



Eastern Association for the Surgery of Trauma
Advancing Science, Fostering Relationships, and Building Careers

2022 Oriens Honorable Mention Essay
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I remember Jane Doe's letter almost word-for-word, and I remember how my chair at the corner computer in the SICU felt as though it was sinking into the ground as I read it. The squiggly cursive seemed to blur and curve as the note continued, unclear if due to her tears or mine. "Security found this with her belongings in the car, they brought it up to give to the family. It was ... self-inflicted," the nurse whispered softly. The remaining moments of a life left behind casually thrown into bags and stored. Purse, wallet, cut clothes fragments. The gun.

It had been a magnificent symphony up to that point. "GSW to the left chest" rumbled throughout the trauma bay as we donned our battle attire. Everything was perfectly choreographed, each piece moving in tandem. Airway secured, line in, blood hung, as the knife swiftly cut and the aorta was clamped. We ran in tandem to the OR, where the furious flurry continued. The clunking of tools hitting the Mayo stand and the swooshing of blood slips punctuated the air around the announcement that the left lung was being passed off. The vac tightly secured over the open chest, with the beating heart crying just under the surface, as the flurry moved into the SICU. That crying heart released one last outburst and was suddenly silent, leading to one last controlled cacophony, the percussive beats of compressions echoing loudly. And then, just like that, it was over, all coming to a screeching halt. The moment of silence was louder than anything had been prior to that point, and that deafening silence lingered in the air as I absorbed the words of the letter.

The concept of trauma surgery is beautiful in its inclusivity. Each life welcomed through the gates of the bay, often on the brink of death, fits into that well-rehearsed, often life-saving symphony, no different from the last. ABCDE, ABCDE. It's a refrain that is so deeply ingrained it becomes instinctual, and, when it all comes together, it is perfect. However, more often than not, the beautiful simplicity of the algorithm is revelatory in that it exposes the darkest cracks that exist in our society, inequalities and injustices that have been eternally bubbling under the surface.

To say this has been a trying year and a half is a cloying understatement, a cliché at this point. Each day seems to come with a new battering. Like so many, like Jane Doe, I was not immune to the struggle, and some days, even getting up to go to work seemed like an insurmountable hill to climb. However, one of the few places I was initially able to find my peace was within the trauma bay, that repetitive ABCDE refrain comforting me, centering me, and clearing the surrounding dark fog. Now, several months later, with my feet firmly planted on the ground, Jane Doe's letter remains etched in my mind. Her words illustrated that had many similarities, but the trauma bay exposed the differences society imposed upon us. I had innumerable resources, unending support. Her inner demons, on the other hand, were strengthened by societal walls she described facing at every turn.

In the field of trauma surgery, I hope to make my mark and rewrite some of these refrains. We are uniquely situated within this field to expose inequality and charge at it, meeting it head on. To advocate for reform on so many different fronts, from income inequality to access to healthcare. Racism and gender discrimination. Gun violence. The stigma against mental health. The possibilities are endless and so, so important. In the bay, I have not only been able to anchor myself, but I have been able to find my purpose. That perfect ATLS resuscitative symphony will only be "perfect" when each patient truly reaches the bay on equal footing. And I want to enter this field to play a part in composing this new chorus.