

Personal Statement

My purpose in this world, I have known it since I was 15 years old, is facilitating transformation for others. There is nothing more precious in this world than to watch someone who wants it, works towards it, and deserves it get what they have been vying for. I have seen this in the peers I have been privileged enough to inspire, and I have seen it in the process of developing evidence-based practice, an experience I have been privileged enough to participate in via research. Now, as I continue to exact this dream, I desire the same for myself.

My experiences with public schools, racial and queer discrimination, and homelessness have colored my past and continue to paint my future; my youth was stained by discrimination and inequity within the urban jungles of Los Angeles. In such a fashion, it plucked a striking, roaring chord within me, that made me promise myself to affect change long before I came to terms with wanting to live, much less wanting to attend college. I knew it before anything resembling a plan existed. It tortured me as a child to experience the effects of redundancy, inaction, profound ignorance, and implicit, systemic racial discrimination in the systems I was thrust into: LAUSD, DPSS, U.S Veterans Long Beach, WIC, STAReducation. It changed me profoundly to see the crystal clear effects of invisible walls of generational poverty and poor education closing in on the people I belonged to. It left such an indelible, carrying conviction that I felt I wished to be that rare somebody who both cared and had the level of authority to do something about it. The concern is comprehensive and wide-spanning, but my motivations and career foci are narrower: it is related to the injustices we as educators commit in and out of classrooms to children out of passiveness, in the culturally-sustaining inequity that is practiced from this agreed level of teacher responsibility within all standardized education systems.

That conviction has never let go. I remain unseated; It continues to happen today and so it continues to drive me.

As I exited it, gradually, the residue of systemic discrimination haunted my every action in and out of school; following high school and the infamous March, 2020, I struggled to simultaneously work, live, and maintain my dreams. I maintained composure for years until I was able to secure housing; barriers I think is too soft of a word. I surmounted my challenges as a homeless youth, working full-time and attending community college full-time. I survived this for years— I am nearly six years older now— I choose to interpret it now as a defining narrative as well as a strengthening one, because it would be too painful to recognize the co-occurrence of probability and coincidence but know the blame is faceless. Depravity doesn't begin to define my origins and my path out.

It is a genuine waste of words to cover the half of it, so this part of me will remain unsaid, saved for later; I have just a limited medium to advertise myself, so it is more economic to speak on my skills and lessons learned.

As I've worked, as a 7/11 cashier, as an art handling apprentice, as a researcher, I've learned about my abilities and how they can benefit others. My *signature* is intuition, and my

leadership style is filling in gaps and sealing breaks. My method of completing goals is reinforced by my ability to follow through; my confidence paired with my navigational capital empower me to go constantly above and beyond, look for answers on my own, and proactively engage with the work even in idleness.

I found myself at college excelling at organizational tasks, in the form of managing others and creating information systems. I now have years of experience managing and training collaborators and colleagues, and my aptitude for interpersonal communication lends me to love this work; I enjoy intuiting my colleagues' needs and preemptively helping them navigate challenges in our work; I love guiding them to develop self-sufficiency and confidence skills relevant to collaborative workplaces. In terms of creating information systems, I have so far created several data keys and several sets of data tables that have helped analyze and report on large (N=500, N=700, N=100) sample sizes of data. I have independently created dozens of data visualizations using stat analysis software and Excel, most of which have been or are in the process of being published. Several of the labs that I've been in continue to rely on me for my data visualization abilities to this day.

The lesson I learned at UC Santa Barbara, the old fashioned (running-into-a-brick-wall) way, was how my traumas and maladapted nervousness prevented me from progressing at the pace I had envisioned for the years I'd spent working up to it. I was struggling to pass classes, and I felt more alone than I ever had before. I missed LA. It felt like true betrayal for my mind and body to give out on me after decades of resistance to scarier things. My discovery of OCD and other complex psychological phenomena within myself took *nine months* to acknowledge; the oxymoron that I could not live with, suffering how I was *and* achieving my dreams was the contradiction that I resisted for too long, too conditioned and socialized by masculinity. It took moving out of shared dorms, medication, and talk therapy to sustain and empower me to continue moving forward with vigor and an upright zeal again; this was beyond invaluable because it was a genuine threat to everything. I felt myself falling to pieces at a time where finally, *for the first time ever*, I had something to lose.

What got me out was my network. The people who I had treasured had come to treasure me, and the people that I thanked began to thank me. The cloud that obscured diminished over time; because of my mentors, my friends, my peers, and the little kids that I worked with during the school year. Then, it was impossible to falter again, because I had finally turned around to see that it was love that had uplifted me from any depths, as it always had.

I have begun work on an honors thesis at my university, to graduate with distinction in my major, at the encouragement of my mentor and faculty advisor Dr. Vanessa Woods. Under her guidance I have begun work on an independent research project on transfer success amid transfer-specific threats to success, and how institutions can facilitate equitable access for transfers and mediate this threat. My purpose in this reflects the deepest compassions of my soul, to make a contribution to the asset-based wealth of knowledge that I hope will further illuminate ways in which we as designers can foster and facilitate more equitable learning opportunities.

My personal goals are to contribute to a paradigm shift in the domain of school psychology; more specifically to prioritize equitable, accessible, real-world applications of positive psychology and transformative learning. I must research best practices to foster equitable and cultural humility pathways to self-reliance, hope, and joy for young people, so that I might be able to pass down what I have learned concerning happiness and meaning. My skills and expertise will allow broader truths and goals to contextualize youths' lives, essential to combatting generationally learned helplessness and burnout.