

WORTHY

2021 Worthy Women's Scholarship – Finalist Essay

Kelsey Anderson

In my early 20s, I became a survivor of domestic violence. Compared to others in similar situations, I was fortunate: I was able to bring my partner to justice and testify before a jury. In sharing my experiences, I began to comprehend more fully that my experience of violence was all too common, yet so many individuals lack the support networks and legal resources that helped me find my voice against my perpetrator. The struggles I witnessed lit a fire in me and made me want to dedicate my career to helping others secure justice.

I specialized in human rights and gender policy during my graduate studies, which challenged me to think critically about how policy can uphold or degrade individual rights, and to explore innovative methods for responding to human rights violations. I learned how to advocate for those lacking the social and financial resources to pursue justice and those for whom the judicial system fails to provide a framework for accessible legal recourse.

I gained knowledge of how organizations are combatting sexual violence around the world through advocacy and litigation. My recent position at an advocacy nonprofit expanded my professional human rights experience and illustrated the impact of law on upholding rights. Through innovative technological approaches to documenting forensic evidence, we created avenues for sexual violence accountability. We developed MediCapt, an application which allows health professionals to capture and store forensic evidence on a digital platform, securely transmitting evaluations and photos to lawyers, judges, and law enforcement for use in court. For instance, the sexual and gender-based violence program has been supporting survivors seeking justice in Kenya following the 2007 – 2008 post-election sexual violence. Supported by evidence from MediCapt, the High Court at Nairobi recently ruled in favor of the survivors, setting a monumental precedent for legal liability.

What I have seen and experienced at home and around the world has shown me that using an ethical approach to the law has never been more vital. I am currently enrolled in the Juris Doctor program at University of California, Hastings College of the Law. My legal education will allow me to layer my human rights background with methods for elevating the needs and incorporating the voices of women and other disadvantaged groups to ensure effective survivor-centered responses to human rights violations. As a student pursuing public interest law, this scholarship will help me focus on my education and ideals when seeking summer positions, and reduce the amount of debt I will accumulate upon graduation.

The bridge between law and human rights is built on ethics and evidence, and my background has positioned me to excel on both fronts. By building on my conviction to speak out against wrongdoing and knowledge of human rights, studying law will equip me with a formidable arsenal to combat injustice and shape a more equitable world. I will be a lawyer representing my clients with empathy, bolstered by personal experience.