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I found it strange that they served him water. As I sat in Courtroom III of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslav (ICTY), a glass wall and ten feet separating me from an alleged war criminal, I considered why this man was handed chilled water from a pitcher each time he felt thirsty. And that he felt thirsty and went to the bathroom and wore glasses, just like the victims he was indicted for murdering, and just like me.

War crimes and genocide are gruesome and they are implacably tragic. Certainly they constitute transgressions of international law. But above all they are inhumane, for they represent the greatest violations of the most fundamental of principles, the dignity of all human beings. They detract from my own humanity and that of every other person, regardless of who committed them or against whom they were committed. That the perpetrators too are human makes us wonder what drove them, in that situation, in that time, to such acts and ask if there is something wrong with more than the individual.

I spent four and a half weeks in The Hague this past summer conducting research on the ICTY for a thesis on transitional justice mechanisms. Those weeks confirmed for me that my life studies and work lie in international humanitarianism, though I have long engaged in coursework and activities related to global affairs. I remember still the first time I raised my placard to give a speech in the sixth grade, in a simulated Third Committee session on the human rights situation in Chechnya. Since then I have found continually that such issues animate, push, and provoke me in a way other subjects do not and singularly motivate me to acquire greater knowledge, understand more perspectives, and critically debate the questions involved. Ultimately I hope to undertake both direct fieldwork and advocacy to change and propose more effective policies toward global justice, relief and development, and conflict resolution.

In view of these goals I aspire to pursue studies of the history and politics of Africa and the dynamics of multilateral and international institutions. The MSc in African Studies would fulfill my scholarly interests in current debates in Africa, such as democratization and multi-party politics; “ethnic” conflict; and the role of external agencies in Africa’s affairs, and prepare me for substantive work in this field. Through the MSc in Global Governance and Diplomacy I will acquire a stronger grasp of how different elements in global governance interact and negotiate, through a foundational course on diplomatic practice and two elective courses on non-governmental organizations and regional integration. I am drawn to the emphasis in both MSc’s on nuanced analysis and consideration of a spectrum of measures and actors. I plan to build on these studies by attending law school in the States, where I intent to focus on international humanitarian and human rights law and the rapidly evolving field of international criminal law.

Much of the activities and studies I have undertaken has been inspired by my experiences at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice. There are sights and sounds from the annual Youth Town Meetings that have never left me. Hearing the president of Adopt-a-Minefield describe the horrors of landmines exploding in playing fields, homes, and schools, and then holding an old landmine casing in my hand is an experience seared in my brain. Listening to Muslim youth from San Diego talk about the discrimination they faced after September 11th is another. Hearing the accounts, in person, of victims of sexual trafficking from Mexico remains perhaps the most indelible. It was at these conferences that I became familiar with some of the key issues I wish to work in – intra- and inter-state conflict; child soldiers; and the protection of civilians, especially women and children. Last fall I volunteered and participated in the 2008 Women PeaceMakers Conference and got to connect with incredibly

courageous and resourceful women striving daily to build peace in Liberia, Colombia, and many more. Peace processes must be inclusive and aim at gender equality for sustainable security; and local and international actors must strive vigilantly to make them so. These have been formative and compelling experiences, leading me to believe that it is both possible and imperative to effect change.

My internships have provided me with more direct exposure to the issues I care about and current efforts to address them. I watched how two leading humanitarian organizations grapple with challenges of coordination, security, neutrality, and effectiveness in conflict and disaster zones and areas of neglect by governments. The highlight of my summer in New York was when I worked intensely with the UN Representative of CARE International in the weeks preceding the vote on Security Council Resolution 1820, on sexual and gender-based violence in conflict, to lobby Council members to vote in support of the landmark resolutions. Some weeks later, working on a web interactive for Doctors Without Borders, I did a voiceover of the quote of a young woman who had been raped in Eastern Congo and though I could not understand what she had been through I related to her powerfully, as another young woman, and suddenly felt so vulnerable.

Even mindful of the implications of inaction for people's lives, the world community must work system-wide for the protection of human rights, creatively employing all available resources to prevent future violations; detect conflict before it escalates; and address root causes and conditions which engender conflict. Moreover, prosecution is not an end in itself and transitional justice is not just about "getting the bad guys" for justice' sake. It is a continual, positive endeavor that ends impunity for atrocities but also involves fostering reconciliation and helping a society to rehabilitate and rebuild. This will be a long-term process, often frustrating, always sobering, where progress will be incremental and perhaps not even visible in one lifetime. But is what I want to be a part of and where I believe I can make the greatest difference. (1001 words)

I certify this is my own work.