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As a little girl, I believed love and compassion could cure illnesses. I healed Cat's fractured leg with a band-aid. I treated Domo's broken arm with a hug. I cured Bella's aching heart with a kiss. Cat, Domo, and Bella are stuffed animals. But, in my infantile eyes, they were my patients.

My early summers were filled with my grandma's doctor's appointments. I sat in waiting rooms reading medical pamphlets and idolizing doctors in white coats. They symbolized wellness, trust, and everything I hoped to be. However, my grandmother had a different idea about the profession and believed she was being provided subpar medical care. Her frequent criticisms forced me to question her beliefs in science and her sanity. My participation in three medical programs at the Cleveland Clinic (Charles R. Drew Academy and Junior Ambassador Program) and Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine (Scientific Enrichment Opportunity Program) exposed that her seemingly unreasonable opinions were more than just delusions.

The Charles R. Drew Academy focused on the intersection of race, medicine, and health disparities. After studying the story of Henrietta Lacks and the Tuskegee Experiments, I concluded that my grandmother's criticisms developed from her awareness of the historical medical mistreatment of African-Americans by white doctors, who failed to sufficiently solve health disparities, and were undemonstrative of loving and caring sentiments for black patients. Additionally, as a student volunteer in the Junior Ambassador Program, I cared for patients and completed clerical work for employees, solidifying my understanding of the importance of encompassing empathy in the medical field.

For two summers, I independently conducted biomedical research at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine to gain familiarity with research practices and molecular interactions within a cell. In my research project entitled "The Role of Epha6 in African-American Colon Cancers", I learned there is a genetic predisposition to disease. Previous studies in my lab identified Epha6 as a gene significantly mutated only in African-American colon cancers (CRC), suggesting that Epha6 plays an important role in the advancement of African-American CRC. My research project identified whether the CRC associated mutations in Epha6 impact its endogenous phosphorylation, altering the downstream signaling cascade and promoting tumor development. The data shows the prevalence of higher mortality rates of colorectal cancer and diverse cancer types in African-American populations, suggesting molecular differences between the tumor landscapes of African-American and Caucasian cancer types. By understanding these genomic differences, through research, I can develop more comprehensive treatments to reduce the disproportionately large cancer mortality rates in black communities.

I aspire to obtain a degree in biology, with a minor in public health, to understand the role of the body and immerse myself in community health. After completing my undergraduate degree, I will obtain a doctor of medicine degree and doctor of philosophy to dismantle health disparities from a structural level.

The unsatisfactory level of cultural competence, ethnic sensitivity, and biomedical research to understand the landscape of African-American health cultivated my dedication to serve my community as a medical doctor and researcher. I desire to eliminate health disparities by compassionately assisting families and demonstrating that there are culturally competent and ethnically sensitive doctors available to provide help. My knowledge of the importance of biological research and medical advocacy for African-Americans, awareness of the negative social impacts of health disparities, and love and compassion for minority communities will allow me to carry out multiple goals. I will conduct biomedical research and provide empathetic medical knowledge to heal the distrust between black patients and their healthcare providers, and decrease the number of black patients disproportionately dying from disease.