evan Puschak was chosen for the media list, people who are “defining and driving the world of news and content.” As the creator of the YouTube series *The Nerdwriter*, Puschak (COM’10) produces illuminating video essays that

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examine a wide range of subjects, from art and literature to culture, science, and—most of all—language. *The Nerdwriter* recently surpassed a million subscribers.

Whether he is speaking about the music of Drake, how E. E. Cummings

writes a poem, or even how President Donald Trump uses language, Puschak works hard every week, he says, to “bridge the gap between the layman and the expert.”

Raphael Arar (CAS’09), a principal designer at IBM Research, was named under enterprise technology. On the health care list are Niko Skievaski (GRS’10), cofounder of Redox, which helps transplant health care data across different platforms, and Emilia Javorsky (SPH’10), founder of Arctic Fox, a company that hopes to freeze and remove fat to treat a variety of conditions, such as sleep apnea and type 2 diabetes. Under retail and commerce is Sam Roberts, a 2008 BU Academy graduate, who cofounded NaturAll Club, which sells hair products over the internet for women of color, or with especially curly hair.



Evan Puschak is the creator of *The Nerdwriter*, a YouTube channel with more than 1.2 million subscribers.

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