COUN 503 Intro to the Counseling Profession

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With this paper, I appreciate the opportunity to envision my future, trying on potential roles and seeing what fits. Just as in good counseling, it is important to deeply sense the desires of one’s heart, especially those that may be as thin as a light bulb filament or as fragile as a cobweb. Awareness of these desires creates a road map I can follow, finding positions that most closely respond to who I am and what I have to give. For years I have been working in the field of early intervention with children with autism and their families, and my studies in counseling and my degree will enhance my skills immeasurably. There are also new ideas popping that may or may not connect with this already established path, and these are my filaments reaching into the unknown, creating possible new paths.

It would follow that I will use my degree in counseling to support what I am already doing: coaching parents of young children with autism in ways of engaging and relating. I use a biopsychosocial, parent coaching model called Play Project, which is an evidence-based, intensive yet gentle method. I am cautiously optimistic regarding the possibility of being compensated for this work through insurance companies as the result of having my LPC. What I love about Play Project is the valuing of the child’s feeling life, and supporting parents in harnessing the power of their child’s motivations to work on all areas of development. This emphasis I place on children’s emotional well-being, and the prospect of my degree in counseling inspires me to dive deeper into unknown seas, and to work with children with traumatic stress and their families.

At the age of ten, I underwent intense psychological trauma which was untreated until I started counseling at age 22. I know that children’s feelings are often trivialized and not seen as having the depth and gravity they possess. Many children embody traumatic stress without acting out, yet many may experience deep depression. I also recognize that I have moved into a locale that has experienced specific and intense systemic, generational racism as well as poverty. These factors—my personal experience of pain and a recognition of the pain around me—influence my decision to pursue my counseling degree, and to work with children experiencing traumatic stress and their families.

Trauma was in the air in the 1960s, my formative years, with the assassination of six political figures associated with political change: John Kennedy, Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, and Robert Kennedy. I was ten when I saw the black smoke in the sky from the 1967 uprising in Detroit. I also remember seeing my cousins go off to Vietnam and the footage of the war on nightly news, the last time war was reported graphically on television. What moved me deeply was not only the unrest and tragedy but the palpable social change in the air: seeing hippies squaring off with police at my local park, my cousins wearing long hair and mod clothes, and the amazing music I could tune into from the safety of my transistor radio smuggled under my pillow. I grew up sensitive to social change and was inculcated into organizing for action by my socially and politically active parents. Fast forward to my time living in San Francisco from 1988-1994, and the power I felt in the ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) movement, battling the AIDS pandemic. These deep factors influence my sense of the possibility of change, my motivation to work for change, and my desire for my degree in counseling.

Another factor influences my counseling goals, and it is the awareness of impermanence. With luck, my counseling career will last up to twenty years; I consider what will deeply influence this beautiful place after I am gone. I am aware of the efficacy of and need for black and brown counselors in this area, and the desire to see this happen is a factor influencing my professional goals at this time. I would like to collaborate to destigmatize counseling, to create scholarship funds, reasonably priced clinical venues for new counselors, and therapeutic cooperatives to support long term healing for the people in our area. I would like to play my part in making Farmville not only a furniture destination spot, but a mental health destination spot as well. If one is to have goals, why not reach as high as possible?