

Marie Curie, Personal Statement

Leaving Ghana in 1981, I never imagined I would be in the position I am today. My family and I came as war refugees to America shortly after the death of my father during a military coup that ended democratic governance in the country that year. The hardships I endured thereafter instilled in me a strong work ethic and greater appreciation for life. From my academic, employment, and volunteer experiences, I have used my energy and motivation to not only become a skilled dentist, but to continue further by pursuing a career as a caring and proficient endodontist and community leader.

My interest in endodontics began during my second year pre-clinical laboratory endodontics course, taught by Dr. Leonardo da Vinci. The course proved both challenging and rewarding, while stimulating my desire for more clinical exposure to root canal procedures. My very first emergency patient in clinic turned out to be a young woman with an abscess in the area of #14 and extreme tenderness to percussion and palpation. She also presented with a restless and curious six year-old son, who made things that much more interesting. After performing the emergency debridement, I found the experience of relieving her pain extremely satisfying, despite the hectic circumstances. In addition, I participated in an advanced endodontic literature review with Dr. Niels Bohr, observed private practice endodontists and post-graduate residents, and performed many root canal procedures during my clinical rotations. In the process of consulting mentors, family, and colleagues, I believe that I am making an informed and conscientious decision to pursue endodontics.

Throughout dental school at the University of California, San Francisco, I have taken advantage of the wide range of available opportunities. During my first year, I was selected for a three-year coordinator position with the UCSF Community Dental Clinic, a completely student-run free clinic for San Francisco's homeless. I served as director of the organization during my third year, managed all clinical operations and supervised 15 other dental student coordinators. During this past year, we doubled clinical productivity, expanded interest within the dental school, raised funds through the San Francisco Foundation, and provided an estimated \$100,000 worth of free dental service to the city's high-risk homeless population. I also participated and organized numerous community events, which allowed me to learn efficient ways to help underserved populations while giving back to the community in the process. In the meantime, I began a research project with Dr. Charles Darwin at the UCLA Medical Center, working to apply three-dimensional imaging and visualization technologies for biomedical and educational purposes. I was also elected fourth-year class president by my classmates. It feels good to be recognized by your peers and I am honored to receive their trust and respect.

My career objective is to become a board-certified endodontist and a leader within the field, equipped with the skills to perform surgical and non-surgical root canal procedures, to use modern techniques and instrumentation, and to make sound treatment planning decision for patients based on current best practices from evidence-based sources. In conjunction, I hope to attain a Master's Degree in Public Health. With this combination, I plan to either start or join a sliding scale specialty group practice for low-income families in an underserved community. A sustainable facility such as this would offer low-cost alternatives and options for patients who would otherwise resort to extractions. The public health degree would educate me in the intricacies of the public and private charity systems, whose financial support would be used to offset clinical expenses and reduce fees. Opportunities for interdisciplinary learning and research would also be a great opportunity in a setting such as this.

Escaping from Ghana during a time of civil unrest cost us our home, took my father's life, and led us into a life of welfare dependence in America. Nonetheless, the same misfortune has blessed me with the opportunity to work towards a career in endodontics and public service. I am grateful for every chance I have been given and will continue to strive to become a caring individual, a productive and involved member of society, as well as an accomplished and honest endodontist.