

A Guide to the Law School Application Process for People of Color



Prepared by UCLA School of Law :La Raza Law Students Association

I. Introduction

The law school application process is extremely competitive and time consuming. This information packet is designed to guide you through the admissions process and help you put together the best possible application. Furthermore, we have tailored the information contained within to serve those of you who either have low LSAT and/or GPA's. Your application will undergo a committee review, therefore it is imperative that you provide a global picture of who you are.

The number of people of color applying and being admitted to UCLA School of Law has plummeted since the implementation of Proposition 209. Although the opportunities for students of color have dwindled, a strong application can bolster your chances of gaining admission to the law school of your choice.

II. The Admissions Process

The admissions process can be very intimidating and it requires a lot of work in order to be successful. LSAT scores, GPA, and the undergraduate institution attended are all factors that play a large role in whether the applicant will be admitted. These are not, however, the only factors taken into account. Schools also look at the applicant's personal essay, work experience, maturity, research projects completed, recommendations, community and campus involvement and whether the applicant comes from a disadvantaged background.

Everyone who applies for admission to the law school is given a personal index number (PIN) based on their LSAT, GPA, and undergraduate college. Approximately 60% of those admitted to UCLA School of Law are admitted automatically, based on their PIN. The rest of the applicants are carefully screened by a committee composed of faculty and students. Unfortunately, the current formula used at UCLA School of Law, and many other law schools throughout the country marks applicants down if the average LSAT of the undergraduate school they attended was low, while giving applicants an extra boost if the average LSAT of students at their school was high. The one exception to this rule is if the applicant has a 4.0 GPA. All 4.0 GPAs are weighted the same, regardless of the undergraduate institution the applicant attended or the number of pass/no pass grades the applicant took. Nonetheless, the practical effect of this process is that a large number of potential minority applicants from schools such as the **California State Universities** are disadvantaged in this supposedly "neutral" process.

In order to counteract these factors, potential applicants should make sure to plan ahead. One major mistake many applicants make is rushing to take the LSAT at the last minute in order to meet application deadlines. Multiple LSAT scores are averaged together by most schools. Thus, in order to avoid damaging your potential for admission, you should take a practice exam in order to determine more or less where you are before officially taking the LSAT for the first time. Regardless of your score, you should try to either take an LSAT preparation course if you can afford it, or at least make sure to dedicate yourself to a stringent study schedule. The higher your score, the greater your chances of gaining

admission to the law school of your choice. High LSAT scores can also help you get scholarships.

If you have grown up with socio-economic disadvantage, make sure to note this on your application. Starting last year, UCLA School of Law has decided to perform “blind screening” of students who have socio-economic disadvantage. In other words, these applications will be read without looking at their LSAT score or GPA. Only after a recommendation has been made are the numbers revealed. If the applicant meets the school’s informal LSAT and GPA floor, then it is likely they will be admitted.

Several programs at the law school also have independent admissions authority. These programs include the Public Interest Law and Policy Program (PILPP), and the Critical Race Studies program (CRS). Although applicants preliminarily admitted through these programs must still be approved by the general admissions committee, both programs have a significant degree of latitude in determining who it will admit. Students who apply to either of the two programs will be considered for admission by the program as well as the general admissions committee.

In order to be considered for the Public Interest Law and Policy Program (PILPP), applicants must indicate that they would like to apply to the program, and they must send in the additional materials listed in the information booklet. The PILPP admissions committee tends to focus less on the applicant’s GPA and LSAT if the applicant can demonstrate a serious commitment to an issue deemed to be in the “public interest” (this is defined quite broadly). If you are interested in public interest issues or community activism, get involved with them right away, and then apply to the Program. If you do decide to apply to the Program, make sure to highlight the public interest work you have done in your application. Try to focus your application on a specific area or issue that interests you, even if you are not entirely sure that this is what you want to pursue after law school. Form the links. In other words, make sure to tie your different experiences together, so that the person evaluating your application can see how they relate to the type of work you wish to do in the future. Strong recommendations from professors, politicians, or community organizations can bolster your application immensely. Also, make sure that the references you list know you well, as the PILPP committee is known to call.

As mentioned above, the Critical Race Studies program (CRS) also has independent admissions authority. Unlike PILPP, CRS does not currently require that you supply an additional essay. In order to be considered for CRS, the applicant need only check the box indicating an interest in the program. However, applicants who would like to be admitted through the program should discuss their interest in anti-racism and what they could offer to the program in their personal essays.

III. The Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS)

Once you begin the application process you will need to subscribe to the Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS). You may want to subscribe to this service at the same time that you register for the LSAT to simplify the paperwork, though you do not have to. You can

register for the test and subscribe to the LSDAS online (www.lsac.org). You should register for the LSDAS approximately six weeks before you plan to apply to law school. This should allow enough time for you to gather transcripts and other documents, while maximizing the finances invested in the twelve-month subscription. The LSDAS will coordinate your academic, biographical information, and test score for the law schools to which you apply.

Almost all ABA-approved law schools and several non-ABA-approved schools require the LSDAS. The LSDAS is a twelve-month subscription that prepares and provides a report for each law school to which you apply. The report contains information that is important in the law school admission process. Your report will include:

- An undergraduate academic summary
- Copies of all undergraduate, graduate and law school transcripts. If you have attended an exchange or cooperative program and this work is included in the transcripts from your sponsoring institution, you need not request a separate transcript from the institution abroad. Transcripts must be sent directly from the attended institutions.
- LSAT scores and writing sample copies
- Copies of Letters of Recommendation. The Letter of Recommendation service is optional unless a law school to which you are applying requires its use. There is no additional fee for this service. LSDAS accepts a maximum of three letters of recommendation.

The LSDAS Fees are as follows: (1) LSDAS 12-month subscription fee of \$95; (2) LSDAS Law School Reports are \$9 each if ordered at the time you subscribed to the service (3) additional Law School Reports are \$11 each. But do not let the costs affect your decision to apply to Law School. The LSDAS offers fee waivers (a sample is attached). You can obtain a fee waiver application from the LSAC website at: <http://www.lsac.org/LSAC.asp?url=lsac/download-forms-guidelines-checklists.asp>. If you have not already applied for a fee waiver do so immediately.

When Law Schools receive your application, they will request Reports directly from the LSDAS. Keep in mind that the LSDAS will send Law Schools your Report only if your LSDAS file is complete. Thus it is imperative that you are diligent about sending the LSDAS your letters of recommendation, undergraduate transcript and paying the LSDAS fees.

LSDAS Checklist

The following checklist broadly illustrates the sequence of events in the law school application process after the LSAT.

- Research law schools and compose a schedule of application deadlines.
- Register for the LSDAS (you may have already done this when you registered for the LSAT).
- Receive an LSDAS Subscription Confirmation.
- Receive an LSAC Activity Update each month that activity occurs in your file.
- Request that an official transcript be sent to us from the registrar's office of each school you attended (allow two weeks for processing).

- Request that letters of recommendation be written and sent to the LSDAS (allow two weeks for processing).
- You should receive a Master Law School Report once all undergraduate transcripts have been summarized.
- When you apply to law schools the schools will request your report from the LSDAS.
- You will receive an Activity Update that indicates reports have been sent to law schools.

LSDAS Renewals

Once you register for LSDAS, your account will remain active for twelve months. You may renew your LSDAS file for another 12-month period any time within two years after it expires. During this two-year period, the LSDAS will retain all transcripts, recommendation letters, and other information in your file.

IV. Overall Strategy

As a student of color, it is imperative that you establish a clear strategy in assembling your application. Your goal should be to provide a global and dynamic picture of yourself to the admissions committee.

There are two types of information that your application contains. One, there are “Good Things” about you that the committee will find out from your application, namely a high GPA or LSAT. Two, there are “Bad Things” they will know about you, conversely a low GPA or LSAT. Your **MAIN OBJECTIVE** should be to provide the admissions committee with “**GOOD**” information that they would not know about you unless you tell them. The vehicle for conveying this information is the following:

1. personal statement;
2. an addendum to the personal statement;
3. letters of recommendation;
4. a dean/counselor letter of recommendation;
5. resume; and
6. finally an elongated version of your resume.

The things you could and should focus on is your race, gender, sexual orientation, physical disability, economic hardship, pattern of overcoming adversity, etc. It will be your challenge to provide this information so that the committee can make a holistic assessment and hopefully **OUTWEIGH** those “Bad Things” that they know about you.

This informational packet is designed to provide you with some basic information in order for you to accomplish this crucial goal. If you are able to tip the balance in your favor by focusing on the “Good Things” they do not know about you, it should outweigh the “Bad Things” they know about you, thus significantly increasing your chances of admission.

Keep in mind while you are going through this process that as a student of color you cannot limit yourself to only doing the minimum that the application requires. You will have to be much more proactive and aggressive by including information that the law school does not necessarily ask for. Namely, this includes an addendum to your personal statement that discusses your low GPA or LSAT score, or any other information that you think should be considered, such as the number of hours you had to work during your undergraduate years. Also, you should not settle only on producing a plain resume, you should also produce a document that fully describes all your accomplishments and all your experiences. (Examples of both these items are attached). Again, an application should be tailored for you. You will have to balance many pieces of information and make judgments about what to include. Keep in mind that whatever you decide to include the quality of the writing and presentation should be first class. There is very little room for error in this process.

