

## Personal Statement

When I was 18 years old I found myself sleeping in the back of my car during the frigid winter. I was not among the number of my classmates who had received acceptance letters and scholarships to attend college during my senior year. I dropped out of high school, which caused disappointment and strained my relationship with my mother, who ultimately decided to put me out of her home. For the first time in my life, I did not have a clear direction or anywhere to go. My circumstances became so desperate that I ended up living in a prison.

During my first night, I held my scarce belongings close as I slept on a mat surrounded by nearly one hundred strangers. I can recall how dangerous this converted prison-turned-homeless shelter was. I witnessed so much violence between the men who stayed there. One night, two rows over from where I slept, one resident stabbed another. I watched it happen. Afterwards, I made sure to avoid stepping on the bloody spots on the floor. These events served as harsh reminders that this was not how I wanted my life to end. It was a humbling experience. Despite my mistakes and ill-advised choices, living in a prison pod allowed me to reflect on the changes I needed to make to ensure that my present reality did not become my permanent future.

I was raised in City X, a city known for violence, poverty, and its citizens having negative interactions with the legal system. Looking at my past, I know the odds were against me. As I grew up, drugs, shootings, and homicides were a prevalent threat and source of trauma. Growing up on the West Side of City X meant navigating the dangers of a high crime neighborhood while encountering drug dealers who showed more interest in us than some of our teachers. By the end of my sophomore year of high school, many of my friends joined gangs, went to prison, or been murdered. I followed some of their behavior, not realizing that committing myself to my education could be my escape.

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A piece of my hope was restored when an assistant pastor at my church, who had been notified about my situation, referred me to a program named Job Corps. The Jobs Corps program is dedicated to assisting young people while they work to obtain their high school diploma or GED and develop job readiness skills. This new chance to complete my educational goals and gain employment skills was a chance to have a better future for myself. I saw opportunity instead of obstacles, and with little support I chose to go back to school. It was hard. I earned my GED and pursued my education at X Community College and later X University. I became the first person in my family to graduate from college with both an associate and bachelor's degree. My hunger for knowledge was forever kindled.

However, I had not realized that I wanted to become an attorney until I attended X College. I took a criminal law course and it captured my attention. Learning about the elements of a crime, and criminal procedure was thought-provoking for me. Our discourse included analysis of the stand-your-ground law and the controversial Trayvon Martin trial that captured the world's attention at the time. I naturally found my voice as an advocate in that course. I passionately addressed the lack of diversity in the legal profession, the racial disparities that plague our justice system, and reflected on the manifestation of inequity in my home community. I knew that I could not simply be a bystander constrained to theory in the walls of academia. I wanted to be more actively engaged. My resolve was further emboldened after the killings of Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Eric Gardner, and the countless lives of others that were cut short due to police brutality and oppressive policies. I regained a sense of direction and wanted to achieve justice on behalf of those who have been afflicted unjustly.

Importantly, my will to equip myself with the knowledge and skills to advocate effectively revealed the need to attend a law school that fits my mission to become a local

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prosecutor. I want to attend The X School of Law because I want to be a change agent in my hometown of City X. The X School of Law has an endless commitment to training sound attorneys along with its rich practice friendly legal community. When admitted, I plan to participate in the Criminal Law Clinic and Writing Program to hone my legal skills in the area of advocacy and legal penmanship to be a change agent my hometown needs. I want to ensure that justice is achieved for all people while furthering legal access to underrepresented communities.

I'm convinced law school is a natural transition for me to fulfill my purpose to become an advocate for the voiceless. I am confident my upbringing that allowed me to navigate City X and my academics will positively contribute to any law school environment by bringing diversity of thought to lecture halls, benefiting future peers, and our legal community. I am determined to succeed in everything that I do, and continue to operate with maturity, determination, and perseverance.

Overall, my untraditional upbringing, which I learned to cherish, led me to my passion to become an attorney. Although I was not afforded many privileges growing up, my diverse experiences made me who I am and led me to the law. I would not change it for anything, and I will never forget where I come from. This is my story. Today, I have the distinct honor to apply to law school, with gratitude and thankfulness. Many of my childhood friends are dead, in prison, drug-addicted, or lost in a cycle of dead-end employment and unemployment. Reflecting on my experiences, I know my life easily could have been the same.