


PERSONAL ESSAY
Natalia Grabowski

I am a recent Mount Holyoke College graduate, who specialized in International Relations, as well as, Romance Languages and Literature with a particular emphasis on Spanish and Italian. My interest in foreign languages and cultures stems from my childhood. At the outset, Polish was my first spoken language. I grew up in a bi-lingual household, of which I am very proud. Likewise, I am convinced that because of my environment I learned to appreciate other people and their cultures. In turn, this admiration led to my fascination with foreign languages and intra-personal communication. Beginning in middle school and high school and continuing throughout my college career, I avidly studied Arabic, Italian, Spanish as well as Russian. Through studying these languages, I have been fortunate enough to work with individuals of various cultural backgrounds. More specifically, my love of foreign languages inspired me to help others learn foreign languages. My teaching experiences began my junior year of high school, where I volunteered as a Spanish and Italian tutor. Likewise, I was an interpreter and English tutor to my peers who belonged to the small Polish and Russian immigrant communities in my hometown of West Springfield.

Even before I began my undergraduate career, I was certain that I wanted to be part of the international arena; where I could use my language skills to communicate with individuals of various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. However, it was not until after I graduated that I realized where I would like to focus my talent: legal translation. In June 2008, I began working for *Womenshelter/Compañeras*, a non-profit organization that assists victims of domestic violence. Through this organization, I was exposed to the legal world and quickly realized that the diverse populations in the surrounding area were in a dire need for interpreters and translators. These individuals, most of whom were recent Spanish-speaking immigrants to this country, did not have a complete awareness of their legal rights and responsibilities. Seeing these people struggle because of language barriers made me determined to find a way to assist them in a professional and respectable way. Moreover, I truly enjoy interacting with all kinds of people and would like to think that I could be of assistance to anyone who is in need. I sincerely believe that my calling is to work with the immigrant communities of the United States. Ultimately, as a legal translator, I would serve as a cultural and linguistic link to our nation's Spanish-speaking peoples; by eliminating some of the common misunderstandings of our country's legal system and helping immigrants understand their rights and options.

Presently, I am preparing myself for Middlebury College's Graduate School in Spain program. While in Spain, I plan to pursue a Master's Degree in Spanish linguistics. My ultimate goal is to return from Spain with the ability to speak like a native. In addition to this program, I have also begun my studies concerning the legal world; currently I am pursuing NYU's certificate in Spanish Legal Translation. I realize that my educational endeavors are great and can only hope to be successful in them. However, my personal situation is one that does not easily permit such an extravagant educational path. Thus, I would be exceedingly grateful to the Lint Center for National Security Studies Scholarship Committee for any aid that it could award me. With the help of your Committee, I would be better able to attain my goals and play a more active role in our American society. Thank you for your consideration.

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 20 August 2009