Annie B.

**Criminal Justice and Psychology**

*Arrowhead Union High School*

Growing up, I was always pressured to think about what I want to do when I get older. Most commonly I was asked during family holidays. Thanksgiving, Christmas, birthdays. We would gather around a table. The adults talking about their jobs and their lives. The children sitting and listening. Sooner or later, the adults would add me into the conversation. They would proceed to ask the famous question, “What do you want to do when you grow up?” My most common response: “I don’t know.” Me, a six-year-old little girl playing with Barbies and watching cartoons was now attempting to lay out my future.

With that question constantly on my mind, I wondered, what do I want to do? Teacher? Detective? Nurse? Veterinarian? Movie Star? Lawyer? The answers were endless. A never ending spiral of thoughts. Although the world gives me so many options, my mind was always set on one field. Criminal justice, politics, and psychology. Why these?

This type of work has run in my family for years. My dad, a former DA, police officer, and lawyer. Brother, a lawyer. Sister, a lawyer. Mom, a political journalist. Even though these fields destroyed my family, I want to be living proof that you can do something you love and be able to love others at the same time.

I know the consequences. I have seen it first-hand. PTSD, depression, anxiety. It slowly takes control of your life, only if you let it. The toll it took on me and my family was drastic. I do think if my dad had been in a different career, things would be different. Everything happens for a reason, and that's why I want to choose this path. To make a change. To show I can be different.

Growing up I was forced to hear about all the bad guys and all the bad things in our world. I learned so much at such a young age; it forced me to put up a shield and to constantly see the negatives over the positives. From watching my dad in court defending people, to watching him become the DA and all the backlash that comes with it, to knowing almost every piece of information about any major event that happens, due to my mom.

I grew up thinking that everyone has some ulterior motive. For the most part, that is true. Throughout my life so far, I have learned that everyone has a big, bad wolf inside of them. No one is fully good and everyone questions themselves. The tasks they do, the people they meet, the ideas they have. The big question that wanders my mind is, why? I want to solve crime, yes. I want to help families get closure, yes. But I want to know why. Why do people do the things they do, and how can I make a difference?

I want to see change. I want to feel change. Whether that's the nation as a whole, or one individual. The feeling that you helped someone and kept someone safe, is one of the most positive feelings. The mind is the most powerful thing. It makes decisions that can affect your life forever. Lead you down a good path, or a bad path. Giving an answer to the most important question, determines everything in your future. In my head I have that answer.

But I continue to wonder if I can do it. Am I motivated enough? Am I strong enough? Is it possible? Now that I am older, I tend to question myself much more frequently. One thing I know for sure is that the 6-year-old little girl who played with Barbies and watched cartoons would say yes.