Goal Statement

Growing up on a military base in Japan in the late 70’s, and a bi-racial household, my mother often required me to read historical accounts of an famous quote from the civil rights era. My mother wanted me to understand what people in the United States had endured so that my father could have the same opportunities as she was born with. My mother believed that education was a cure for intolerance and self- awareness.

I recall reading a quote by Dr. Martin Luther King that stated, “The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to be critically. Intelligence plus character-that is the goal of true education.” As a child, I never truly understood what Dr. King meant. It was not until I was 18 years old serving in the United States Army during Desert Storm. One of my first assignments when I arrived in Saudi Arabia was to dig in eight-foot deep urinal in 116° temperatures. I was told we were digging the urinal to give Officers a hygienic area to relieve themselves. I was then told these urinals were not to be used by enlisted soldiers. As soon as I finished digging the urinal, and officer came over to test it out. I asked this officer what he received his degree in. He responded, “Astronomy.” I thought, “Astronomy, studying the stars, are you kidding me!” Obviously, I now know that Astronomy is a commendable major as any, but back then I was 18 years old and totally unimpressed. As I reflected it became clear to me that there was one distinction between him and me, he had a higher education and I did not. His higher education provide opportunities and perks that would never be extended to me. Ultimately, I deduced that this Officer's degree ensured that he would never have to dig a urinal and conversely because I do not have a degree, I would always be digging urinals for someone else.

For the next several years, I continue to think a degree equals education and education equals opportunity. I decided that seeking additional education was an intelligent step forward and began taking undergraduate classes while I was still enlisted in the Army. I knew that I would take advantage of every opportunity presented to me to get an education. I liked the notion of only having to dig a urinal if I so desired so much and what it represented (opportunity and choice) that I decided to become an educator. Being an educator would allow me to help others understand the power of education.

As an individual who is always placed a priceless value on my education, it has done wonders for me. I am one of four siblings and the first to receive undergraduate and graduate degrees. As a result, not only have I have an opportunity to become a special education teacher and educate countless students, I have continued to expand as an educator and go into administration. I am currently the principal of a middle school in Alexandria city, Virginia. As a principal, I have the opportunity to bring clear focus on student learning and encouraging students to realize the endless possibilities open to them. My current position has given me a clear definition of leadership, integrity, sacrifice, commitment, trust, collaboration, accountability, and lifelong learning.

Working in the field of education, I knew that I wanted to get my PhD in education with a concentration in Educational Leadership. After looking at several schools, I knew that George Mason University fit the criteria I was looking for. I asked myself, “where can I go to study theory-based research in education? Where can I go to develop skills and perspectives required to conduct independent research in the area of Educational Leadership?” The answer to all of these questions lead me to George Mason University. As a principal, I am constantly reflecting on my leadership practices and what I can do better to promote students’ academic growth. I work with a population of 80% free and reduced lunch, 48% black, 37 %Hispanic, less than 5% white, and 37% English Language Learners. I have to constantly reflect on what are the best practices in the field of education and what theories are in the field of education that are working for other school districts. This program will allow me to grow as an instructional leader that will yield a positive result for the students that I am responsible for learning.

John F. Kennedy stated, “Let us think of education as a means of developing our greatest abilities because each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation.” One particular phrase in President Kennedy’s statement, “education as a means of developing our greatest ability” sums of why I do what I do. That is my greatest motivation. I have an opportunity to help thousands of individuals reach their greatest ability. The George Mason University, PhD program will help me build a solid bridge that will link research to practice. The knowledge I acquire from the program will strengthen my ability to be a critical thinker and give me a clear understanding of inquiry base to learning. As previously stated, acceptance into the program will be a lifelong goal of mine and furthermore help me to gain the knowledge I need to be an effective instructional leader who has the ability to help all students.