

WHERE THERE IS A MAN WHO HAS NO VOICE, THERE I SHALL GO SINGING

Kirsten Marie Grice

The week before we left for Immokalee, all I can remember is stress. Stress about outlining. Stress about brief writing. Stress about trying to make moot court or law review. I was exhausted, burnt out, and living solely in my own selfish, law school bubble. I started law school because I wanted to make a difference in the world. I wanted to travel, and be a voice for people who could not speak for themselves. I wanted to write books and spark social change. I was a dreamer who had the strongest faith in myself. But after starting law school, things changed. Hours of reading, long classes, and legal writing assignments leave little time for dreaming. Instead of dreaming, I started questioning my own intelligence, as most law students do. This questioning resulted in a diminished faith in myself. Without faith, I had lost my voice for others because I wondered what I could actually do to help anyone.

Since returning from Immokalee, my perspective has changed. The things I saw on our trip, the people I met, and the friends I made have refreshed my perspective on law school. On our trip, we met with high school students from Immokalee who were preparing for college. They were so excited about starting college and so eager to experience a different world. They seemed anxious about navigating the mysterious, and oft times, overly complicated college application process. They were flowing with questions about how to get in to college, what it is like, and how difficult it would be. These are questions I did not have going into college. College was just something I knew I was going to do. I did not feel like I had been gifted with a wonderful opportunity that would expand my horizons and change my life. In reality, it felt like I was doing something ordinary that everyone else does. But the truth is, not everyone goes to college. In fact, very few do.

Many of the students we met with will be first-generation college students. Their worries do not stop at trying to make a

good SAT score, or writing the perfect college-admissions essay. Often, instead of going to school, they wake up at four o'clock in the morning to help their parents in the fields because their family needs the extra money. They also travel from state to state to follow the harvest, and may change schools more than once in a year. Some face the fear of having one of their family members deported at a moment's notice. They feel guilty for wanting to stop working in the fields and leave their family to go away to college. The stress I have about law school now seems so trivial in comparison to what these high school students have to deal with every day.

When my friends and I were driving around Immokalee, listening to music, I heard lyrics from a Jewel song that I always thought were beautiful; "Where there is a man who has no voice, there I shall go singing." This time, hearing those words had a greater meaning than ever before. Maybe I cannot change the world yet. Maybe I will not be the next Sheryl Sandberg or Angelina Jolie...yet. But right now, I can be a voice for these kids. My mission is to return to Immokalee every year and provide advice, guidance, and encouragement about college to these students. I have stopped thinking about the burden that law school has placed upon me, and started thinking about the power it has given me. I have had the opportunity to meet so many helpful, influential people during my time at FSU, and I can use my voice to tell them about these students. I have the power to help people in my very own state. The strength that law school has given me, and all of the experience I have from college and law school can be used to help others beside myself. I can be a voice for someone else, right now, and that makes all the stress worth it.

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