

My hands danced naturally across the ebony and ivory keys, every finger choreographed to elicit a beautiful note that meshed with others in song. I could see each key vividly, but more importantly, could see the string of notes scrolled in my mind as my fingers raced across the piano keys until the final note. Then, everything stopped. I looked over my right shoulder and saw my parents standing, applauding my performance. They enjoyed what they *heard*, and although I wrote and played my own music, could not fully share in that experience. Although I was only a child, I fully understood the magnitude my limited hearing abilities had on every dimension of my life. Music was anything but an aesthetically pleasing harmony or song that pleased me audibly, but a safe haven where I could escape into my imagination and be fully “normal.”

While a child and adolescent, I was consistently branded as the outcast. Life on the fringe was not easy, particularly when alone. However, I found refuge in music, computers, and other portals of creativity that broadened the bounds of my imagination. However, life always had a rude reminder that *brought me down to earth*. I was sitting in the middle of the class of nearly thirty students, closely monitoring the lips of the stout Science teacher who was issuing the first assignment on my very first day of high school. I could not hear the particulars about his assignment, and sank low in my seat dreadfully waiting my turn. My neighbor Henry confidently responded, “Hardworking,” and I assumed that the teacher simply asked us to choose an adjective we most identify with. He pointed in my direction, and I answered “Determined!” which caused a raucous laugh that reaffirmed my status as an outcast. Minutes later, I learned that the teacher asked each student to: “Pick a quality that describes you that starts with the first letter of your name,” but could not hear this part of the question.

My hearing disability detrimentally impacted my academic performance, and the help of my analog hearing aids were minimal. I grew accustomed to sitting in the front of the class, although this did little to help me achieve marks that placed me at the head of the class. Background noise exacerbated my ability to listen, and my hearing aids often times clashed with lecture hall speakers. After I graduated onto the University of Washington-Seattle, I made it custom to approach each professor to inform them

about my hearing disability, but even such efforts fell short of mitigating my inability to hone in on lectures or share in classroom discussion. Therefore, my academic performance suffered, as did my self-confidence. I initially majored in Science to please my father, a patent attorney, which required a keen attention to lectures and involvement in collaborative labs. Political Science was a far better fit, particularly because I excelled at writing and analytical reading. Although I emulated my father, I nonetheless sought to blaze my own trail toward a career in patent law. My father worked closely with engineers on innovative concepts years before they became commercially marketed products. The insider stories I was privy to, which relayed the input of engineers and scientists, fascinated me, and I learned about the evolution of the patent process. After resolving to pursue law school, I took on a position at *Kurtz, Richards, Wilson & Company*, and completed legal research, learned about products liability, and regularly visited the Southern California Courthouses. I found myself reading more about cyberspace law, and the complex legal challenges and questions posed by the Internet. The law, like the piano before, became a forum that ignited my imagination and triggered my confidence, and the infinite opportunities it beheld, provided an ideal career path.

My struggles with hearing loss inspired my innovative spirit, and empowered me to transcend the physical obstacles that life presented me with. Since my hearing senses were limited, I proactively found avenues to sharpen my intellect through music, technological curiosity and innovation, and a burgeoning interest in law and advocacy. Therefore, I cultivated a deep interest in the intersection between law and technology, with a specific interest in patent law, music and copyright law, and cyberspace law, a burgeoning area of the law that is ripe with uncertainty and excitement. While employed, I enrolled in an Immigration Law Class at a nearby college, and studied alongside prominent practitioners who I shared dynamic debates with, which enhanced my advocacy skills. Furthermore, I also channeled my condition as a source of leadership, which motivates my desire to use my *Juris Doctor* as a platform to advocate on behalf of handicapped children and citizens enduring other physical limitations. This segment of society is extremely marginalized, and suffers from a void of authentic advocates who can champion their rights

in the courtroom as well as in the policy realm. For instance, I look forward to studying how to enhance the practical legal reach of the *American Disability Act*, and expand both legal and public awareness about living with a disability.

I am greeted by my mother, and the glowing keys of the black Steinway piano seated squarely in the living room whenever I return home. The black seat looks much smaller today than it did when I was a child, but the texture of the keys are ever so familiar. I sometimes take my place on the seat, and play a melody that sends me on a nostalgic drift. In addition to seeing the notes intermeshed with the trials I endured as a child and teenager, my cutting-edge hearing aid, patented through the work of legal visionaries, allows me to fully hear my own music. My father has since succumbed to cancer, but I vividly recall his glowing pride after I played a tune. Today, my passion for music has not waned over the years, but is met with another love that demands more of my time, and hopefully, the remainder of my professional life. I hope to make the kind of *music* in the courtroom in particular, and society at large, which improves the lives of disabled people of all handicaps and limitations, and inspires the brand of legal innovation that both my imagination and intellect are fully capable of making.