

Crystal Maria Hernandez

During the summer of 1958, my *abuelo*, Jose Diaz, was orphaned on a ranch in a little town in Anáhuac, México. Sleeping outside by their pond was his only alternative to staying in his home, haunted by the memory of his parents' death, until a passing neighbor offered the boy his first job as a shepherd. By day, he chased after his friends, the sheep. By night, he herded them into the shed and found solace in the blanket of their wool. As he grew older, *Abuelo* worked different jobs: selling newspapers, shining shoes, and serving as a waiter. Eventually, he had a family of his own, and as his children sprouted, so did his paternal desire to offer them a world free of the beasts he was forced to wrestle with. Placing his hopes on the allure of the American Dream, he relocated his family to the United States.

I am aware of my privilege. Unlike my *abuelo*, I can act on my passion for education, and I make the most of that opportunity daily. I invest all of my efforts in making the most of these moments, aspiring to honor those who paved the way for me. My aspirations remain unwavering; I desire to provide for my culture at least a *fraction* of what it does for me by advocating for people like my family, people without the means or confidence to fight for their rights. I am proud to be a Hispanic, and when everything else is going wrong, the love for my culture is always something I can draw from to push me forward.

My undergraduate studies fixate on an underrepresented field across the nation: the Latinx community. I pore through literature from powerful, contemporary Mexican-American authors such as Sandra Cisneros, Ana Castillo, Erika Sanchez, and many others. Each of their novels incorporate strong Hispanic female characters, encouraging others to transgress boundaries. I look forward to aiding our cause, using my position as an attorney to promote policies in areas that advance Latino engagement such as voting rights, civic life, and education.

Specifically, I want to invest my knowledge as an attorney in the education system. Many of our school hallways are filled with students who are trapped in a cycle of failing to meet test standards, losing faith from their community, and in themselves, and as a result, pitting against education. The American education system has succumbed to judging children's intellectual capability upon a series of unrepresentative standardized testing. As such, children are often prematurely deterred away from potential subjects or fields of interest, altering a major lifetime decision. Teachers are almost single-handedly evaluated by their students' success rates for tests which inaccurately showcase all that they have learned for the year. Consequently, to remain in good standing, teachers become consumed by "pass the tests" rhetoric, filling students with methods and strategies to answer multiple choice questions correctly. Additionally, being severely underpaid easily discourages professionals from over exerting themselves to reach the incredibly high-set standards. This leaves many children inadequately taught, going into college poorly equipped, and themselves becoming teachers who complete the cycle.

As an optimistic 1L, I want to merge my passions of servitude and learning by one day being a part of the change that fixes such an important, yet broken, system. My hope is to reach a position where I can curate a series of legislative reforms that implement redesigned methods of measuring student success. The reformation would also affect teachers by increasing salaries, and consequently, standards. As a result, the education system will be restructured to consist of highly trained teachers, provided with competitive incentives to produce quality work, and free of the pressures of a standardized test. It is our responsibility to invest in legislation that promotes our children's ability to confidently become the leaders of the future. I am confident in the possibility of implementing more effective and strategic methods of educating our students, and measuring the nation's progress.

The \$2,500 dollars that I would receive from this scholarship will propel the change I hope to contribute to in the future. As an incoming law student, the near future awaits with financial weights in the form of loans to cover tuition and books, student fees, housing, and living, to name a few. The money provided by this scholarship will lower my loan to cover tuition. As such, many of the other costs will become bearable, and more of my attention can be redirected into my dream. Thank you for allocating your time and attention to my imploration, and for continuously enabling so many aspirations to change the world.