

Personal Statement

I was raised in California's Central Valley. I graduated from Shafter High School in the top 3% of my class. I attended UC Santa Barbara on a full-ride scholarship as a Gates Millennium Scholar. I am a UCLA Law Fellow, a PG&E 1L Diversity Scholar, and a PracticePro Diversity Scholar. Next semester, I will be a judicial extern to Justice Groban in the California Supreme Court. I am the first person in my family to attend and graduate from college. I will be the first person in my family to attend and graduate from a professional program. These accomplishments are not just mine. These accomplishments belong to my family and to my community.

My parents inspired me to lead these accomplishments because they built something out of nothing. They immigrated to the United States from Mexico when they were 18 and 16 years old. They brought nothing more than the clothes on their back and the dream of achieving a better future for my three siblings and me. My parents struggled to maintain our two-bedroom apartment filled with six people by working multiple jobs. One job was working as wedding photographers on weekends.

Over time, this side job grew so successful that it became the family business. At the age of nine, I served as my father's assistant, carrying cables and setting-up equipment. By the age of fifteen, I filmed weddings on my own, with little more than my father's trust. To this day, I spend my Saturday helping the family business.

When our photography business slowed during the winter months, my father grew rose bushes to sell and bring in additional income. My school winter breaks coincided with the crop's winter harvest season. I spent all my high school and college winter breaks working in the rose fields. The work was grueling but humbling. With every day that passed in those fields, my

appreciation for the sacrifices my parents made grew. I reflected on my goals and returned to school more motivated to excel.

Because of my parent's sacrifices, and their example of selflessness, I understood at an early age I had a purpose and that no aspect of my family's history, wealth or pedigree could prevent me from fulfilling it. My purpose is to serve others. My dedication to serving others explains why I returned to Shafter after college graduation.

Since my second year at UC Santa Barbara, I increased educational opportunities for our youth. Most of my students are first-generation, between the age of 13 and 17, and many, like me, have worked the fields. My work focused on mentorship and academic development: Basically, it was my responsibility to be an expert for my students. They relied on me to help them navigate and demystify the complex college application process. Because of my work, I am proud to say that over eighty of my former students are now attending elite four-year universities across the state and country.

Throughout my college access work, I saw parallels between the advocacy work I did for my students and the advocacy work attorneys do for their clients—It is the attorney's job to be their client's expert and guide. I saw this when I interned at the public defender offices, and I see this now in my role as counselor for the Workers' Rights Clinic. In this profession, people depend on you. My future clients will expect no less.

My experiences growing up instilled in me a desire to serve others. I continue to do this now as a law student, and I will continue to do so as a lawyer. Just as I returned to Shafter as a graduate to improve educational opportunity among its youth, I intend to return to the Central Valley as a lawyer. I also hope to one day become a sitting judge in Kern County and teach law-related classes as an adjunct professor at a local university or college. Thank you for your time.