

## **Maryam exit interview:**

### **What's your story about?**

It's about the American Dream, mostly. And how our ideas of free will and determinism, all that stuff about whether human beings are in charge of their own destiny. It's exploring that through the lens of human being and also robots. And my point was, basically, it doesn't matter if free will exists or doesn't exist. Because we have to believe it in order for society to keep on functioning.

### **What did you learn?**

The research that I did, going online and reading and speaking to experts, gave me a lot of knowledge. I think it's really important personally for me, trying to understand myself. And getting to learn that was a really surprising thing. I didn't think I would actually be affected by what I was researching.

I learned that truth isn't necessarily the most important part of living. Because when I was researching free will and determinism, what I saw over and over again was that nobody can say whether it's real or not. And I guess I've always grown up with the idea that -- being an American and also a Muslim -- it's part of my religion to believe that. And also it's something that's really emphasized in American culture. Like the idea that you can do whatever you want no matter what. And seeing this kind of scientific analysis of it, you realize it's not necessarily a truth, but it's still so important to the way we work as human beings. That was really shocking to me. Something that's not necessarily true is essential to our society. I don't know if it's changed my whole outlook on the way the world works, but it is really interesting to think about.

### **What do you want listeners to take away?**

"A lot of what we take to be true is not necessarily true. And exploring research can show you things you don't want to hear. Things that are hard to hear and evaluate objectively. But it's important to put yourself out of your comfort zone and understand that even something that even something you really want to be true doesn't have to be to be impactful.

### **Anything else about the program?**

"It was really impactful. More than anything I've ever done in school, I think. Because you were free to research and do whatever you wanted. You could really dive into it, research as much as you wanted, talk to professors that you might be afraid of. The program encouraged you to find answers to your questions. And I really enjoyed that process.