

Professional goal: Human rights law

Bringing my Passion to Light
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Youtube Link

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52vL1-29TW4>

Haiku

For life, peace, justice
Sole eligibility
Is to be human.

Spoken Word

My island is my music
I carry rhythms in my earphones
Extending from my head
Like arteries exposed
Transporting accumulated drumbeats
That possess the power to make feet and hearts beat
To the acoustics

I have rhythm in my bones and I can't ever lose it
Its people are my muses
Dios took soul and fused it to color
Bound it to a mound of earth and browned it
Pounded it till the strong arms of Africans and Tainos became one

My grandmother used to say he left the black behind the ears
But she let her fears cloud her judgment
Quisqueya, you call yourself morena BUT bella, India
As if Black needed qualifiers
Dark like the regimes that have been so mean to your grandmothers who
Taught us the 23rd Psalm and that it was normal to
Wear hair rollers to the corner store
To run down the block waving chancletas
A little thieves in doodoo-stained power ranger briefs
Riding rusty bicletas

I come from the land where we play baseball with a stick

They say platano makes your hips grow thick,
Everyone is mixed, hair isn't is always slick
We got caught in between so we get flat irons and perms to smooth Africa out
I was taught to wrap my naps into tubi every night before I go to bed
Because I come black, white, and the red blood natives shed
From where skinny brown kids have big bellies and big heads

Patria, I feel your pain
They call me Spanish even though I've never been to Spain
I know butterfly wings are fragile, Minerva
But there is no sorrow on earth that heaven cannot heal
And even when you're drenched in rain
God will unclog the drains that flood your streets
Return to you the libertad conquistadores made fleet
But I wouldn't trade the cane plantations
That made you so brown sugar sweet

I come from mango, mangu, merengue, and sugar beets
From the coconut's meat
I'm trying to reach the crossroads where my passions and my courage meet
To fight the ugliest human rights violations even in the face of defeat
To trace the steps of my mothers: God, Angelou, Anzaldua, Morrison
And write myself into a broken tip until my soul's complete

Portalatin would encourage me to fight for rights
In the land whose womb bore seven children, racial problems
who would in Dallas, Memphis, or Birmingham
be neither black nor white
To battle darkness with the light

Because it's about the fight
Against conventional wisdoms
Not simply getting all things right
It's about addressing their plight, to shake up law and order
For the sake of Mexicans whose skeletons exhale their last breath
As they lay their hands to rest across the border

To confuse them if you can't convince them, like Henry Truman
To write haikus like:
For life, peace, justice
Sole eligibility
Is to be human.

Essay

After visiting the Nakivale Refugee Settlement in Uganda and witnessing the living conditions and the effects of governmental ill-treatment that the refugees are subjected to, I was convinced that refugees' and migrants' rights are human rights issues. Issues like these fuel my desire to work in the field of human rights law and activism. Ultimately, I would like to work for Haitian migrants' rights in my birthplace, Dominican Republic, where Haitians are often detained and subjected to identity checks and mistreatment. In graduate school, I would like to merge research interests in constructions of race and racial relations and their role in societal conflict, and the ramifications of conflict and globalization on the livelihoods of women in the Caribbean, Latin America, and Africa.

My academic quests are inspired by the work of Sonia Pierre, a human rights activist working to end anti-Haitian discrimination, human rights lawyer Rhonda Copelon, as well as by the works of talented writers like Toni Morrison, author of *Beloved*, who has nurtured my love for writing with her words. My intellectual interests have been shaped by the knowledge I have gained in courses for my women's studies and criminology majors, as well as English and anthropology minors which have exposed me to issues surrounding gender and racial identity and discrimination, human rights violations in prisons, economic marginalization, globalization, and other issues that fall under the scope of human rights.

My parents have instilled in me the values of self-discipline, honesty, and wholehearted devotion to completing any task I apply myself to. After migrating with my family to Miami, Florida from the Dominican Republic in 1994, I began elementary school subjected to the rougher conditions of inner city areas, and with very little knowledge of the English language. These experiences have been the root of my relentless drive rather than a hindrance or a source

of shame. I am often praised by family members, close friends, and professors for pursuing an education and meeting the demands of a challenging curriculum even in the face of many obstacles. While accolades are nice, I have found that my experiences— the good and the bad, from bucket showers in the Dominican Republic, to economic hardship, to the lasting friendships I've established—have greatly humbled me and given me an appreciation for Maya Angelou's words: "Know how complex things are, do not be so proud of your bucket of water when there's an ocean out there."

The genocide memorial sites I visited in Rwanda reinforced my belief that the sole eligibility for the rights to life, justice, and peace is to be human. It is this realization that we are all part of the continuum of humanity and bound by interconnected histories that, in my experience, has made the borders of nationalistic pride much more fluid and legitimized the importance of fighting for basic rights that transcend race, gender, class, religion, and nation.