

Thank you Seth for the introduction, and thank you Jeremiah for advising me on the speech.

Growing up in Los Angeles, I've always been a fan of politics. In fact, at a very young age, before I even understood anything about government or politics, I would always watch C-SPAN, and I found all the chatter and talk to be fascinating.

The fascination quickly translated to real opportunities as I arrived here at Harvard. There is no better way to delve into politics than through amazing opportunities here in places such as the Harvard Institute of Politics, and there's no better way to learn about classes than sitting in discussions and lectures led by the likes of Steven Levitsky and Carlos Diaz. The opportunities here seem endless: in the past 2 years, I've dined with cabinet secretaries, met foreign head of states, and became friends with former members of Congress. All this has led me to think of what many would consider the good life: the motorcades, the official residences, state dinners, and all the glamour that accompany national politicians.

Little did I expect that what would capture me is not all that. In fact, it was local government, and struggles of my hometown Los Angeles. Here at Harvard, where students often forget about local government's existence and focus on national issues such as marriage equality and gun control, few people focus on the quality of living issues that cities tackle everyday. As a freshmen, I was given the opportunity to intern for my hometown mayor, Antonio Villaraigosa. I entered into the internship expecting to have a brief and nice exposure to how local politics work.

However, I left with much more than that. I left with a sense of motivation in the face of all the challenges the city face. I left with an understanding of what public

service meant. And most importantly, I left with a greater appreciation of how much people give to see a better city for themselves and future generations.

For those who don't know, the City of LA itself is at a crossroads; it is in itself a Tale of Two Cities. On one end, people view the City from outside as a place of sunny weather, Hollywood, and diverse culture. The other city in Los Angeles is rarely seen: you are talking a city where about 300 people were killed last year, a city where about 40 percent of students don't graduate high school, and a real employment rate that probably hovers at around 15 to 20%. As an intern at the Mayor's Office, getting a taste of the challenges only made these numbers more real: you hear angry citizens yell at City Hall meetings, you sit in on meetings and realize how dysfunctional and embarrassing the city agencies can be, and at the end see how monumental the challenges are. And by embarrassing, I mean it. In 2010, Department of Water and Power employees were caught visiting strip clubs on work time. In the later year, slow response and poor planning has resulted in people dying when they could have lived.

In the face of such challenges, I was driven and inspired by the heroes at the workplace. I saw selfless people dedicating themselves to working for the City. I'm talking about people like Austin who left a major investment bank he co-founded himself to work for a City he cared deeply about, all for the price of one dollar a year. I'm talking about Jeremiah, a sports consultant now working to make the City business friendly, and I'm talking about Dennis, one of the LAPD security detail officers working long hours and making sure the City's mayor is safe and sound.

The three weeks ended quite quickly, and before I knew it, I was back at the wealthiest university in the world and eating in a dining hall that looks an excerpt from a Harry Potter movie. Since then, I've always found myself asking the same question: why? Why is it that if you were born in Los Angeles city itself, there's quite a chance you won't even graduate from high school? That you may not have a job because businesses are moving out of your city? Why is it that, as I was working on a mayoral campaign this break, I talked to so many disheartened voters who had little to trust in government? I'm sure there are hundreds of different correct answers to the questions listed above, but for me, these questions have taught me that public service is not about the media spin game and not about conducting slimy deals for your cronies. Instead, it is about providing the support and foundation so that your fellow citizens can thrive.

Here at Harvard, we are so lucky to have the resources and support to make, quite literally, a world of a difference. For me, I realize the challenge of public service is reaching the day Los Angeles is filled with shining skyscrapers, green parks, and an education system where any inspired hard working student can go to college and thrive. As we all arm ourselves with a great education and prepare for thriving careers in varying fields, let's not forget about where the greatest challenge lies: solving dire problems that face our neighbors, families, and mankind. Thank you.