

By the age of seven years old, I was stripped of my childhood due to my father's domestic abuse, in which I was forced to be on high alert and on guard at all times. I was subjected to witness many instances of abuse, resulting in my participation in health and safety precaution programs, including women's shelters, countless therapy sessions, and even obtrusive visits at school and home from Child Protective Services. None of these outlets healed the trauma I faced, as I instead learned to bury my memories and fear speaking of them instead of facing my emotional instability head-on. The missing element of a father in my life led to a slew of problems internally as well as physically, as I was unsure of how to feel or act in his presence as he irregularly moved into prison and out of my life. I faced emotional damage, finding it necessary to grow up faster than other children, to be "strong" rather than be a child. As my discomfort grew so did my distrust in others, causing me to not speak of my hardship to those who aimed to help me. Too focused on being strong for myself and younger brother, I shut down my emotions by bottling them and ignoring them until they overflowed, resulting in more internal turmoil than any child could take.

Several years later, I found an outlet to let out the thoughts and emotions I harbored for copious years in my childhood, as writing became a therapeutic expression and outlet when the world begins to spiral, keeping me planted to the ground. I began with poems and continued into short stories which I would share with others. Their enjoyment enlightened me, and I got to develop my craft with their constructive criticism. Writing became a source of pride unlike any other, and it relieved a lot of my own pent-up emotions, as I stored them within my characters. Though I wasn't often able to verbalize the trauma I faced, my poetry could effortlessly tell my story. I realized that when overwhelmed by the daunting thoughts in my mind, poetry could compartmentalize them and ease the chaos. When in need of an escape from reality, poetry could transport me to safety. Developing my craft inspired me to pursue fieldwork and discover other people's stories, especially for those who similarly were not able to do it themselves.

In my elementary and middle school years I lost a great deal of dedication in school considering the constant distractions I faced, especially considering Child Protective Services' frequent visits during my classes or my prolonged stay at a women's shelter. Finding this sanctuary allowed my circumstances to eventually motivate my educational excellence rather than bring me down, as I yearned to gain independence from the problems that were out of my control. From trial and error, I've been able to graduate as an IB diploma candidate with a 3.8 unweighted grade point average within the top 2% of my class, and am now seeking a college education at the University of Central Florida, a feat neither my parents completed. After spending seven years being able to breathe clean air, free of the chokehold on my childhood or stench of alcohol and cigarettes, I was able to thrive in this period of reflection and learned to become my own person without definition based on my situation. By breaking free of my

struggle I was able to find a passion that would motivate me towards my future, which I have discovered to be public relations and journalism.

Envisioning my future, I'd be employing my love for writing in a more professional fashion, designing marketing strategies and working with communication teams towards the common goal of gaining an audience. By using the experiences of creative writing classes and interning I would not only be able to formulate the social media and business constructs for a company in a creative manner, but I would be able to work with diverse individuals that expand my perspectives and organization. Here I would challenge myself to take the initiative of event campaigning where I could write and give speeches as the face of a company. I'd not only be gathering connections at this stage in my career, but furthermore strengthening my artistic knowledge on a multimedia platform where I could reinforce my passion of writing and photography/photoshop. If I could specify a business I'd like to join or later create, it would be a service-driven organization that informs victims of abuse of opportunities including therapy services that could facilitate a community allowing those of similar struggles to revive hope in one another. By touching those of similar stories to mine, I would like to provide comfort for those who do not yet see the light at the end of the tunnel, and hopefully find those who would like to confide in my writing to tell their story for awareness purposes, pushing this cause. Though creating or proposing this service is a long-term goal and requires growth beyond my senior year of college, I would like to maintain these dreams and make them a reality.