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Master's in public administration at Evergreen State College

Statement of Purpose

The African proverb "I am because we are" has significant meaning for me because I was born and nurtured in Kenya, where I have always internalized and appreciated collectiveness and its blessings of companionship, protection, and cooperation. For the society I was born into, collectivism was simply understood; however, as I got older and continued to live in the United States, I realized that collectivism is a multifaceted idea that is yearned for but ultimately distorted by complex concepts that permeate social and systematic processes that were constructed.

I often ponder how I might contribute to or what is required for such a tranquil and continuous natural collectiveness full of black empowerment and expression. As I progress in life, I realized that the key was education and spending time in environments that addressed the deeply ingrained issues. I often think about bell hooks' chapter "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness" from "Yearnings: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics." In particular, she talks about the desire for a marginal space (open space) that is both representative of society as a whole and unique enough for Black individuals to talk about their livelihood in a way that is liberating and turns into a position of focus that begins the process of reconstructing rather than essence. Spaces that bring forth narrative and representation, one that understands the statuses imposed by the dominate discourse and challenges it.¹ bell hooks' goal of using marginal spaces to challenge authoritative cultural practices and transform society is one that I identify with. More importantly, though, as an African living in the United States, I feel that it is a responsibility that I share to continue addressing and influencing the advancement of black empowerment and equality because without the historical and ongoing contributions of African Americans, much of social benefits and modern African immigrants' lives in the United States would not be possible. For this reason, I work as a public servant and am pursuing graduate study in public administration.

¹ Hooks, bell. 1990. Yearning: Race Gender and Cultural Politics. Boston MA: South End Press. 145-146

During my exploratory and intellectually stimulating college years at the University of Puget Sound, where I received a degree in African American Studies (AFAM), I learnt various racial competencies and addressed my inner yearning for collective space, which is a prevalent Pan-Africanism concept. I also developed an in-depth understanding of the persistence of institutional racism, as well as how race relations interact and influence various facets of society and continue to have an impact on the political, social, and economic spheres. AFAM has also taught me that tackling systems that have historically supported prejudice, as well as reforming systems, is exhausting work, and that concepts about self-preservation, self-understanding, and self-love are also mechanisms of resistance, and that simply being is a form of resistance to dominant culture. The rich discourse of AFAM provides me with a conscious prism through which I can observe how aspects of life have and will affect not only black livelihoods, but also those of other marginalized groups.

Policy was of great interest to me in undergrad, deeply within the framework of AFAM, and as I started working at Tacoma Housing Authority my interest has grown. I have come face to face with policies and initiatives that not only do not promote the advancement of marginalized individuals but also have a way of reenforcing and perpetuating racial inequalities, specifically in housing assistance programs, homeownership, and community involvement. Though much of the issue regards funding, halting conversation due to lack of funding does no justice to the undeniable need for progressive advancement and the need for more equitable and racialized thought. It is important to examine the relationship between race and policy in the shaping of democratic systems, economy, and politics to break continued practices that further the racial socioeconomic wealth gaps. The government, despite having conducted its own studies, is aware of this but does not go deep enough in addressing it. Racial inequality was first caused by an imbalance of economic gain between racial classes, and this disparity still exists today.

By attending in Evergreen State College's master's program in public administration, I will be able to learn more about the data and the connection between race and policy, as well as the principles of designing and implementing policies that will benefit black communities and society as a whole. Additionally, under Dr. Doreen Swetkis' guidance and encouragement, I would like to indulge my curiosity about the public sector and its relationship with communities. I have devoted my life and academic career to diversity and public service ever since I can

remember; receiving funding from the 2020 Census to encourage people to take part in the research and increase awareness, interning at the Tacoma Urban League and being currently employed by a public housing authority. I value this program's commitment to teaching students about the many diverse intersections that exist between policy and the battle to end social and economic inequality, in addition to holistic public policies. I am eager to participate in challenging discussions, learn from the viewpoints of my fellow students and professors at Evergreen State, and, when given the opportunity, tell my story as a public servant.

Bibliography

Hooks, bell. 1990. *Yearning: Race Gender and Cultural Politics*. Boston MA: South End Press.
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