

The law affects everyone, sometimes without them realizing it. Little did I realize how true that was until I unearthed a dark truth about my past. When I was in second grade, my mom took me and my brother to her hometown of Belem, Brazil to visit our extended family for a year and a half. Years later, when I was in high school, I was reminiscing with my father about the trip, and he explained to me that it was no vacation. This was my introduction to *Sandra H. Dacosta v. Alberto Gonzales, Attorney General of the United States*, 449 F.3d 45 (1st Cir. 2006), the case that resulted in my mother's deportation.

The revelation that my mother—my hardworking and curious mother who piqued my interest in learning—had been deported was earth-shattering. It left me baffled and with a crippling drive to learn more. I dove into the dusty cabinet stacked with her file's various legal documents, trying to understand. We had been living in the US for years, how could she have been deported? Combing through the forms, motions, and Executive Office for Immigration Review's decisions, I slowly understood the situation. My mom came to the United States on a tourist visa. She applied to stay longer, but the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) denied her and told her she needed to voluntarily depart. My parents were also working with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to get her citizenship, but issues processing her application led to a legal showdown. She lost.

Initially, I was angry. I thought, "How could these people tear my family apart and throw my mom out of our home?" I spent many hours reading through the arguments section in particular, desperately trying to see how the government I trusted could possibly justify such a result. What I found was bittersweet. I could understand some of the court's points as it explained its decision. My mother's argument—that her voluntary departure date had been extended since the BIA reopened her case—was flawed. And although the INS did not *oppose* my mother's motion to reopen her bid to remain, I understood that it did not waive its rights to present an argument against her.

My fixation with the legal arguments got me thinking. *What if the INS claimed jurisdiction to approve her application? What would it have taken to support a Due Process claim?* Disassembling the arguments into their fundamental components and observing how the attorneys manipulated them

fascinated me. The law was used like an open-ended puzzle, but its chosen solution had significant effects on people's lives. Approaching the law from this perspective made me realize that I enjoy reading through legal writing and trying to understand its underlying procedures. Such an interest followed me to college and has stayed with me throughout it. Some of my fondest academic memories include working through Supreme Court cases and analyzing legal arguments. My passion for law even led me to conduct undergraduate research observing the influence of attorney demographics on the results of federal district court cases.

Even before I found my calling in life, I knew helping others brought me great joy. Using music in particular has helped me benefit my community. Throughout my academic career, I volunteered to play at many different community events, including elementary school Veterans' Day celebrations, holiday church services, graduation ceremonies, and a funeral for the son of a beloved university professor. Beyond music, I have also taken other measures to aid others. Before I moved to college, I participated in my church's Home Works of America program, which involved traveling to low-income households and providing nonprofit repair and maintenance services to them. Additionally, as Vice President of Phi Mu Alpha's chapter at my university, I promoted and supported our charity events. Our chapter hosted fundraisers with local businesses and bake sales to raise money for different causes, including funding underprivileged schools' music programs and donating to charities for people with disabilities.

Becoming aware of my fascination with law and my innate urge to help others eventually made me realize that I could pursue both in tandem by becoming an attorney. Working with the law these past few years has shown me it is a complex subject matter. Many underlying procedures guide its usage, and such procedures are often unknown by most people, like my family. My family was lucky enough to see my mom eventually come home as a full citizen. Not everyone is so fortunate. I want to become an attorney so that I can better understand the law and use it to aid others. While I realize I still have much to learn about the law, my personal experiences with it have prepared me to be a successful law student by making me consider new perspectives, analyze different legal writings, and manage my time while

working with numerous cases. For me, studying law is neither a passing interest nor just a pathway to a good career. It is an integral part of my life, one that shaped my childhood in ways I was not even aware of and deeply touched those closest to me. The law *is* personal.

I want to attend law school so I can strengthen my relationship with the law and convert it into a tool I can wield to protect others. Recently, I was given the opportunity to do just that as I was accepted to attend Cornell Law School in fall 2023. While I am excited to attend, I recognize the financial strain this could put on my family. While my supportive parents have expressed they will contribute as much as they can towards my tuition, I know we will have to take out extensive loans. I am already working to chip away at these loans, and if I am selected to receive this scholarship, I know it will provide me substantial relief and allow me to focus more on succeeding in my academics as an upcoming law student.

- Magellan Scholar Research Assistant - August 2021 to June 2022 - 20 hours per week
- Substitute Teacher - February 2023 to June 2023 - 32 hours per week
- UofSC Marching Band - August 2019 to December 2022 - 18 hours per week
- UofSC Wind Ensemble - August 2022 to December 2022 - 10 hours per week
- UofSC Swing Shift Jazz Band - August 2021 to December 2022 - 6 hours per week
- UofSC Symphonic Winds - January 2020 to May 2022 - 10 hours per week
- UofSC Volleyball Band - September 2019 to December 2022 - 2 hours per week
- UofSC Basketball Band - October 2021 to May 2022 - 3 hours per week
- Vice President of Phi Mu Alpha Delta Sigma Chapter - January 2022 to December 2022 - 6 hours per week

- Volunteer Trumpet Player for various community events - January 2019 to May 2023 - hours vary greatly

- Interest in learning about interplay between psychology and law - August 2021 to present - 4 hours per week

- Interest in analyzing film and video game soundtracks - August 2019 to present - 4 hours per week