

## **Taylor Aronow**

My name is Taylor Aronow. I currently live in Anaheim Hills, but I just moved there last year from Orange. I've been in Orange County now for about six (6) years. I'm originally from just inland of Malibu, California, so it wasn't too big of a move. But socially and culturally, it's a shift.

I would definitely say that I'm an outgoing introvert. I like to be around people, and I like to be social. But I definitely need my alone time, and I need down time. My perfect day is sitting and reading at the beach, alone. Or with some people, for some conversation. I love learning, and I love animals. And I love children, so I guess you could say I have a soft spot. Just a few things about me...I love the beach, I love animals, I love kids, I love helping people, and I love making a difference. I'm 24. I'm born and raised in Southern California, and I love to be active.

I am currently getting my Master's in leadership development at Chapman, and I know I want to do something that involves kids and potentially teaching because I love working with kids. And my undergraduate degree was in Education. I want to work with kids. I want to work with leadership somehow, to some capacity, whether that's teaching leadership in schools or just teaching in general and then incorporating leadership skills. I want to teach children with special needs especially, so I would love to do it in an inclusive classroom, where they're integrated and truly included in the classroom community.

Coming to Orange County from LA County was a shift because in the city I grew up in and the area I grew up in, it was very homey. Not only because it was home, but also, I was surrounded by people like me. As a Jewish young adult or child growing up, I was always surrounded by people who had similar religious beliefs, almost always. And I found my group of people who had similar religious beliefs and religious backgrounds that I could relate with. That's kind of the biggest change that I've found coming here and being away from family. I don't necessarily have that connection, which is fine because I don't really care what people's religions are, not in an ignorant way but in an "I think we can all get along" way. I think it's great that people can believe in different things, but that's definitely been my biggest change coming to Orange County, the lack of Jewish-ness, or sameness, or community. I feel like it's very apparent that I'm a minority in that sense. And a lot of it is being at Chapman. For example, at home, not every city but most places you go, you find a Jewish deli or some sort of restaurant where you can buy traditional Jewish foods and stuff like that. In Orange County, it's just not like that. Or, at home, there's a bunch of Jewish bakeries, for example. And you come to Orange County, and they just don't have that. It wasn't necessarily a shocking thing to me, but it was just more like something to adjust to.

My biggest struggle right now is probably balancing the end of my Master's with work because I'm working a few different jobs right now. Also, maintaining a social life and maintaining relationships with family. I guess that kind of goes with social life, but just maintaining a healthy balance of everything. I think that's the big thing I'm working on right now. Now, I'm about to be done with school for the first time ever and actually be out in the real world.

My greatest joy, at this moment, is probably being able to come to my job at Chapman throughout the week and go two (2) days a week to the class that I am TAing for because it's honestly so fun to listen to all these seniors, college seniors, getting ready to graduate and hearing what they're going through because I totally can relate. And I went through the exact same thing. Also, hearing their ideas and the amazing things they want to do with their lives, and hear how they've kind of incorporated what they've learned into their own theories and into their own belief systems. I just feel like it's so fun, honestly, seeing them and seeing the difference, even just from the beginning of the semester to this point in the semester when we're mostly done. It's so great to see the change and the passion that they all have.

I love that Disney Land is in Orange County. I love that it's nice outside. I love the weather. I love being near the beach, not super close but still close enough. And I love that there's a lot of stuff to do. And I love that out here, there are so many different things to do in different areas and in some areas, so many different people to do it with. Everyone has their story, and you meet some very interesting people.

I feel like a hate-free Orange County is a place where, in an ideal world, everyone could just get along, and people wouldn't have the fear of going certain places or the fear of doing things that they want to do that are reasonable. For fear of backlash or fear that they might be treated differently, or fear that something negative could happen to them. For example, as someone who is Jewish and having there been multiple recent hate crimes against my community, I will be honest. There have been times when I am afraid to say that I'm Jewish, to identify in certain contexts or in certain areas. It's not like I hide it, but it's more like it's left out, unless it's brought to the forefront. I'm not someone who's going to wave it in your face all the time, but it's more like an aspect of my identity that I may keep hidden at times. But I think a hate-free Orange County is a place where you don't have to hide that, where you can be who you are and believe what you believe and not be penalized for it or targeted for it.

If I could give advice to the residents of Orange County, I would say to be more open to difference and different things, different opportunities, different people. That doesn't mean you have to change your beliefs. It doesn't mean you have to believe something you don't believe, or pretend to believe something you don't believe in. You really don't have to make any changes to your core. You can still believe what you want. You can still think what you want but be open to hearing different people's stories or different opinions, different beliefs that are out there and exposing yourself to different things. When you expose yourself, I think part of you does change because you're opening yourself up to everything that's been closed, everything that you've been closed off to before. So, it may not change your opinion, but it may make you more cognizant of reality and what other people are going through and more aware of those around you.