This goes to our final point in regards to strategy. In order to produce an application that will give the committee pause, it is imperative that you dedicate a considerable amount of time toward strategizing and putting together all the materials that you will need in order to produce this high quality document. It will take a long time to get the letters of recommendation, letters from your dean, produce the addendum and elongated version of your resume, and most crucially your personal statement. We would suggest that at the very least you plan about six months ahead to get this all together.

V. Personal Statement

Attached to this information packet are personal statements from law students of color who were admitted and attended UCLA School of Law. Next to the GPA & LSAT the personal statement is one of the most crucial pieces of the application. The ability to provide a global picture of yourself to a complete stranger poses many difficult challenges. However, a carefully and strategically crafted personal statement can be vital toward your goal of gaining admission to law school. Below are some general points you should keep in mind when crafting your personal statement.

1. Primary Goal

From the outset your primary goal in crafting your personal statement is to provide a lucid narrative of who you are. **In doing so you must focus on the “Good” things the admissions committee will not know about you unless you tell them.**

The personal statement will serve as a key tool in your overall application strategy. **DO NOT LET THE APPLICATION COMMITTEE ASSUME ANYTHING ABOUT YOU.** A successful personal statement will alleviate any doubts about your ability to succeed in law school and your desire to further your professional and educational goals.

From the examples we have attached, it is clear that a successful personal statement takes the risk of fully articulating a major theme and tying that theme to your future success. In it you should mention that you are a person of color that has faced some sort of adversity. Also, you should not shy away from pushing forward your ideology. However, you must strive to reach a balance and cannot focus too heavily on any one area because it will take

away from another. Every sentence is crucial in a successful personal statement and you should consider the impact of every word.

2. Length

How long should the personal statement be? The general rule is, *quality over quantity!* A direct, concise and fluid personal statement will serve you much better than a wordy convoluted one. Make sure to stay within the limits that the school you apply to establishes, but by no means feel compelled to reach that limit.

3. Do's and Don'ts

a. Essay Do's

- Use a Narrative Style – readers respond much better to a story about your life than a drab list of attributes.
- Make your personal statement interesting to read: remember you are competing with thousands of applicants and must make yourself stand out. Again, clarity and conciseness will dramatically increase your chances of fulfilling your goals during the admissions process.
- Start and Finish strongly: Again, to grab your reader's attention your first sentence should grab the reader's attention and the final sentence should leave them with a clear impression of who you are and what you are about.
- You must have a general theme – stream of consciousness does not work for personal statements and you will have to strive to limit your narrative to one central theme that you want the reader to be left with.
- Don't be afraid to express your opinions or ideology: that gives the reader a clear indication of who you are as a person.
- Be an open book: This is no time to be shy. Again, you cannot let the admissions committee assume anything about you. Therefore, you must provide personal details that you would not otherwise divulge. It is necessary that you provide the reader with a clear picture of who you are.

b. Don'ts

- Don't use the resume approach – once you start reciting your resume, you are losing your audience and significantly diminishing the possibility of gaining admission. A mere listing of your accomplishments will seem shallow and uninteresting. Of course, you should mention the things you have done especially those that provide examples of your character. However, it is very easy just to provide a list and that quickly becomes ineffective.
- Avoid the “Why I Want to Go to Law School” essay – trust us, there are many more interesting topics to focus on.
- Do not focus on your negatives: Again your main target should be “The Good Things They Don't Know About You.”

- Avoid trying to sound like a lawyer: you are not a lawyer yet and your attempts to emulate one will not impress the reader.
- Do not try to cover too many subjects – again, limit your prose to one central theme. If you start wondering around, you will lose the reader and subsequently diminish your chances of being admitted.

VI. Addendum to the Personal Statement

If you have a low GPA and/or LSAT score it would be a good idea to add a one or two paragraph addendum to your personal statement that addresses why that is the case. Attached is a sample addendum that explained an applicant's low LSAT score. Also, many of you probably worked a considerable amount of hours during your undergraduate career. That information should be included in the addendum. Why did you work so much? Did you support a family? Did you put your self through school? Remember you are competing with many applicants who had the luxury of only concentrating on their studies. Again, you will be a much more competitive candidate if you frame your successes within the context of a student who **overcame adversity**.

VII. Letters of Recommendation

There is much debate as to the impact of letters of recommendation and unfortunately much misinformation about who should write your letters and what they should say. First and foremost, someone who knows you well should write your letter of recommendation. It serves you no good to have a letter of recommendation from a famous or notable person, if they will only provide a trivial account of who you are and your accomplishments. The letter of recommendation should be designed to provide the admissions committee with a third person perspective of who you really are and their assessment of your potential.

Second, someone who knows how to write well should write your personal statement. Again, it is of no good use to have a letter of recommendation that is convoluted and does not set out clearly the things that you want to get across.

We are well aware of how difficult it is to accomplish both these goals. However, you should work toward accomplishing these ends. In order to increase your chances of getting a good letter of recommendation, we suggest that you do the following:

- Write your potential recommender a letter explaining what you need from them. Again, letters of recommendation are wonderful tools to provide the admissions committee with “Good Things” information that they would otherwise not know about you. Therefore, in your overall strategy think of what you want each recommender to cover. Usually, it is best to have two academic and one work recommendation. The academic recommendations should obviously focus on your academic success and your future potential. The work is much more flexible and can provide a wonderful opportunity to provide the committee with a glimpse of personal qualities that are really difficult to find out about you through the application process.

- If the recommender tells you to write it, we suggest that you do it. *However, one word of caution.* You should be careful not to be repetitive. Again, each recommendation should say a different thing. For example, if a recommender asks you to write the letter, focus on the adversity issue. It is much better for a third person to talk about how you have overcome obstacles in your life. This will free up space in your personal statement and addendum to discuss other matters. Again, the focus here is to provide as much “Good Things” information as possible that the admissions committee does not know about you.
- Attached are three sample letters of recommendation: notice how each one compliments each other in that it provides new “Good Things” information about the applicant.

VIII. Dean’s Certification / Recommendation

Most law schools include a dean certification form to establish that you have a good record at your undergraduate institution (i.e. you have not been suspended or expelled, etc.) However, this form also provides space for the dean or school official to provide some insights into who you are.

However, this is challenging for those of you who attend large public institutions because you have probably never met, or even know who your dean is. This should not hold you back from seeking a recommendation from this individual. Remember, you must be very proactive and do things that the average applicant will not do. You must contact either the dean of students at your school or the dean of your department and provide them with a letter, resume, and statement so they can have the information necessary about you in order to write you a recommendation.

Attached is a letter that a student wrote to their dean and the recommendation that the dean wrote even though they had never met.

IX. Resume

We have included a sample resume. You should follow the conventional methods of putting together a resume. It should only be one page long and provide the reader with a good sense of your community and work experience.

X. Supplement to the Resume

You should not be comfortable with only providing a resume, or simply listing your community and work experience in the application form. These media provide absolutely no room for you to provide detailed information about what you did or how it was significant in your life. Enclosed is an example of an elongated version of a resume that sets out in detail all of the applicant’s accomplishments. Again, your goal is to focus on the good things that they do not know about you to provide advocates in the admissions committee with ammunition to fight for you.



XII. Conclusion

The application process is a long and tedious one. As a student of color you have probably faced economic and social challenges that most applicants have not endured. This should give you pause, but more importantly it should motivate you to go beyond the boundaries of the conventional application and to be very proactive in seeking out the materials that you will need to put together a high quality application. Of course, GPA and LSAT scores do matter. But a high quality application will go a long way to mitigating any uncertainties the committee may have about your ability to succeed in law school. Remember, the mere fact that you are applying signals that you are a successful individual. The application process is merely a tool by which the gatekeepers intend to deny you an educational opportunity. Your challenge is to be smarter than them and make it very difficult for them to deny you your right to a legal education.

If we can be of any assistance, please feel to contact us. We wish you the best of luck in your future endeavors.

XII. For more information

You can e-mail La Raza Law Students Association at laraza@orgs.ucla.edu.

You may also contact the La Raza Law Students Association Admissions Committee members directly:

- Elizabeth Barros, barros@2003.law.ucla.edu
- Martha Contreras, contreras@2003.law.ucla.edu
- Crystal Silva, silvac@2003.law.ucla.edu
- Anthony Solana AnthonySolana@2003.law.ucla.edu

Sample Statement # 1

I was on the UC Berkeley Campus Police night escort shift when my superiors called me to the northern end of campus. A Mexican male was pulled over for failing to make a complete stop at an intersection and they wanted me to question him in Spanish. The first question the officers ordered me to ask was his citizenship status. I was confused at first, the campus police usually only handled minor public safety and traffic offenses in the campus area. Questions of citizenship were not in their jurisdiction. Things became very clear when I overheard an officer stating, “If he’s not, its 187 time”, alluding to the anti-immigrant measure that California voters had passed earlier that year. I translated the question, but in the same breath informed him of his right not to answer it. I had seen this too many times, where officers instead of performing their duties in a professional manner opted to intimidate people with their stature. He was a citizen, but at that point it didn’t matter, the damage had been done.

