

Personal Statement

Home for me is the small, picturesque city of Victoria, British Columbia. Growing up, my relative liberty and affluence were largely unapparent to me. My concepts of inequality and injustice informed by trivial unfairness such as when my twin sister received the larger slice of cake. Despite my comfortable upbringing, I possessed, from very early on, a strong curiosity and eagerness to understand the people and the world around me. This happened at first through language, later through travel, and today in my current work as a youth education advocate for refugees.

From childhood I evolved from an exclusive twin talker, to an English-speaking chatterbox, to a fluent French speaker and dabbler in Spanish, Latin, and Bulgarian. As an undergraduate majoring in French and Linguistics, I was thrilled to explore the bilingual nature of my Canadian identity and to be able to engage with an increasing number of people globally. Throughout my studies, I worked with international ESL students, further nourishing my cultural and linguistic curiosities, as well as the nascent teacher in me, who was to mature further as I took on roles as a private French tutor and university tutorial instructor. Additional time spent volunteering at a local immigrant and refugee centre allowed me to better comprehend the depths of diversity and adversity, justice and injustice, in my own community and the world. These experiences, compounded by my natural curiosity, inspired me to undertake more global pursuits upon graduating, first as an international humanitarian volunteer in Senegal, and then as an NGO staffer in Mexico, Ghana, and Fiji in the years to follow.

My post-graduate travels and professional work not only helped consolidate my undergraduate experiences, but also led to great personal and professional growth as a teacher, student, advocate, collaborator, manager, and leader. These experiences on the ground served as an invaluable contribution to my evolving understanding of equality, justice and their counterparts and both fuelled and fed my innate curiosity in ways not possible in a classroom. Whether listening to the stories of hardship of urban families in Guadalajara, establishing unique educational programming in rural Fiji, or monitoring teams documenting human rights abuses in Ghana, I was reminded again and again that justice is not a given, and that strong advocates are needed to help give voice and strength to those who are so often silenced or ignored.

Importantly, these years abroad served as my initial exposure to international human rights in context and eventually inspired my pursuit of a Masters degree. Balancing the demanding schedule of graduate school and part time work, conducting in-depth education and policy research, participating in rigorous debate, and interacting with strong and diverse ideological and political viewpoints were all challenging but enriching experiences. These challenges colluded over a short 16-month period to strengthen my own values and beliefs, ultimately solidifying my decision to pursue a legal education and career.

My experiences since graduate school as a human rights worker, leadership and problem solving instructor for young women, and education advocate for refugee families have further reinforced my beliefs in the importance of human rights and education, the potential of the law to protect and strengthen these institutions, and my desire to act as an empathetic, socially conscious advocate in these contexts through a legal career.

While small, idyllic Victoria will always be home, my notions of justice and equality originally born there have evolved greatly over the years. Victoria serves as a symbol and reminder of my unearned privilege, a privilege that continues to motivate me to advocate for justice and equality for others less fortunately situated. But it is further afield, across Canada and abroad, where I hope to apply a legal education in the field of international human rights law, a field in which the University of Toronto's Faculty of Law would train me distinctively through its International Human Rights Program, clinic opportunities, and global internship options.

My personal and professional experiences as an academic, teacher, expatriate, mentor, and leader have equipped me with the initiative, passion, competency, and commitment necessary to succeed in law school. I believe strongly that a University of Toronto legal education in particular, with its rich course offerings, distinguished and supportive faculty and ideal location will equip me with the additional tools and resources necessary to pursue my professional goals. But most importantly, a University of Toronto legal education will formally and uniquely prepare me to help others effectively seek and find justice in the truest and fullest sense of the word.