

Being raised in the San Fernando Valley in Southern California has helped me become the person I am today. I grew up with the desire to help others and the environment around me, but I did not know how I could make this a career. I would regularly volunteer at my local community center, Pacoima Beautiful, and sign up for any environmental internships they had available. Their mentorship helped me understand the importance of environmental and community work.

During a joint internship with Agua University and Pacoima Beautiful in the summer of 2016, I traveled the state of California and learned about the flow of water and how water impacted each location. We started in a water recycling plant located in Los Angeles and made our way to the state capital in Sacramento. Following the flow of water and their tributaries, we studied water policies and how water injustices have shaped the outcome of lakes and rivers across California. We stayed at Mono Lake, the site of one of the most famous water injustices in California, and studied how the local community created a social movement to help save their beloved lake. Mono Lake's water is saltier than the ocean, and without tributaries bringing in fresh water, the salinity of water became too much to sustain life around the lake. Los Angeles was taking advantage of local water policies and using these freshwater tributaries at an unsustainable rate to feed the growing needs of a city over 300 miles away. This caused Mono Lake to shrink and lose biodiversity. Without the intervention of locals, Mono lake would have dried out completely. This experience shaped my desire to help the environment because I did not learn about this environmental injustice through school or the news, and this did not sit well with me. I want to help ensure that an environmental injustice such as that of Mono Lake will not happen again, and I believe Evergreen State will help me achieve this.

Soon after, in Fall 2016, I participated in an internship with Community Nature Connection, where I learned about the beneficial aspects of connecting a community with its surroundings. This internship guided me through environmental advocacy and how it relates to accessibility. Every Saturday and Sunday for 17 weeks, I traveled with my peers throughout Los Angeles, learning how to connect with nature on a spiritual level. We learned about native plants and how they were and continue to be used in everyday life. This changed my perspective of the environment; I now understood it was not separate from society but rather highly intertwined with everyday life. I began to see environmental advocacy and justice as a lifestyle rather than simply a potential job.

After graduating highschool in 2017, I wanted to pursue a degree in environmental studies. For the next 4 years, including every summer, I studied intensely at the University of California, Berkeley. One of my upper division courses included a course in Resource Management (ESPM 102C). This course introduced me to the management or lack thereof environmental resources and how poor planning can have a lasting effect on the environment. This course taught me the importance of planning for resource management decisions based on local rangelands rather than making a broad decision without taking local factors into consideration. This course helped me link data models with environmental justice by providing data on how decision making can affect resource management and consequently the environment.

In May 2021, I received my Bachelors of Science in Society and Environment. However, I felt like I wanted to gain more knowledge and experience in environmental studies. I wanted to gain a new set of skills that would help me understand spatial data in a new way. In September 2022, I began taking classes about GIS at Foothill College. I was introduced to a new perspective

on spatial analysis that only reinforced my desire to help the environment. I now possessed a greater understanding of spatial data that could help me prove environmental issues from a spatial perspective while also making the data visually digestible.

This winter, I found Evergreen State College. This program will help me reach my goal of becoming an environmental leader and advocate. My goal is to be able to help the environment through environmental advocacy, resource management and policy making. I plan to use my electives to earn a certificate in GIS while also learning how to become a better environmentalist.