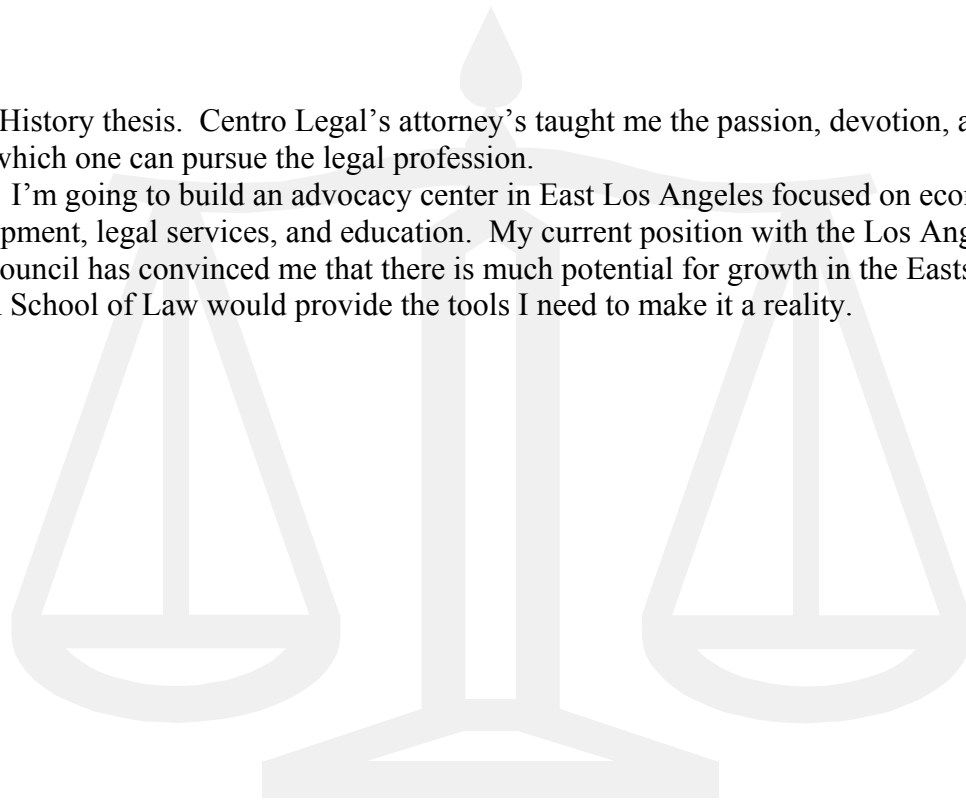
That night, as I walked students home from their study sessions, I thought back to all the time my friends and I had been stopped in East Los Angeles without apparent reason. In fact the only time anybody ever pulled a gun on me was when a Los Angeles County Sheriff stopped us on our way home, still wearing our football gear from practice only minutes before. I thought Berkeley would be different, more open minded, but I was wrong. I realized that lack of resources placed low-income communities in vulnerable positions and the only difference between that man and me was that I was in school and spoke English. I eventually quit UCPD and worked for a criminal justice reform organization.

My work at the Institute for Law and Policy Planning (ILPP) stemmed from a Federal Court decision on *Ralph Coleman vs. Pete Wilson case*, which found the California Department of Corrections negligent for not providing adequate mental health facilities and services to inmates. I worked for one of the monitors charged with reviewing the compliance of state prison facilities with court orders. I reviewed thousands of documents, inmate and correctional officer testimony, and assisted in preparing compliance reports to the court. It did not take long before I realized that most if not all of the names in these facilities were people of color. Salazar, Hernandez, Johnson, Brown, Jimenez and on and on it went in prison log after prison log. The references to “Black Male” and “Hispanic Gang Member” served to illustrate to me the pandemic nature of the lack of legal services in minority communities given the fact that most of these men were mentally ill and convicted of petty drug possession charges. These inmates needed medical treatment, not prison sentences. I saw legal service centers as one possible answer to this dilemma because I had personally benefited from one.

When my parents died during my freshman year of college our house was already in foreclosure. I worked full time but could not afford a lawyer. The Los Angeles Legal Aid Society helped me extend the foreclosure allowing me to secure enough finances to move my family to Berkeley. If it were not for them I would have dropped out, moved back to East Los Angeles, and maybe continued my education when things settled down. This experience led me to volunteer at Centro Legal de La Raza and make them the topic

of my History thesis. Centro Legal's attorney's taught me the passion, devotion, and spirit which one can pursue the legal profession.

I'm going to build an advocacy center in East Los Angeles focused on economic development, legal services, and education. My current position with the Los Angeles City Council has convinced me that there is much potential for growth in the Eastside. UCLA School of Law would provide the tools I need to make it a reality.





Sample Statement #2

Being the one person who should know more about myself than anyone else, describing who I am to you – the nameless, faceless “you” reading this -- is more difficult than I ever imagined. Simply, I am a 22-year-old Mexican-American female who wants to go to law school. Yet, I know you are asking more of me. What I am, is not who I am. Describing “who” I am is a much more complex and insightful process. My identity consists of a potent combination of past experiences and future dreams. Experiences that now seem could not have been my own. Though those experiences may have been difficult, I can only be thankful for them. As a result of those experiences, I have emerged dedicated to education.

For me education is sacred. During my primary education, school was a place I equated with stability. In fact it was the only form of stability I knew. Going to a school was an indication that my family had come across a more permanent temporary home. School provided the opportunity to have a “normal” life. Even so, in my childhood, the concept of “normal” was non-existent.

In between the many homeless shelters, motels, and cars I called home, there were times when I thought we were as close to normal as I would ever experience. My parents, siblings, and I lived in a structure with walls and a roof that was much like any family home from the outside. But within this man-made structure lurked a venue of drug abuse and poverty. Surviving from paycheck-to-paycheck and often on less, living without water or electricity was not uncommon. When food became scarce we often sought refuge from the local church parish. Government block cheese and powdered milk became a symbol of the persistent state of crisis in my family. These difficult times, however, furnished me with a sense of steadiness in a world of turbulence. It was during these times that I was enrolled in school and for six hours of the day felt I was just like everyone else.

Performing well in school earned me praise that signified a positive aspect of my life. So long as I did well, teachers and school administrators viewed me as a bright and talented student. Having these qualities in the eyes of my teachers and school administrators provided me with something that not every “normal” child had. This gave me the assurance that no matter what I was experiencing at home, I had something inside that nothing in the world could take away. I was better than “normal” I was special. With this as my motivation I strived to learn all that I could.

At thirteen, when I felt that life had handed me all that I could suffer, my mother was shot and killed. This incident was an important point in my life. While I had suffered a terrible loss, losing her marked the ending of one life and the beginning of another. Not the ending of difficult times, but an end to the girl who for so long had to accept the life she was given. Leaving an existence of poverty and strife, I went to live with an aunt. What began as a temporary stay developed into a five-year living situation. I began high school with the same amount of determination as before. However, my motivation was no longer simply seeking stability. What started as a quest for normalcy, transformed into a means of salvation. I sought to leave the circumstances of my childhood behind and

build a new way of life. The way to achieve this goal was to obtain a quality education that could provide me with the knowledge to succeed.

The result of four years of hard work and determination was my acceptance into the University of California Berkeley. Attending Cal was an opportunity I quickly grasped. College proved to be yet another difficult journey. After a rough adjustment period from high school, succeeding scholastically was more important than ever. Throughout the four years of undergraduate study I strived to maintain my GPA while working 25-35 hours a week. I feel that I would have performed better had I not had the commitment of financing my own education. My LSAT score of 163, which I feel more closely reflects my potential, demonstrates this.

Continuing my education is a high priority in my future. While I have closely considered all areas of study I feel that law, specifically criminal law, is where my passion lies. It is the profession I feel best suits the type of contribution I would like to make to society. The criminal trial for my mother's death was the first time I had ever been exposed to the inner workings of the legal system. That exposure left an impression on me that continues to kindle my desire to enter the legal profession. Seeking further understanding to help solidify my desire to choose law as a profession, I participated in an intern program at the Berkeley Pretrial Services Agency. After participating first hand in the legal system, I am certain of my decision.

Looking over my life put into words, I struggle to focus the memories into a clear picture. Having traveled so far makes it difficult to retrace the path. Law school is the one thing I can link to that world so lost, the world I know as my childhood. A career in law is the one thing that has remained constant throughout my transformation. For although I look at who I have become and what I have achieved and can scarcely recall how I got here, I have never lost sight of where I am going.

Sample Statement # 3

My parents emigrated from Mexico thirty years ago. They arrived in the United States with only a grade school education, but with the desire of improving their lives, and giving their children opportunities they never had. Due to their limited education and limited English, the only work available for them was in low paying manual labor. My father was a textile warehouse worker and my mother worked as a dressmaker in the garment industry.

