

Turning Lessons Into Action

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Growing up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin taught me a lot about oppression, privilege, and the necessity of giving voice to the voiceless. My understanding of humanitarianism, journalism, activism, and service are rooted in my understanding of growing up in a city plagued with a long history of division, discontent, and distrust, where one's perception of a community is often shaped and driven by stereotype and assumption over interaction and truth.

As a young African-American woman, I witnessed this divide firsthand through my early educational experiences, how people spoke about my community and disparaged others, not seeing accurate reflections of people different from themselves on their tv screen, in the books they read, or in the classroom. Captivated by the field of journalism and inspired by its unique ability to expose me to stories and dialogues which shaped my worldview and understanding of these issues, I committed myself to combatting this division through writing, communication, and organizing. Using my passion and educational opportunities to write and create in a manner that uplifts, educates and empowers, ensuring that I utilize my power to serve as a bridge for communities which otherwise would not interact as a mechanism for positive change and understanding.

My coursework at The University of Wisconsin - Madison offers the unique and immersive experience of learning through action, dialogue, and deep analysis. As a journalism and political science major, my reporting courses and classes on election behavior and political communication have shaped my understanding of critical issues shaping our nation and reignited my passions for activism, journalistic writing, and leadership. My work in journalism and for the Morgridge Center of Public Service has centered around the concepts I learned in class, working to help my peers better understand disparities which exist within our country and community and translate that passion into direct action.

On April 7, 2020, on the day of the Wisconsin Primary Election and the day in which I was supposed to cover the Wisconsin Election for a project in J335, I stood in line for my grandfather, who was undergoing treatment for Stage 4 Stomach Cancer, terrified that if he took the risk of standing in line that day he would lose his life because of it. For almost three hours, in the occasional but persistent pouring rain, I stood, certain that the frustrations which fueled me that day would guide my life's path and drive my passion and commitment to advocating for the people who failed to make it there that day and were silenced as a consequence of fear, pre-existing conditions, lack of access to a vehicle, disability, misinformation, and discrimination.

In that moment, like many which followed that summer as I covered protests and vigils and rallies across the state, I felt a devotion to diligently advocate for the rights of all the voters who were silenced as a consequence of fear, pre-existing conditions, lack of access to a vehicle, disability, misinformation, and discrimination. I returned to campus in the fall to my position at The Morgridge Center of Public Service and worked the entire semester mobilizing student voters with The Badgers Vote Coalition. "I feel like I don't know enough to vote or talk about politics" was a statement I heard constantly from my peers.

Through meaningful student-led learning experiences and the development of social media pages which would regularly disseminate voting information and resources to students, in my role, I helped to establish Badgers Vote as a hub for election information during a time in which our campus was not only highly polarized, but also entirely virtual.

At UW-Madison, the ways I have been able to learn have been expansive in their capacity to teach me the true meaning of the Wisconsin Idea, connecting learning to service and changemaking and working to educate others. Whether I am registering students to vote, writing an article about my community, in conversation with policymakers and activists or advocating for legislation on Student Council, I remain highly aware that my work grants me a unique power to educate and shape the minds of the public and serve as a critical tool in their pursuit of positive change and action.