

Life growing up was a perpetual state of madness. I, like 1/15 children in the United States am a survivor of domestic violence. Witnessing, being victim of and made to feel guilty for the pain and suffering inflicted upon myself and my family revealed basic, societal issues. Issues which even in my youthful naivete I recognized could not possibly be solved by my parents who struggled intensely with their own substance abuse and mental health issues. During one several-hours long instance, my father pointed a loaded gun at my mother and I, consumed by a bi-polar episode which had been ongoing. Even as I lay in my mother's lap in an effort to shield her from bullets, I felt no anger toward my father, just as I don't now. What I felt then was sadness and regret at the state my father had come to, at the way he had been allowed to disintegrate by a pharmaceutical industry eager to pump people full of opioids, and a Veterans Administration with an ample supply of patients in desperate need of relief. My father would eventually lose his fight to addiction, committing suicide shortly after his 40th birthday in 2010 rendering my Mother a single parent for the second time in her life. My family's existence had instantaneously transformed, and in this transformation I became unbearably aware of not just the depths to which addiction could drag people, but also the depravity and senselessness of our capitalist economy. My father's passing put considerable strain on our finances and in an effort to save our home from foreclosure my Mother took on three separate jobs. Until that point she had been a relative constant even when she worked, but things had changed. She had gone from Vice President of the PTA, to very rarely being present at all. We would see her at the tail ends of the day, always smiling, even when it was obvious she could barely keep her eyes open. Ultimately her valiant efforts were for naught and we lost our childhood home, along with my Father this signaled the end of a life we had any familiarity with and presented instability as an omnipresent monster. While moving I saw my Mother cry for the first time and felt an instantaneous,

indescribable hollowness. The last time I heard that same wrenching cry was upon learning that I was gay. Her tears in that moment did not originate out of some bigoted belief system, in her eyes I had broken no rules and had harmed no one. The tears were an expression of concern over the treatment I would receive at the hands of ignorant and careless people, particularly in regard to my curious and sensitive disposition. Her response was far from what I had envisioned or idealized, but this moment was pivotal nonetheless because what she did give me was the plain and honest truth. My mother's candor had prepared me to face what would be a hellish slog through high-school after being unceremoniously outed. My tenure at Bonners Ferry High School was a case study in persecution, no opportunity to humiliate, ostracize or block me was spared by fellow students, teachers and administrators. The pocket change and garbage that people would throw at me daily certainly made me upset, but it fundamentally failed to suppress me. To not become a number, a statistic, a past tense reference, I steeled myself to do anything and everything possible to resist what I saw as unjust bigotry, bigotry which went above and beyond anything which could be explained strictly as issues with being gay. In defiance of continuous assaults on me and others, I became a 3 time VP of the Student Council, created the first queer organization in North Idaho and became a caucus organizer for Bernie Sanders' 2016 Presidential Campaign. I risked being expelled my Senior year of highschool by fighting for 1st Amendment rights in protest of the pledge of allegiance, despite an active and ongoing coordinated effort to both kidnap and murder me because of that stance. Upon graduation I was given the opportunity to move to Washington to learn, speak and dream about the things that I wanted so desperately to do, all so that my experiences could not be repeated by future generations. The bigotry I have experienced as a result of being queer is not siloed to me. The same bigotry, the same illogical hatred, is present in any and all forms of bigotry. Racism,

Sexism, and Homophobia among others are united in their efforts to prevent full sovereignty of human beings and suppress lawfully granted rights privy to all citizens. Our institutions, including those who often work in them, are plagued by wealthy, white, heteronormative assumptions and functions which seek to maintain or widen the chasm between those who win and lose in our economy and society. My experiences, my education in the broad urban environment, my social justice advocacy and my political work have led me to understanding that working in public administration will give me the tools to change the world. Policy and the ways it is enacted, researched and lobbied for create radically disparate outcomes meaning persistent deltas in equity across the spectrum for our communities. Policy specialists and administrators who understand the present moment and are prepared to meet it are integral to securing justice and progress moving forward. In order to attain the education necessary to do this most vital work, Evergreen State University has captured my attention and my imagination. Evergreen is an affordable, high quality institution dedicated to justice and sustainability with the staff necessary to accomplish those goals. Most importantly though, those who come from Evergreen are of the most morally strong, kind and intelligent I have personally met. If a school can be judged by the personal constitution of their students, then my choice of Evergreen cannot possibly be contested, thank-you.