Once, I found my mother crying when I got home from school. She explained that she had spent the day searching for a job that would pay her more than the minimum wage. At one garment shop where she applied, she slipped and fell in front of several women sewing at their machines. My mother could not believe that they were so afraid of the shop owner that not one of them stopped working to help. When the shop owner realized what happened, he screamed at my mother demanding that she leave because he did not want to be liable. Instead of moving, my mother demanded that he call an ambulance. I could see the pain and frustration in my mother's eyes as she described the humiliating experience. She explained that she did not cry for herself, but she cried for the women who would not stand up out of fear. My mother's struggles have influenced me to make improving the working conditions of immigrants my life long struggle.

I grew up in Pacoima, a Los Angeles suburb made up of recent Mexican immigrants. My household consisted of an older sister and my mother. My mother and father divorced during my first year of high school. I spent my time in high school feeling unchallenged and without motivation. The high school I attended was a polytechnic school that geared students toward trade college. Feeling the need to take a challenging course load to keep myself interested in school, I met with my high school counselor and asked him to place me in college-prep classes. He responded by telling me I could graduate from high school without taking those courses.

Instead of focusing on school I spent my time working to support myself to ease the financial burden on my mother. I worked as a sales person in department stores an average of thirty hours a week after school and on weekends. Work kept me from falling into the traps many Latino youth in my neighborhood fall into, such as drugs and pregnancy.

I am the first in my family to attend college. They accepted me through an outreach on-site admission program at my high school. A week after I graduated, I moved to the college dorms to participate in the Summer Bridge Program. The purpose of the program was to help at risk minority students transition from high school to college. The program was intense and after six weeks I was better prepared for college.

I spent my first two years of college trying to find direction. My purpose began to take shape during the course: The Chicana and Third World Women. Several important changes took place in my life during that semester. First, I began to develop political consciousness as I made a connection between my mother's struggles and the struggles of the women I was learning about in the class. Second, I learned that a higher education was the best way to prepare myself to contribute to the cause of working people. My professor was a Chicana from a working-class family. She had recently finished a dissertation focused on Mexican-American women activists in East Los Angeles. She motivated me to go on to graduate school, stressing the importance of grades. From that moment, college took on a new meaning. I made school my priority and a doctorate degree in Sociology my goal.

It was the first time in my academic career that I had a specific goal and it helped me achieve. I was placed on the dean's list, was awarded honorable mention in a pre-doctoral

program and received a scholarship. I planned to concentrate my graduate studies on the lives of working people, but immediately entering graduate school was not my plan. Instead, I felt that I needed real-world experience before continuing my education.

I chose to explore the labor movement to get a broader understanding of the lives of working people. The AFL-CIO had a training program for recent college graduates to get involved in union organizing campaigns. I was placed in San Francisco and worked with unions representing public employees, hotel, and restaurant workers. The experience changed my life. I saw workers unite to challenge corporations and elected officials in order to improve their working conditions. I learned that my role was not to speak for the workers but to give them the tools to represent themselves. After the training program I was offered an organizing position and decided to apply to graduate school after a year of work.

My first organizing campaign involved home health care workers in San Francisco. The campaign lasted a year and ended with the layoff of 140 employees due to downsizing. It was an intense year and organizing became more than just a job - it became my life. Building a strong organization among the workers took long hours and plenty of patience. The greatest challenge was proving to the workers that the power their collective labor held could improve their working conditions. We held monthly demonstrations, lobbied politicians for support, struck for one day, and even participated in civil disobedience. The objective of the actions was for the workers to have a voice in the restructuring that was taking place.

I went on to work on several organizing campaigns and as a result postponed my plans to attend graduate school for four years. My work experience has been invaluable rewarding and frustrating. Reflecting on the years spent working with unions I have realized that my frustrations are due to three issues. First, I felt a lack of respect by union leaders for women of color. I found that they easily dismissed my suggestions, though through my job responsibilities I was most in touch with the workers. Second, my own educational shortcomings frustrated me. As an organizer, exploring all options when confronting issues in the workplace is important. I need to acquire the critical reasoning and analytical skills taught in law school. Third, I also need an understanding of the law and our legal system.

My original plans to receive a graduate degree in sociology will no longer help me achieve my goals. Researching and writing about social problems does not empower working people, but using the legal system offensively can. For these reasons I know that to achieve my goals law school is the next step.

I would like to fulfill my law school education at the University of California, Los Angeles School of Law. Two events that took place at the law school left a positive impression on me. The Program in Public Interest Law and Policy organized a conference to discuss ways to bridge the gap between the legal community and grassroots social movements. I approach the study of the law with the same goal in mind. I was also impressed by the faculty and students who participated in the walk out and teach-in in response to the severe drop of minority students at the law school since the passage of Proposition 209. These two events demonstrate that at the UCLA School of law, a legal education is not limited to the classroom. I believe UCLA's learning environment is one that I can thrive in academically.

Sample Statement # 4

Furthering your education is supposed to enrich your life and expand your mind. My undergraduate career did this and much more. One particularly powerful class was a Women's Studies course called "Gender, Welfare and Homelessness." It opened the door for a deeper understanding of my life experiences and greater appreciation of the power of perseverance. It helped change my perspective on so many things and led me down the road where I am today.

Like many in my generation, my parents are divorced. I was seven at the time, so I was too young to realize that it would be such a defining moment. My life changed in so many ways, and the problems that arose have influenced many aspects of my life. Through the experience, I also now realize how important it is in our society to have access to legal resources.

During the time of my parent's divorce, things were somewhat different than they are now. Even though my father was ordered to pay child support, the amount of support ordered was a paltry sum despite his relatively high income. The class, "Gender, Welfare and Homelessness," made me recognize this injustice and helped me to identify the fact that the lack of access to legal representation was, and still is, a sad reality for many women in my mother's situation.

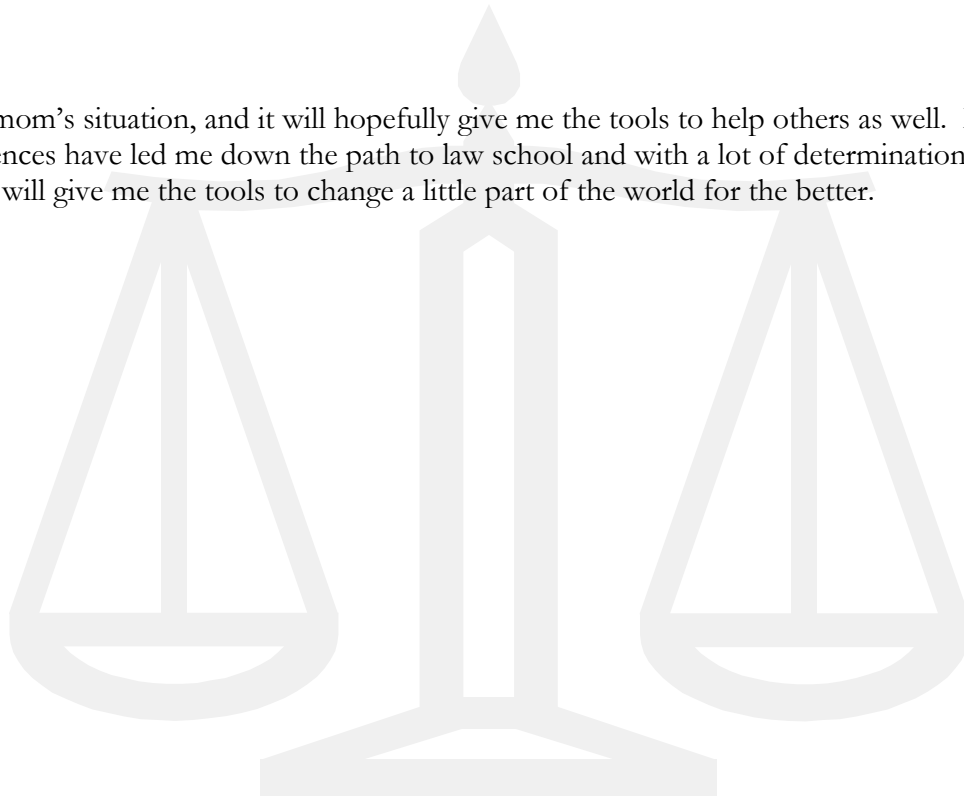
Throughout the years after the divorce, my mother worked extremely hard to support us. Unfortunately, she was more or less relegated to the service sector since she had few marketable skills. Since women of her generation were brought up with the belief that they would not need the job skills necessary to support themselves outside the home, she was ill-prepared for the job market that she was facing. Therefore, our standard of living dropped dramatically in the years following their divorce.

Even though I was aware of all this growing up, it was not until I entered college that I started to truly understand the obstacles my mother faced while raising me almost completely on her own. Like so many in our situation, there is no doubt in my mind that we were always one paycheck away from poverty and possibly homelessness. I am convinced that limited access of legal representation for those who cannot pay was a major reason that we were in that predicament. If my mom could have paid for a good attorney, our situation would have likely been much different. Our lack of financial resources made it so that she was unable to demand the child support we needed and this, in turn, exacerbated our financial problems.

