

I have always wanted to be a leader. Growing up, I admired the people that were not afraid to hold the reins. Leaders are the people that sacrifice, serve justice, and make tough decisions. True leaders, or at least the best ones, are not self-serving or after the benefits of authority. They identify a need or a deficiency in a community and fight to fix it. Some people are born into leadership; others get thrust into it. I, however, wish to grow into it. My educational goals and career ambitions center around an overarching desire: to lead and to protect.

My father always saw something in me that I could not see. He saw my tenacity and passion and always encouraged me to find a career that could harness it. As a child, I pictured myself having a job where I could paint a compelling picture that changed people's perspective of the world. It was not until I stepped into a courtroom for a mock trial that I found where my passion ignited. At the National Student Leadership Conference for Law and Advocacy at Yale University, I acted as a defense attorney in a criminal case. Advocating for a client that people wrote off as a lost cause changed my perception of legal work. For the first time, I saw lawyers as more than mediators or counselors. Lawyers compose the armor that defends the vulnerable. I want to be a lawyer because I want to be a defender. I am certain that I can contribute a high level of integrity and creativity to the legal field, following the path paved by inspiring women like Judge Jerri Lee Mills.

Obtaining a law degree will assist me in serving my community by acting as a stepping stone. I must acquire an extensive legal education to become the legal professional I aspire to be. Learning how to think like a lawyer will allow me to branch out of my comfort zone and into a state of growth. My intention for attending law school is to gather the knowledge and experience needed to establish a career defending civil rights. To integrate both my passion and my potential, the aim for my educational career remains to become a lawyer worthy of serving my

community. Such a goal requires more than getting impressive grades. Attending law school will set an added expectation of integrity, persistence, and ethics. Studying the law, I hope to challenge myself and further develop my character.

An indicator of my work ethic is my dedication to my education and my community. I started college at the age of sixteen, in which I enrolled in high school and college simultaneously. I graduated high school early, pursued a degree in political science, took the LSAT at eighteen years old, and I will graduate *summa cum laude* from the University of Houston's Honors College. As an undergraduate student, political science professor, Dr. Alin Fumurescu, selected me to take a graduate course in political theory. While I was apprehensive about enrolling in such a challenging seminar with graduate and doctoral students, I was also appreciative of the opportunity. After finishing the course at the top of my class, I knew that I could pursue a law degree at a young age. This resolve embodies a similarity to that of Judge Mills: she is a driven and determined person that actively pursued her goals.

Concerning my community involvement, I undertake extensive participation in my church and local campaigning. Every weekend, I love leading worship on stage in the adult, youth, and children's ministries. I have always loved using my voice to debate and facilitate discussion. This outlet, however, allows me to use my voice to glorify God. Off the stage, I volunteer my time to help outreach ministries and my church's volunteer program. With over 500 volunteer hours completed, I have contributed my time to a church community that I cherish. Another community activity I have participated in is Judge Greg Hill's campaign for U.S. Congress for Texas' Congressional District 22. Volunteering on this campaign allowed me to interact with members of my community, advocate for a campaign I supported, and discover more about the political process.

On my first day at Dawson High School as a sophomore, I confronted a groundless belief I held about myself. The confined cubicle of my guidance counselor's office felt like a sauna. My palms were remarkably sweaty with nervousness; I clutched my backpack in anticipation. I had just moved from northern California to the humid climate of Pearland, Texas, a city I had never heard of two months prior. On edge, my eyes darted to the neon spirit posters on the wall as I awaited the news of my new classes. The thoughts raced in my mind, wondering if I would retain my rank as valedictorian from my previous school. Having researched Dawson High School's stellar academic reputation, all I could think in my head was, *How could I possibly match up to these other Texas students?* My counselor plopped down on his rolling chair with a thud. His expression was obscure, failing to ease my anxiety. Holding up my folder, he uttered, "do you want the good news or the bad news?"

The subsequent hour changed the course of my academic career. My counselor informed me that graduating at the top of my class was unattainable because of my previous school's incompatible grading scale. My heart sank in my chest. In that office, I challenged the belief I once held that my rank equated to my self-worth. Although I was disappointed, I understood that pursuing academics to the fullest would be the greatest reward. I ultimately decided to dual enroll in college and graduate high school early with an associate's degree. This pathway enabled me to become an Honors student at the University of Houston. Thinking back to the day where I questioned my belief in myself, I now recognize that academic accolades, while important, do not define who I am. Although I did not graduate as a valedictorian, I proved myself a dedicated student with a passion for the legal field. My plan is to continue my work ethic in law school and beyond to further contribute to my community like Judge Mills. Thank you for your time and consideration.