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Behind the Key

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Behind the Key

Skyler Gray

Lawyer in the State of California; federal judicial law clerk in West Virginia from August 2014-15

**University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), 2011
B.A., Communication Studies, summa cum laude
University of California, Irvine School of Law, 2014
J.D., summa cum laude**



In a few words, my passion is public service.

If money and time were of no concern, what would you do for the rest of your life?

I would continue working towards what I strive to achieve today—making a positive change in society. I'd like to get involved in policymaking and government. I'd travel around the United States and the world listening to individuals' concerns, aiming to provide them with a voice and determined to formulate a tangible solution. I'd write about these experiences on my blog on [The Huffington Post](#). I'd spread individuals' stories and thoughts through [social media](#). I'd bring my guitar, and [I'd sing about it](#). I'd encourage others to do the same.

What course in college had the greatest impact on you and why?

During my junior year at UCLA, I was accepted into a small honors seminar taught by former U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher. The course was International Flash Points, and, in class, we discussed and debated various U.S. foreign policy approaches to areas of controversy around the globe.

Needless to say, it was an unbelievable opportunity to study foreign policy under Secretary Christopher, and I am so grateful. Secretary Christopher inspired my decision to go to law school, and particularly to attend the University of California, Irvine School of Law under Dean Erwin Chemerinsky, given the school's public service focus.

Tell us a little about your first job after college.

Between college and law school, I served as a Council Aide for the Los Angeles City Council, District 15, under now-U.S. Congresswoman Janice Hahn. I had previously interned at the District's offices for a few summers, and I was excited to return. I loved working in L.A. City Hall, and I became fascinated with the local legislative process. It was very rewarding to work on City issues and to feel connected to the surrounding community. I later

conducted research for Congresswoman Hahn's office as a law student.

What was the best advice you were ever given and who gave it to you?

My parents gave me the best advice I have ever received: Be yourself. Being yourself should be effortless and allows you to focus your energy on achieving your goals, rather than working tirelessly to be someone you're not.



What are some of your favorite pastimes and activities?

I love music, and playing guitar, piano, and singing are favorite activities of mine. While in college at UCLA, I performed singer-songwriter music frequently on campus for various events and benefit concerts supporting several causes, such as earthquake relief for Haiti and AIDs awareness. I even got to play in-studio on UCLA Radio, and UCLA Residential Television filmed a few music videos for my original songs. I see music as a powerful avenue to spread important social messages, as seen from so many great

artists from John Lennon to Jewel. Music has always been a big part of my life.

If I were a book, I would be *To Kill a Mockingbird*. It's my favorite book. My dog is even named after the character Scout!

As a Phi Beta Kappa member and liberal arts and sciences graduate, why do you think the liberal arts are important? How has your education or membership in Phi Beta Kappa impacted your life, personally or professionally?

I think that liberal arts and sciences are a crucial part of any college curriculum. My undergraduate education broadened my creativity and thoughts. Majoring in Communication Studies has largely impacted my aspirations. My college coursework explored public relations, new technology, the law, and media. I've carried this knowledge with me through law school and into my career.

Communication plays a part in all public interest work, and my college education certainly underscores my passion for public service today. My interest in communications is the reason why I valued working for the Los Angeles City Council. It is why I was captivated while studying diplomacy in Secretary Christopher's class. It is why I was interested in interning for the ACLU of Southern California in law school. It is why I enjoy blogging on *The*

Huffington Post. Communication is such a powerful tool for society, and learning about it cannot be underestimated.

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