

In 1986, amid war, my father and a small group of his siblings and peers set out on foot in pursuit of a refugee resettlement office in Khartoum, Sudan. They traversed the Sahara Desert, surviving on a solution of water and urine, survival skills, tenacity, and luck. They buried themselves in the desert sands by day and walked quietly through the night; successfully dodged death via starvation, dehydration, and military fire. After three weeks, they reached Khartoum. This is where he met my mother, a Peace Corps volunteer working at the resettlement office.

If my father hadn't embarked on that journey and my mother hadn't pursued advocacy work in East Africa, I wouldn't be here writing this statement in pursuit of this scholarship to facilitate my own advocacy work. I call this path a choice, but in reality—as someone who earned a bachelor's degree after growing up in a community where more of my peers went to prison than attended college, and as the daughter of a refugee who was never able to fulfill his dream of becoming an engineer—I feel a sense of duty to those whose fates are not as fortunate. I am committed to use the choice I have to give choice to others. As I grew into adulthood, I learned about the trailblazing work of attorneys like Constance Baker Motley, Bryan Stevenson, and Sherrilyn Ifill. As members of communities underrepresented in the legal profession, their tenacious commitment to justice inspired me to eventually pursue a legal career of my own, focusing on appellate litigation. But my journey from college to law school was not linear, and I have been fortunate to exercise advocacy in my academic and professional career through mediums outside of the law.

When I earned my undergraduate degree over eight years ago, I already knew my life and career path would center advocacy. By that point I had volunteered as a sexual assault and domestic violence survivor advocate, interned for a local political candidate I believed in, and completed a fellowship researching restrictive election law and Black political efficacy. After college, I worked at a shelter managing a rehabilitation and housing program for adults with persistent mental illness experiencing homelessness. For seven years before law school, I advocated for workers with disabilities administering work accommodations. While I have treasured every opportunity to impact my communities thus far, I am eager to achieve positive change through the legal system.

I now understand that the Baker Motleys, Stevensons, and Ifills of the legal profession did not achieve their successes alone, but with the support of organizations like DDRB, committed to uplifting students pursuing meaningful legal careers. I believe everyone deserves access to justice, regardless of socioeconomic status. I find passion in appellate litigation concerning civil and constitutional rights, and I aim to harness the law to equalize access to justice. Your financial support will enable me to help shape and defend policy pursuing this goal, improving our communities now and into the future.