Personal Statement

“Sigue tus sueños y haz algo que de veras te guste.” Follow your dreams and do what you love. My grandmother’s advice still rings in my ears. As much as I would love to make her proud, what if doing what I love goes against her beliefs? I realize now that I cannot please everyone and I know that I have been through many rough obstacles to be who I am today.

Growing up, I dealt with verbal, sexual, and physical abuse until I was thirteen. This caused me to isolate myself from my friends and distrust most male figures in my life. Meanwhile, my family continued to test my inner strength by ridiculing homosexuals, including Dorian, my uncle and role model. It hurt to know that my family was judging Dorian for his sexuality rather than the important characteristics that he exemplifies: intelligence, humility, and resilience. To get away from the abuse and my family’s intolerance, I submerged myself into education as a method of healing. Books became my best friends, and after-school tutoring and activities became the norm. I did anything I could to take my mind away from home. Home, a four-letter word that, for most, brings thoughts of a happy family, love, and unity, for me only serves as a reminder of survival, struggles, and homophobia.

By the time I entered high school, I did my best to forget my early childhood by staying silent. The only person to whom I could turn and express myself was Dorian. We started our activism in support of his rights (and secretly mine) in 2008 when Proposition 8 passed, prohibiting the marriage of same-sex couples in California. We volunteered at phone banks, canvassed neighborhoods door-to-door, and made our voices present at rallies to inform the public of how the passage of this law would negatively affect thousands of Californians. My love for activism grew when I volunteered at San Diego LGBT Pride for the first time in 2009. The next year, I was solely responsible for the youth-oriented activities and areas at the largest civic event in San Diego. I coordinated and facilitated the Pride Festival for 500 LGBT youth who had been kicked out of their homes or who had not yet come out to their families. This experience granted me the opportunity to recruit youth volunteers, create a youth committee, and even work one-on-one with youth who were having trouble coming out. After the 2010 Pride Festival, emboldened by the courage of others, I came out to my mother. Much to my surprise, she welcomed me with open arms and continues to support me unconditionally.

Now as a high school senior, it is clear to me what my passions and aspirations are. I will become a public policymaker and establish laws against rape, hate, abuse, and bullying to ensure that those who commit these heinous crimes are penalized to the full extent of the law. In addition to my political dreams, I will dedicate my life to supporting non-profit organizations like Love Our Children USA and help children who are survivors of abuse. Through these goals, I hope I can be a role model and empower those in my community who are otherwise afraid to break their silence.

My childhood abuse and experiences give me the drive to help those with similar experiences. To think that I have only begun to break my own silence only serves as a reminder that there are many others like me. Today I am proud to be who I am. So the next time my grandmother asks me if I am following my dreams, I will respond with an honest answer. I will look into her eyes and confidently respond with, “You may not accept aspects of who I am. Nonetheless, being an advocate for abuse survivors and fighting for equality are what I love, and that is following my dreams.”