Classes like "Gender, Welfare and Homelessness," combined my life experience helped me see where my motivation and desire to succeed has come from, and why my passion to study law is so strong. I thrived in college and learned something about myself in each and every class. And now I realize that my passion for education is partly attributed to my basic belief that I can make a difference. This belief has guided me through my undergraduate years. It no doubt had a lot to do with my desire and success in helping to form the first Women's Coalition in my university. It also shaped my activist leanings towards women's issues, such as domestic violence, freedom of movement and equality issues.

I know that my next step is to study law. I see the study of law as a powerful avenue to promote positive change, and I am convinced that the knowledge of law is something I need to acquire in order to promote such change. It will be my way to make sure I am never

in my mom's situation, and it will hopefully give me the tools to help others as well. My life experiences have led me down the path to law school and with a lot of determination, law school will give me the tools to change a little part of the world for the better.





Sample Statement # 5

I am the man I am thanks to two people. My father taught me to be responsible for my own actions and to not hold back when reaching for my dreams. If I failed, it was not an utter defeat for at least I had done everything in my power and when one tries one's best it is never a total defeat. My mother taught me how to care about myself and those around me, and that it is my responsibility to change those things that I see as unjust, and to not just complain about them. This foundation is the reason that I am the first one in my family to go to college. It has not been an easy road. Public school in Los Angeles was oftentimes a dangerous place and conditions were not always ideal for learning. Moreover, the limited income of my family forced me to do without things that others might deem necessities, like a computer. Yet, despite these obstacles, or perhaps because of them, the road to graduating from college with a double major in History and English Literature has been a fulfilling one. How I wish to take yet another step by attending law school.

When I was a young boy, I would walk to the corner store with my father and he would always tell me that he wanted to me to study hard and to take advantage of all the opportunities for education that he was denied as a child. His father, for reasons I cannot understand, did not let my Dad go to school, even though my Dad's desire to learn was great. My grandfather did not want his son to be better than him by becoming more educated. A closed-minded and ignorant view to be sure, but in Guatemala around the 1940s, it was not so uncommon. My Dad had to teach himself to read and write and to make simple calculations, but his potential was wasted as he was forced to take up the physically grueling job of auto body. Fortunately for me, my father took the exact opposite approach towards me. He did not want me to waste my life in "menial" labor as he called it. He wanted me to be better, to live the "American Dream." I know I could never be better than him, but I want to do everything in my power to make him proud of me. That is why I have always prioritized my schoolwork over all other things. I am never satisfied with my performance, because I know that no matter how well I do at something, I can always do better. Moreover, I believe that satisfaction breeds mental stagnation and prevents one from evolving mentally.

Although it sounds trite, and a bit naïve, one of the primary reasons that I want to go to law school is because I want to make a difference in this world. Although I have not decided on the precise field of law that I wish to pursue, I know that I want to help those who cannot help themselves. I will not lie and say that the monetary rewards are not important factors as well. It would be nice to live comfortably and to be able to provide for my family; especially after all they've done for me. However, that will be secondary to the knowledge that my efforts have made a difference in someone's life. I attribute this altruistic side of my personality to my mother. There is no specific instance that I can point out that exemplifies her influence on me; rather it was being raised by a woman who never has any qualms about showing how much she cares. She is the one that taught me not to be satisfied with a task until it is done, and done well. The task that I gladly took upon my shoulders was to be a successful and educated man, understanding that success does not merely mean financial security, but it is also measured by the changes that one can make in society. I know that I may not be able to change the world as drastically as I may hope, but I at least want the tools to try.

As a Latino born and raised in Los Angeles, California, there are few things that people can either do or say to surprise me. I went through a public school system that, despite its many deficiencies, has the enormous benefit of possessing a vastly diverse student body. Consequently, I was exposed to races, religions, and ideas from all over the world. I believe this is why I am so open-minded to ideas that differ from mine. I will not claim that I will necessarily accept them and embrace them as mine, but I will at least listen long enough to decide whether I want to assimilate it as a part of me and my thinking. I do not feel comfortable anymore unless I am surrounded by diversity. The UCLA School of Law desires diversity to enhance its learning atmosphere, and so do I.

As a History and English-Literature double major, I have gained highly analytical reading skills and the ability to dissect text and retain information. Skills that I feel are directly applicable to the study of law. However, after having been in school almost twenty years, I felt that I needed to take a year off. My decision was also motivated by the fact that I wanted to be certain that I actually wanted to become an attorney. I sought and successfully gained a position as a litigation clerk at the law firm of Irell & Manella, LLP, which specializes in patent law and other intellectual property matters. The work is far from glamorous, and is in fact fairly tedious. Despite the drawbacks, I am grateful that clerking for this law firm is not exciting because it has shown me that my interest in the law profession is genuine. There are times when I read the depositions of deponents and become utterly engrossed. I can only imagine how much greater it will be when I am the one who is prosecuting these depositions or trying to come up with a strategy to win a case. Even though I know that I do not want to go into patent law, my short time at Irell and Manella has made it quite clear in my mind that my destiny is to become an attorney. UCLA School of Law is where I would like to make this dream come to fruition. In this era where family values appear to be utterly decaying, I want to show that they are still alive and strong as I want to honor my parents by showing them that the efforts and sacrifices they made to raise me right were not wasted and that they in fact have led to making me into a successful man worthy of respect.

Sample Statement # 6

During the spring quarter of my junior year of college, I had the privilege of working at Sweetwater Union High School. Sweetwater's district is one of the poorest in the nation and the student population is about 80% Latino. I tutored sophomores, juniors, and seniors in World History and Mexican-American Studies. It was one of the most trying yet rewarding experiences of my life.

Being a Latina woman and growing up in an area not far from Sweetwater, I felt very close to the students and saw myself in many of them. Like many of the students, I lived at home with my parents and participated in a large extended family. The students and I spoke Spanish at home and, at times, to each other. Some of our parents were immigrants and many of us were first generation American citizens. The students and I were raised five minutes from the busiest border in the world. This contributed to our similar cultural experiences and our ability to relate. However, the connection I felt with the students ran deeper than this. In their eyes I could see the same struggle that I endured. It is a struggle to try and make things better for yourself and your loved ones. It is a struggle to continue to compete when you feel your disadvantages. It is an uphill battle to fight the sense of futility to which many in our situation have succumbed. I hope that my presence in their classes let them see that they too can continue to fight. I hope they realize that their struggle is worthwhile.

In addition to the connection I felt with the students, I also realized how fortunate I have been. My family has always been very supportive in my education. Although my parents had very limited schooling, they recognized the importance of an education and struggled to ensure my success. Throughout my childhood I watched my parents toil to allow my sisters and I every opportunity. My father worked as a janitor and as a truck driver while my mother worked at a grocery store. Seeing the two of them work at night to send me to a private school had a large impact on me. I knew then that I had to work hard and ensure that they were not working for nothing. I would not allow for their sacrifices to be made in vain. I have been determined to do my best and work as hard as I can to make them proud. During my undergraduate career, I have continued to fight to make the future better for myself and my family through pushing myself in work and school. Because not every student has been given the same opportunity as me, I feel it is my obligation to make the most of myself and give back as much as I can.



Sample Statement # 7

I am not a “brave” individual – or so relatives, friends, and casual acquaintances claim. Since I refuse to participate in activities that require me to be risky and free-spirited, I am often characterized as dull. I admit that I adamantly avoid riding roller coasters, mountain climbing, and bungee jumping, and that I strictly adhere to safety, discipline and planning. As a result, they reason that I am not courageous. Nevertheless, my life experiences, my Cuban culture, and my determination to achieve my academic and professional goals have allowed me to transcend different boundaries. I have lived a structured life in order to fulfill my dreams of becoming a lawyer.

Let’s entertain, however, the notion that my organized and defined life is like, as many have said, a “box.” Boxes are curious things in that they can be filled with precious belongings or left unused and empty. If my life were a “box”, what would I keep inside? Among its contents would be a paperback copy of Gone with the Wind – a book whose heroine motivated me to become a strong and independent woman. I would also have pictures of my family and an apple pin that my mother gave me inscribed with the words “#1 Teacher”, expressing her hope that I would always be a person who passed on knowledge to others. Yet, one item in particular, a tiny wooden drum, represents the most significant aspect of my life, connecting my childhood experiences to the professional I someday hope to become. In fact, if I had not been a brave individual, I would not possess this item today. I ventured beyond powerful cultural taboos to acquire this special keepsake.

This most important possession is an item I brought back from my family’s homeland. My mother was the one to decide that we should finally take a trip to Havana, Cuba. I was, however, the most excited. I had wanted to go all my life, not only because of what an amazing opportunity this was to see a different socio-political system or because I could finally tell people, with authority and experience, what Cuba was really like. I simply wanted to see my family and find myself. As I hold this small souvenir, I am suddenly transplanted to the first day I arrived in Cuba. I thought I knew what to expect. Of all the things I was prepared to experience, such as poverty, indifference, struggle and my family’s disappointment at knowing that what they left behind was no longer the same, I was not prepared to discover this. I learned the most surprising lesson of my life – I was not Cuban.

