

For the longest time, I was ashamed of my ethnicity and where I grew up. Since I was born, I have lived in government funded housing facilities, most commonly referred to as the projects. Even though I thought of my living circumstances to be the same as others, life experiences taught me the contrary. My mother knew after having my older sister that it would be best to send me to schools that were better funded. This meant that I had to attend schools in wealthier neighborhoods far away from my home.

Entering school, I noticed that there were not many people who looked like me. The majority of the students were of a paler skin color. Even though teachers encouraged friendships among students, I almost never had a “clique.” Angry at being different from others, I often denied my skin color and ethnicity. My hatred for being me was so severe that when it was time to draw self portraits, instead of picking up that brown color, I used the white one. Thus the battle with myself that would last my whole life started. Even when I made a friend of a different race than me, I was never able to invite them to my house. My mom always taught me that if I ever brought someone over, they would spread rumors about me of being poor and dirty. As a result, I rarely brought people of other races besides my own into my home.

For the most part of the social aspect of school, I never really felt engaged. In order to distract myself from these feelings of loneliness, I decided to take up some hobbies. My studious personality and curiosity to learn was something that eased me to try out many different activities.

After experimenting with art and sports, I finally found my true passion: running. It was not until the 8th grade that I really began to appreciate the beauty of the sport. With the support and comfort with my teammates and coaches, I was able to find confidence within myself. Not only did I learn how to have fun, I also realized how much farther I can push beyond my limits. From learning the discipline of being an athlete, my perspective changed as I started to apply myself more in school and at home. I soon began to take more chores at home in order to help out my parents and better managed my time and assignments at school.

However, running also was the root of my curiosity in science and medicine. Starting up in running, I always got injured. As an athlete, I always wondered why the body develops certain reactions in response to injury. It was not until I developed my own stress fracture (tibial level 4) that I started to take an interest in human anatomy and science. I found it captivating to learn how the body is all interconnected and its response to the external environment. After being out for a couple of months in the season, I started to pay more attention to how my body responded to the healing process. From this experience, each time I got injured, I conducted my own research on the possible injuries it could be. Being injured was the root of my science curiosity. Soon, I started to take more STEM oriented classes. Taking AP biology, statistics and calculus fueled my passion for science even more.

The experience that most contributed to my interests in science was volunteering at a hospital. By volunteering at Kaiser, I was able to learn more about science by engaging with the patients and medical staff. From going to the different wings and helping out the vaccination center was my first hand experience into the medical world. It was fascinating to see how diverse science can be. With all the different wards in the hospital, seeing the levels of science and treatments gave me the push to pursue science.

Since I would be the first generation in my family to have a science oriented career, my extended families disapproved of my goals. However, I want to pursue something that really brings me joy and happiness and make an impact on other people's lives by helping them.