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Qasim Rashid, L'12

Law Student Seeks Path to Work for the Greater Good

April 15, 2010

Following his heart seems to come naturally to Qasim Rashid, L'12. Born in Pakistan, his family came to the United States in the late 1980's. His father, an Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary, moved the family to Washington, D.C. and later to Chicago, with hopes of finding a better life.

While attending the University of Illinois, Qasim quickly realized that human interaction was what he enjoyed most. "I've always been talkative," Qasim reveals. While excelling in English and public speaking, Qasim longed for a chance to use those skills for the greater good.

Qasim's undergraduate years were extremely meaningful in shaping his career path. He volunteered with Humanity First, a global relief organization whose mission is to relieve suffering caused by natural disasters or human conflict, promote peace and understanding, and strengthen people's capacity to help themselves. When Hurricane Katrina struck Louisiana, Qasim and a few friends drove to New Orleans to work alongside doctors and social service workers providing food, transportation and any help that was needed. "The great thing about Humanity First is that 92% of their funding goes directly to the victims," he noted.

On a visit to South Africa, Qasim walked inside the jail cell at Robben Island Prison, where Nelson Mandela had been incarcerated for 18 years. He also witnessed the disparities brought about by apartheid and the huge divides between rich and poor. It was in South Africa that Qasim recalled his father's teachings. "My father taught me that no matter what you are doing, if someone needs help, help them – don't put yourself ahead of others."

Working his way through college, Qasim did an internship with the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency, a government agency focusing on satellite intelligence for natural disasters. He maintained a budget, put together marketing materials, and trained people to solicit donations for disaster victims. Qasim also worked as an Associate Director of Admissions for Kaplan University, an online college degree program where he led a team of 50 associates to ensure ethical and legal compliance with Equal Employment Opportunity Commission regulations.

With a degree in marketing and contemplating a career in that field, Qasim found himself asking, "What will I actually achieve in the long run? I wanted my marketing skills to have a bigger impact on society." After a lot of self-reflection, he decided that studying law would give him the skills to make a difference. "I also have a passion for writing and debating and can appreciate other points of view."

Qasim has published several opinion pieces about human rights and freedom of religion in *USA Today*, *The Washington Post* and other regional and international publications. He says, "I am a moderate Muslim and my writing seeks to condemn violence in the name of religion in any form. It is through the writing and the law that I want to impact freedom of conscience."

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