I was shocked. To native Cubans, I was an American with all the privileges of freedom and democracy. Yet, although I was raised in the U.S., the Cuban culture had always enveloped me. I repeatedly asked myself – “How could I not be Cuban?” One of the first phrases I remember asking my grandmother as a child was “Han llegado cartas de Cuba? (have we received letters from Cuba, yet?)” because letters took months to arrive. I remember helping my parents to prepare care-packages filled with medicine, balloons, candy and other confections for younger cousins in Cuban that I had never met. To them, these items meant a great deal, as they were unavailable luxuries in a country without a free market. Musically, the first sounds I heard were from my grandfather’s old radio playing Benny More and Celia Cruz – two of the most beloved Cuban musicians. Additionally, the first piano book my mother bought me was of songs by famous Cuban poet and songwriter – Ernesto Lecuona. The first morning scents I relished were those of “Café Cubano” (Cuban coffee) and “Pan con Mantequilla” (bread and butter) on Saturdays and Sundays. Besides so many

wonderful memories, my parents also taught me about complex political issues, such as the Bay of Pigs, Fidel Castro, Communism and the most difficult to comprehend – Exile.

My family made a difficult decisions by fleeing a corrupt regime and deciding to seek a better life for us in the United States. They left Cuba not knowing when they would be able to return, if ever. Nevertheless, leaving Cuban was only bearable by keeping the hope of someday returning. This faith is an integral part of the Cuban exile. Although they came into this country to live an American lifestyle, they also raised me with Cuban values and ideas. This always made me different from other American women. I grew up speaking Spanish with a distinct Cuban accent, eating Cuban cuisine and dancing Rumba, Cha-cha-cha and Mambo. In addition to American heroes, I also had Cuban heroes such as Jose Marti, a Cuban poet, and Antonio Maceo, a patriot who convinced his countrymen that it would be better to burn their village to the ground than to allow the Spanish to re-conquer it. I also expressed myself differently. To this day, I am embarrassed to say American clichés, as I am prone to mix English and Spanish proverbs with one another. Although I have lived within the boundaries of an American culture, my parents had also given me the most important aspects of the Cuban culture.

Once my parents and I returned from Cuba, I realized that I was neither Cuban nor American. I cannot say that I am entirely Cuban because I had not endured the suffering and struggle that Cubans from the island had. At the same time, I cannot say that I am entirely American because something always differentiates me – whether it is my ideas, my expressions, or my subtle accent. In my visit to Cuba, I learned that my identity is Cuban-American – a person with often seemingly contradictory social and political beliefs. I had taken the best of each culture and become a stronger, more interesting individual. I had my own language, in fact. I even fashioned a name for it – “Cuban-ese.” It is a language composed of both Spanish and English, spoken proudly and confidently. It is a language that is rhythmic and full of infection. The use of my hands, eyes and smile are integral to the way that I speak. I finally understood that this is no hindrance, it is an asset. I was part of a unique subgroup, with its own conflicts, customs and own way of communication.

I know I am a brave individual. All my life, I have been transcending various boundaries. Boxes may be an interesting analogy, yet I have not lived my life in any such “box.” I admit that I am cautious in many respects and that I follow the rules – but only the ones that I have carefully chosen. While at UCLA, I made a conscious decision to learn and follow the rules – this was they was to accomplish my goals. I worked hard to deserve the opportunity to attend a university and I took no unnecessary risks. I prepared myself for the demands of an academic institution and a career in law. I knew that desire alone was never going to teach me how to be successful. I knew I had to develop a sharp mind and as a result, grow to be a stronger individual. I kept myself organized and safe and I never lost anything by living this way. In fact, I continued to gain in knowledge, opportunities and understanding. So, some people may jump out of airplanes and these are examples of what many consider to be daring and valiant acts. Nevertheless, there are many definitions of what comprises a brave individual. I am brave in my own way. I want to prepare myself so that I can create the right opportunity to express my ideas and myself. I believe law school will prepare me for this risk. The walls of the “box” that I have chosen to discuss in this essay are only illusory because I perceive no such boundaries in my life. I will continue to step beyond boundaries as I prepare myself to embrace the opportunities of law school and the challenges ahead.

Sample Statement # 8

I never really understood why minorities in the United States labeled themselves African-American, Mexican-American and so forth. I used to believe you were either American or not. I was born in Manila, Philippines and raised briefly in Quezon City until I was four years old. At that time, my family moved to California. As many immigrant families, my family experiences heavy financial, cultural and immigration burdens. Although I grew up in a one-bedroom apartment with five people altogether, I never got the sense that we were barely skimming the poverty level.

My mom held three jobs at the time, one in an insurance company, one in a fast food restaurant and one at a newspaper factor warehouse. Every Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, my siblings and I would help my mom. She called me her best worker. I prided myself in being able to lift 10-15 pound bundles of newspaper by the time I was six years old. I was so short I had to sit on top of a bundle of fifty papers to see atop the table and insert the various sections into one. During those times, I was too naïve to know about child labor laws. Regardless, I just considered it another chore, like doing the laundry. Even at times when I would have rather rested or played, it was hard to resent my mom for making me work for seven years as I knew she worked even harder. Now that I am older and more mature, I realize that it was a blessing in disguise because it instilled a good work ethic and responsibility within me, which I have carried throughout my life.

At the age of thirteen, I retired from the newspaper business. No longer was I bundling newspapers, but rather reading them cover-to-cover. Although I thought it was impossible, my mom became stricter and stricter in emphasizing my education. I finally realized why one day during high school. In order to put a child through the most basic education of even grammar school, the majority of parents in the Philippines had to scrimp and save. Thus, attorneys, doctors, engineers – anyone who attained the top most level of education – were highly respected. Since I was five-years old, I wanted to become an attorney and perhaps this was the reason why I envied the fact that attorneys were walking libraries, containing tremendous wealths of knowledge. With an undying motivation, I used high school as a time when I could finally apply the lessons I had learned, such as perseverance, responsibility and working smart.

When I entered USC as a freshman, I thought I already knew it all. Little did I realize, I was still young and naïve. I became more knowledgeable of the real world. It was the first time in my life I had true responsibility. Like my mother ten years ago, I was now handling three jobs. One at the Los Angeles County Courthouse, one at the USC Library and finally working as a full-time student. All my endeavors were not necessarily by choice, but they have taught me a great deal about working with circumstances as they come.

After sixteen years, I finally returned back to the Philippines. I became confused and forlorn when I arrived because I experienced such a culture shock. I could not directly relate with the Filipino natives, although I am Filipino by blood and by citizenship. Without even noticing, I was enculturated with the American culture. Not until the past few years have I realized the importance of distinguishing myself as Filipino, because it explains my struggles of growing up as an immigrant, my family-orientedness and my identification with Filipino traditions. I equally feel it is important to distinguish myself as an American, because it explains my strong work ethic, my drive to succeed and my independence.

Sample Addendum to Personal Statement

EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES ADDENDUM

As you have probably gathered from my application materials I worked an exorbitant amount of hours during my undergraduate years at the University of California, Berkeley. During my freshman year my father succumbed to cancer and was hospitalized till his death in the summer of 1995. During my first three years I worked an average of 40 hours a week, and frequently worked upwards of 60. I moved my family to Berkeley in order to consolidate my costs, which allowed me the opportunity to work less my last two years. As a result I was able to focus more on my academic endeavors resulting in a 3.75 GPA in my 4th year. This ability to focus on my academics led to my graduating with honors from the History Department.

I do consider my ethnic background to be important in evaluating my experiences, especially since I grew up in East Los Angeles. It is how I overcame these challenges that I consider more significant. Thanks to the foresight and persistence of my father, I was bussed to more affluent schools in the San Fernando Valley of California. Although I faced the racial slurs and bigotry that is common in these areas it did afford me a better education. From the 7-12 grades, with extreme sacrifices my father sent me to parochial school. Although my high school probably fared worse in terms of resources when compared to public schools in the area, it provided a much safer learning environment, which culminated in my achieving high academic marks. I am the first in my family to attain a college degree and pursue a law degree. However, I would not have gained admissions to UC Berkeley without Affirmative Action. I credit this and other programs geared toward assisting minorities for helping me succeed in college

STANDARDIZED TESTS ADDENDUM

Although it is not my intention to seek excuses for my LSAT score of 153, I do believe that it must be considered under a certain context. I have never tested well on standardized tests. Since grade school I continually always tested in the 40% - 60%. The SAT was no different, in which I scored an 860 (400 Math, 460 Verbal). However, I believe that my GPA is a better indicator of my academic potential. Although it dropped during my first three years because of heavy work commitments, I increased significantly my final two when I could focus more on my studies.

Sample Letter of Recommendation #1

Academic Recommendation

Of the undergraduate students I have taught at Berkeley in the past 30 years, [Student X], stands in the top ten per cent. The usual words of praise—bright, hard working, perceptive—are appropriate but [Student X] possesses additional qualities which set him off from many other undergraduates. He brings to his work an extraordinary enthusiasm, and unquenchable intellectual curiosity, and a mind that is open to and eager to grapple with new concepts while questioning (but not necessarily discarding) the old.

