



Upper Arlington High School

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February 6, 2025

Dear Committee Representative,

I had the pleasure of teaching Stella Goff when she was a freshman in my Honors Young Adult Literature and the Classics course. Right away I knew that she was a thoughtful and mature student, one who should follow a path in journalism.

Her writing was the first thing that impressed me. Stella would often turn in work that was sophisticated well beyond her years. For example, our class read the memoir *Just Mercy* by Brian Stevenson, and when we were finished, students had the opportunity to research a contemporary issue related to big ideas in the book. Stella chose to research the effectiveness of school resource officers. What impressed me the most about her paper was not only the targeted evidence that strongly supported her ideas; it wasn't simply that it was a logically organized piece of writing that included a variety of perspectives; it was the critical thinking process evident in her line of reasoning.

In addition, this *Just Mercy* paper could have been bland; however, she used her voice and her narrative and descriptive skills to enhance the research paper and engage the reader. The paper—which started with a vivid scene of UA's School Resource Officer at the doors greeting students at the front door, and ended with a re-examination of that same SRO's broader role in the community—examined the circle of viewpoints surrounding school discipline policies:

I am lucky. For me, Officer Rice is just another authority figure in the building. The building in which many plan to spend the next 4 years. 4 years of making friends, learning equations, and attending football games on Friday nights with fellow peers. Amongst those fellow peers, are students whose hardest part of their day is passing Officer Rice. For those students, Officer Rice is more than just the SRO handing out parking tickets—he sits them down in his office, knocks on their door at home, and stands next to the principal as they're told that they are unwelcome at school for the remainder of the semester.

The paper continued by exploring zero tolerance policies and the school-to-prison pipeline. She blended a personal and academic voice smoothly.

In this paper I saw a future journalist, one who could look at an issue from various perspectives; one who could gather and synthesize quality evidence from a variety of sources; one who took the time and care to deeply understand an issue. Stella enjoyed the discovery process involved in writing research. That is who she is. She is inspired by the challenge of finding the right question to ask, and then crafting an informative, engaging piece that explains the complex answer. She wants to find out everything she can about a topic so that she can share important information with others. When I saw her genuine curiosity, I knew journalism was for her.

In addition, she wrote a piece of historical fiction after interviewing her grandmother. An introduction to the piece was optional, and of course Stella took the opportunity to write one. Stella's has the ability to write in her natural voice, and to "sell" her own writing:

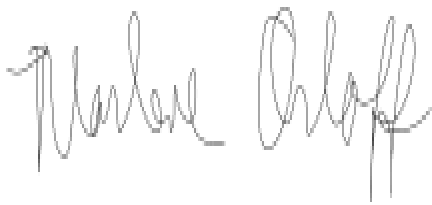
Ever since I was young, the word stubborn was always used to describe everybody on my dad's side – my father, my aunts, and my grandfather – everybody except my grandmother. She was always just opinionated, uptight, and just downright closed-minded. But as we have gotten closer, I've learned that this is far from the truth. It's my grandma, Gigi, who has gifted the Goffs with her stubborn genes. When interviewing her, I asked Gigi how and when she knew she wanted to attend college, how and when she knew she wanted to be a mother, and how and when she knew my grandpa was "the one." Every single question was answered with "I just knew," "I've always known," and "It was just a feeling." There is only one time that my grandmother can account for taking advice from another person. This is that story.

So after reading a variety of Stella's work, I told her that she, as a sophomore, should definitely write for the news magazine at our high school. Becoming a staff writer would have been enough, but Stella took it further, as Stella would. She is a leader. She is ambitious in the best way. and journalism has allowed her to find herself, her place. I did not know, when I encouraged her to become a staff writer, that she would take it as far as she did: not only has Stella won awards for her news articles. She has become a leader on our Arlingtonian staff. As Editor-in-Chief, she has revived past programs (such as podcasts and features) and has

successfully guided a staff of journalists through deadlines, conversation about sensitive content, expectations from the community, and ethics. In doing so, she has successfully built relationships beyond the staff: Stella has worked alongside school administration and UA community members in order to fulfill her responsibilities as chief editor as well as a leader in UAHS's student government.

Stella has a journalist's heart, and she has my highest, and most enthusiastic recommendation for receiving the Georgia Stilwell Dunn Ohio Journalist of the Year scholarship.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marlene Orloff". The signature is written in a light gray or blue ink.

Marlene Orloff

Language Arts Department

Upper Arlington High School