

My initial interest in pursuing a legal career began more specifically as an interest in law enforcement. After deciding on this career path, I joined the [redacted] Police Department and have been a police officer there since 2012. While clearly not comparable to actually being in law school, part of my capacity as a police officer is to be a student of the law. After spending seven months studying in the police academy, I have spent the last four years continuing my education in law through additional training and certifications classes. I have studied many aspects of the law throughout my career, ranging from the central tenets of penal code, constitutional law, and search and seizure, to the more obscure areas of hunting laws, liquor laws, and housing laws. While many other police officers found these classes boring and overly complicated, I discovered that I truly enjoyed the intellectual challenge and rigorous debate over different interpretations of the law.

As a police officer, I have pursued additional studies in law through as many additional training opportunities as possible. While I enjoy my current position, I have realized that I am more interested in the intellectual aspect of law and its real world applications, rather than just the enforcement of the law. I want to be in a position where I can use my abilities to work on challenging legal issues. I enjoy the social service and problem-solving aspects of my position, and hope to continue my focus on those aspects while advancing my legal career. I've been inspired by the few police officers I've met who have been able to segue a career in law enforcement into a career as a lawyer.

When I joined the [redacted] Police Department I did not know what to expect. I was raised in an upper middle-class family in the suburbs of [redacted] I was well-off and sheltered. I went to college and then graduate school. In 2012, I joined the police force, and was immediately assigned to a walking beat in a predominantly African-American community

plagued by gang violence and poverty. Thrust into a new world, I was forced to face the bleak reality of life in the inner city. The things I've seen and experienced in that time have changed me have left a truly lasting impression.

These experiences have affected me, in both positive and negative ways. I have watched people die, and listened to children cry because I took their mother or father away. I have made state-mandated arrests while listening to another human being plead with me to not ruin his or her life. I have dealt with people having the worst day of their life. Sometimes I've been able to make it better, sometimes I make it worse. Many police officers force themselves to become numb to the stress and ugliness and develop animosity towards the job and resentment towards the community. Rather than resentment, I have developed a deep empathy for the plight of the poverty stricken and the downtrodden, and a frustration to my inability to truly help them. This empathy has forced me to confront my own role as a police officer.

Far removed from the quiet white suburb of my childhood, this job has forced me to confront my own conflicted feelings on community policing and racial and social injustice. I'm grateful to the Police Department for its mission of community-based policing, which has made me as a part of the community, rather than outside of it. I believe I've gained my most valuable expertise in policing from continuous interaction with people in all facets of life. I've spent the past five years talking to people on the street, at their jobs, and in their homes. I've seen a full array of human emotions, interacting with people at their best and at their worst, both police officers and civilians. As I prepare to transition from law enforcement to law school, the profound impact that policing has had on me is crystal clear. Regardless of where I end up in life, I know that I will never forget what I've learned as a police officer, about policing, about the community, and about myself.

From these experiences, the societal differences between the inner city communities and those of the suburbs have become clear to me. I believe that all people are born equal, and that success or lack of success in life is strongly influenced by environmental factors. Inner city communities suffer from higher violent crime rates due partly to the confluence of systems that sustain a cycle of mass incarceration and poverty. In my opinion, the antidote for these ailments is a combination of education and family. Much of inner city crime can be traced to ignorance – ignorance of the law, of what is right or wrong, or of the alternatives to crime. This ignorance is a result of a failure of our society to maintain an adequate public school system and strong family and community institutions.

As crime reduction strategies, education and family go hand in hand. A lack of a higher education limits one's options in life and often eventually leads to crime. Successfully obtaining a higher education relies on the skills and values that are taught by one's family, such as responsibility, ethics, and dedication. The current criminal justice system leads to broken families, which raise children set up for failure. This continues the cycle of poverty and crime. Refocusing our national efforts on educational and community programs would have a more beneficial impact on crime than our current war on drugs. I've seen the plight of the inner city, and I know that changes need to be made to break the current cycle. I believe education is the key to success – education of children, parents, and communities. As a police officer, I've done my best to effect positive change in my community, and look forward to continue to do so as an attorney.