I know [Student X] through my two large lecture courses. If I were writing about most students in those courses, I would be confined to a discussion of their examinations and papers and depend on the graduate student instructor or reader for his or her evaluation. ([Student X's course examination were, in fact, solid and clearly articulated.) But [Student X] made it a point to see me regularly during office hours, and each time he came prepared to pursue new lines of inquiry about the materials and lectures. The questions he asked were tough and important, revealing not only a solid command of the materials but a deep appreciation of their implications. In his questions, as in his comments, he demonstrated a particular sensitivity to the human implications and consequences of public policies and laws. I came away from these discussions impressed with his analytical abilities, his independence of mind, and his fine sense of the important question.

[Student X] was no academic recluse. He combined his duties as a community service officer for the campus police department with an active role in the Associated Students of the University of California, serving as a senator and member of several important committees. He has managed to balance his academic pursuits with responsibilities in the larger student and non-student community, and it was quite clear in my conversations with him that he saw these commitments as mutually reinforcing in his education.

[Student X] is driven by the kind of intellectual curiosity and sense of commitment that a teacher would wish upon all of his or her students. I recommend him with enthusiasm.

Professor Y

Sample Letter of Recommendation #2

Academic Recommendation

[Student X] is a most impressive undergraduate. He is very smart, uncommonly articulate, refreshingly thoughtful, and most affable. He took a History Major's colloquium with me in the Cultural Politics of the Civil Rights and Black Power Years (1945-1975) and excelled. Indeed he was one of the very best among a very talented group of thirteen. His written work – a series of three substantial papers – was excellent: well-conceived, well-argued, well-developed, and persuasive. I was particularly impressed with the depth and range of his knowledge, his ability to marshal compelling evidence in an argument, and his critical and analytical faculties. He not only writes effectively, but he writes with conviction. I anticipate that this dedication to improving further his writing in concert with his diligence and commitment to hard work will strengthen his already considerable writing skills.

[Student X] was one of the intellectual leaders of the seminar. He attended every class and was always on time. He consistently challenged the class to get beneath surface answers and meanings and often offered provocative evidence and interpretations to push us to a more thorough and richer understanding of the materials. Whether the issue was gender and sexual politics or strategies for visualizing the concept of "Soul", [Student X] always had something interesting and thoughtful to contribute. In addition, he was especially sensitive to the interracial and gender dynamics of our discussion process and thus sensitively facilitated discussion on numerous difficult occasions. For example, he gave a probing and enlightening in-class presentation on the autobiography of the black revolutionary Assata. Similarly, he was particularly helpful in facilitating a discussion on the jazz giant John Coltrane.

I enthusiastically recommend [Student X] as a most outstanding student and a wonderful person with an exceedingly bright future ahead of him.

Sincerely,

Professor Y

Sample Letter of Recommendation #3

Employer Recommendation

November 15, 1999

Re: Letter of reference for Mr. X.

Dear School Admissions Committee,

I met X when he applied for a part-time position with the Institute for Law and Policy Planning (ILPP), a non-profit public policy research organization focused on criminal justice planning. The position required the mastery of the clerical tasks expected of a typical office worker. However, he made such an impact in the office that I gave him a substantial raise and added a considerable amount of responsibility within his first week on the job. His intelligence, command of writing, ability to clearly understand and articulate complex material was striking.

I soon discovered that X had great intellectual and interpersonal strengths, which would eventually make him a pivotal member of my organization. Before coming to ILPP X was a Supervisor with the Night Escort Service of the University of California Police Department, where he worked full time and was looking for employment that would afford him more freedom and opportunity. He was fully supporting his family, which was bifurcated--his grandmother and mentally ill uncle were living with him in Berkeley and two younger brothers were with his stepmother in Los Angeles.

Although the job description involved rather mundane tasks, X realized the opportunity for growth. He was confident in his potential and quickly made a powerful impression on both my staff and I. X was vital to the completion of many criminal justice planning reports that were solicited by counties nation-wide. However, his most impressive work materialized when the Federal Court in the Ralph Coleman vs. Pete Wilson case assigned me a Mastership.

This was an enormous class action suit where mentally ill inmates successfully sued the California Department of Corrections for failing to provide adequate care and facilities. It was my responsibility to monitor compliance of various court orders by conducting site visits of many California prisons. X became an essential component of this monitoring process. He was responsible for maintaining a voluminous amount of material, gaining a solid command of the orders and procedures that were required, and reviewing prison documents to gauge compliance. His ability to synthesize such an overwhelming amount of material and become an expert on various compliance issues allowed me to streamline my monitoring process.

I could always depend on X to prepare a thorough pre-site visit package, always taking an individualized approach in order to make the monitoring process more effective and continuous. His excellent writing skills coupled with his organizational style allowed for a quick turn-around time between a site visit and the presentation of a monitoring report to the court. X's versatility, discipline, and work ethic was unmatched, hence my need to hire *two* people to assume his duties when he graduated from UC Berkeley and started working

for the City of Los Angeles Councilmember Nick Pacheco as a prestigious John D. Gardner Fellow.

A more personal evaluation of X reveals an even more impressive individual. Life has not been easy for him by any stretch of the imagination. The sudden and unexpected death of both his mother and father during his freshman year of college was devastating. He had to re-focus his life toward fully supporting his family while trying to maintain academic excellence.

By the time I met X he had already stabilized his financial situation by working 40-60 hours a week as a Campus Security Officer for over three years. He had been a volunteer at the Berkeley Rental Legal Assistance Program, and most impressively, had served as a Senator in the Associated Students of the University of California, Berkeley. In sum, he endured circumstances that would destabilize and undermine the progress of most undergraduates, forcing them to take time off or drop out all together.

X decided to remain an extra year in school and his accomplishments during his last two years were splendid. While his GPA had dropped from a high point of 3.34 at the end of his first year to a 3.06 at the end of his third year largely due to the aforementioned events, student X miraculously achieved an astounding 3.75 grade point average in his fourth year of study. However, he still wanted to prove that this was no fluke, therefore during his last year, he went on to complete both a standard thesis as well as an Honors thesis within the History Department, was granted the Woodrow Wilson/PPIA Fellowship at Princeton University, and was awarded a Ronald E. McNair Fellowship for post-graduate study. In addition, he was also awarded the Student Life Achievement Award for his outstanding academic and extra-curricular achievement as a UC Berkeley undergraduate—a prominent accolade awarded to only a select few each year. Last May, X graduated from the University of California at Berkeley having earned the notable distinction of Academic Honors.

X is one of the most impressive individuals that I have encountered both professionally and personally. His incredible work ethic and commitment to overcoming adversity is remarkable and unparalleled in my experience. I have instructed and advised hundreds of law students when I was a faculty member at the University of California, Berkeley's Boalt School of Law and, by comparison, I am convinced that Mr. X will be a tremendous asset to UCLA School of Law.

It is his extraordinary academic achievement, strong work ethic, and uncommon personal conviction that convinces me that X will achieve great success at UCLA School of Law. Although, his LSAT score might not place him in the upper percentiles of your applicant pool it is what he has achieved in life that is the true indicator of his potential.

X is greatly missed in my office and has a standing offer to come back and work for me. But, it is also my belief that a legal education would further develop his already extraordinary abilities and allow him to become an invaluable asset to the UCLA School of Law student body.

For the aforementioned reasons, I give him my highest and most enthusiastic recommendation.

Sample Dean Certification Letter of Recommendation

January 10, 2000

Dear Admissions Committee Members,

A full review of [Student X's] record reveals an individual who is extraordinarily committed to his academics and extracurricular endeavors. I find his experience of having to support his family while still achieving academic honors to be a truly remarkable accomplishment, which is indicative of his maturity, drive, and future potential as a leader. Given his already impressive record at the University of California, Berkeley I can only imagine what more he would have achieved if he was afforded the opportunity to dedicate himself full-time to his studies while at our university. His personal triumphs coupled with his leadership on campus leads me to conclude that [Student X] will succeed in any endeavor on which he embarks.

[Student X] was admitted to UC Berkeley with a 3.8 high school GPA and an 860 SAT score. However, this standardized test did not come close to accurately predicting his academic achievements. Student X was one of a few students who possessed the academic ability and initiative to complete an honors thesis in the history department. Furthermore, his upper division course load, which constitutes over half of his UC Berkeley curriculum, reveals a 3.58 GPA. [Student X] was also the only student from the entire University of California system to be awarded a prestigious Public Policy and International Affairs Fellowship from Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. All these factors led to his being awarded the Student Life Achievement Award during his final year at Berkeley.

I came to know [Student X] through his active participation in campus politics and activities through student government and various committees and organizations dedicating to improving our campus. [Student X] has an impressive employment and extracurricular record, which enriches his academic prowess. I have become increasingly aware that his positive contributions to such a broad range of organizations and activities stem from his combination of seriousness of purpose, highly personable nature, and exceptional intellectual capabilities.

I find [Student X] to be a truly driven individual who will achieve great success at your law school. Therefore, I urge you to review his application in the context of both his academic and personal achievements. As he did at University of California, Berkeley I fully expect him to become a leader on your campus thus, enriching your program and student body.

Sample Resume

Student X

Student's E-mail

Student's Address and Phone Number

EDUCATION: University of California, Berkeley

B.A. History with Honors and Political Science, May 1999,
GPA: 3.33, Upper-Division 3.58

WORK EXPERIENCE:

8/99 to Present **Office of Los Angeles City Councilmember Nick Pacheco, Los Angeles, CA**

John D. Gardner Fellow

University of California, Berkeley fellow working for Councilmember Nick Pacheco in all aspects of his office including city planning, field programs, and establishing legislative agenda.

6/99 to 8/99 **The Greenlining Institute, San Francisco, CA**

Summer Academy Associate

Leadership and public policy program focused on economic development in low-income communities.

5/97 to 8/99 **Institute for Law and Policy Planning/California Planners, Berkeley, CA**

Research & Administrative Assistant

Conducted extensive research and assisted in preparation of reports for criminal justice studies. Produced reports on various California correctional facilities for U.S. District Court.

8/94 to 5/97 **University of California Police Department, Berkeley, CA**

Supervisor for Night Escort Service

Supervised community service officers and oversaw the operation of the night escort service.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:

8/98 to Present **Centro Legal de La Raza**

Historian & Volunteer

Assumed ambitious project to chronicle history of this 30-year organization.

3/96 to 8/99 **Cal Students for Equal Rights and a Valid Education (Cal-SERVE)**

Signatory & Campaign Coordinator

Initiate and coordinate political campaigns under a progressive multi-cultural slate during student government elections. Responsible for setting policy and legislative agenda.

8/96 to 8/97 **Associated Students of the University of California**

Senator, Chair of Personnel Sub-Committee, Member of Business Management Board

Legislated policy for 30,000 students as one of a twenty-member board of directors and oversaw the daily operations of a seventeen million dollar operation. Was very active on various committees.

8/95 to 6/96 **Berkeley Renter's Legal Assistance**

Legal Aid Intern

Assisted the Berkeley and Oakland community by providing legal advice on rental issues.

HONORS & AWARDS:

Student Life Achievement Award

John D. Gardner Fellowship Program

Public Policy and International Affairs Fellowship

Honors Student Society

EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

Office of Los Angeles City Councilmember Nick Pacheco, Los Angeles, CA 8/99 to Present

John D. Gardner Fellow

Awarded a ten-month public service fellowship to work in government or non-profit sector. I am involved in all aspects of the Councilmember's office including legislative research, city planning, and organizing field programs.

The Greenlining Institute, San Francisco, CA

6/99 to 8/99

Summer Academy Associate

Leadership and public policy program focused on developing economic opportunities in low-income communities. Created a "report card" of Silicon Valley companies grading their level of contributions to community-based organizations dedicated to serving the minority community.

Institute for Law and Policy Planning/California Planners, Berkeley, CA

5/97 to 8/99

Research & Administrative Assistant for Dr. Alan Kalmanoff, Esq.

Conducted extensive research and assisted in preparation of reports for criminal justice studies. Duties included interviewing inmates and prison officials, data collection and analysis, drafting reports, organizing and maintaining a vast array of court documents, and maintaining a firm grasp of legal procedures involved. Produced reports on various state prisons including at Corcoran, Pleasant Valley State Prison, Salinas Valley State Prison, Substance Abuse and Treatment Facility, and Duel Vocational Institution. Reviewed and made recommendations on criminal justice research funding proposals submitted to the National Institute of Justice.

**University Village Family Housing Complex
& UC Police Department,**

8/96 to 8/99

Community Service Officer, Supervisor

Coordinated with UC Police and University Village housing staff on designing and implementing security policies for a 1,500 person residential complex. Duties included patrol, issuing parking citations, and writing detailed reports regarding suspected criminal activity.

University of California Police Department, Berkeley, CA 8/94 to 5/97
Supervisor, Community Service Officer - Night Escort Service

Supervised Night Escort Service on campus during evening shifts. Duties included maintaining detailed logs and records, implementing programmatic policies, meeting with UC Police Administrators to develop policies, and assured safety of staff under my supervision.

Summer Employment

The Greenlining Institute, San Francisco California 5/99 to 8/99
Academy Associate
Please refer to prior description.

Campus Textbook Exchange, Berkeley, CA** 5/96 to 8/96
Stockperson & Cashier

Coordinated with manager to assure adequate supply of products and performed sales duties.

International House, Berkeley, CA*** 5/95 to 8/95
Maintenance Worker

Performed various maintenance duties at this dormitory including painting, moving furniture, plumbing, electrical, and other labor-intensive duties.

Hours

- Office of Los Angeles City Councilman Nick Pacheco – Full Time
- The Greenlining Institute- Full Time
- Institute for Law and Policy Planning/California Planners- 20-35 hrs/wk
- University Village Family Housing Complex & UC Police Department – 10-15 hrs/wk
- University of California Police Department – 40-60 hrs/wk

*Summer positions were full time.

**Was also employed at UC Police Department

***Was also employed at UC Police Department

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Associated Students of the University of California 8/96 to 8/97
Senator, Chairperson of Personnel Sub-Committee, Member of Business Management Board

Legislated policy for 30,000 students as one of a twenty-member board of directors and also oversaw the daily operations of a seventeen million-dollar operation. Was active on various committees. Instrumental in passing legislation and organizing campaigns to maintain Affirmative Action programs on campus.

10-25 hrs/wk

Cal Students for Equal Rights and a Valid Education (Cal-SERVE) 3/96 to 8/99
Signatory & Campaign Coordinator

Rejuvenated this campus political party to address issues concerning affirmative action, student services, housing, and advocate a progressive agenda. Initiated and coordinated political campaigns for student government elections and was responsible for creating policy and legislative agenda.

5-20 hrs/wk

Hermanos Unidos/ Hermanos Unidos Alumni Association 8/94 to Present

Alumni Chairperson & Active Member

Founded and organized Alumni Association for this 10 year old UC Berkeley organization. Initiated extensive project to gather information on alumni and create a viable network.

10-20 hrs/wk

Centro Legal de la Raza 9/98 to 5/99
Historian & Volunteer

Assumed ambitious project to chronicle the history of this 30-year-old organization through extensive interview process of former volunteers and members of the community.

10-20 hrs/wk

Leadership and Education Development Taskforce (LEAD) 10/96 to 5/97
Taskforce Team Member

Designed and initiated a campus program to alleviate racial balkanization amongst various groups and organizations. Coordinated funding programs to further ameliorate this issue.

3-5 hrs/wk

Berkeley Renter's Legal Assistance 8/95 to 6/96
Legal Aid Intern

Assisted the Berkeley community by providing legal advice on rental issues.

5-10 hrs/wk

Honors Student Society 8/98 to 5/99
Member

Selected to be a member of this honors society. Performed various community service activities such as food drives, academic recruiting in high schools, and organizing charity events.

2-5 hrs/wk

Order of the Golden Bear 8/98 to 5/99
Member

Selected to become a life time member of this UC Berkeley organization dedicated to improving the university.

2-5 hrs/wk

Chicano/Latino Political Science Association 8/98 to 5/99
Member

Member of this student group that was dedicated to increasing the presence of Latinos in the political science department of UC Berkeley.

5-8 hrs/wk

East Los Angeles Democratic Club 8/99 to
Present
Member

Member of this organization dedicated to assuring that Democratic elected officials maintain the interests of the residents of East Los Angeles.

2-5 hrs/wk

Raza Recruitment and Retention Center 8/96 to 5/99
Volunteer

Volunteered during admissions periods to recruit minority students to apply to UC Berkeley. Organized various campus visits and assisted students with the admissions process.

2-5 hrs/wk

Cantwell Sacred Heart of Mary High School 8/99 to
Present
Volunteer Assistant to College Counselor

Assist students in preparing for college entrance exams, writing personal statements, and encourage them to seek admission to colleges they consider out of their reach.

HONORS & AWARDS

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- Student Life Achievement Award** 1998
Award given to students who have achieved academic excellence, extraordinary community service, and have overcome hardships.
- John D. Gardner Fellowship** 1999
Public service fellowship awarded to three UC Berkeley and Stanford University graduates based on academic record and commitment to public service.
- Public Policy and International Affairs Program, Princeton University** 1998
Summer institute focused on Economics, Statistics, and Policy Analysis. Awarded a fellowship to complete a Masters in Public Policy.
- The Greenlining Institute Summer Academy** 1999
Summer program focused on economic development in low-income minority communities through partnerships with corporations
- Honors Student Society** 1999
Student society for honors students focused on academic excellence and community service.
- Order of the Golden Bear** 1998
Society of selected students, faculty, and administrators focused on improving the university. The criteria for selection are demonstrated academic achievement and leadership on campus.
- Mothers of East Los Angeles Scholarship** 1994,
1998
Scholarship for students from East Los Angeles who have achieved personally and academically. Awarded highest scholarship level in 1994 and 1998.
- Los Angeles County Certificate of Achievement** 1998
Certificate presented by Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina for commitment to community service and academic achievement.
- McNair Scholar's Program** 1998
Research program focused on encouraging students to pursue graduate studies. Focused my research on legal service organizations and their impact in minority communities.
- Chicano/Latino Policy Project** 1998
Awarded grant to conduct research on Centro Legal de La Raza and their impact in the Latino community of Oakland, California.

