

When you're a kid, you lose track of how often you're asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

Regardless of how often we hear the question, our eyes light up, and we answer with pure joy and enthusiasm.

Why? Because the sky is the limit.

Because practicality isn't yet a factor.

Because fear of feedback and judgment isn't on the line when you're six.

When you were a kid, why *couldn't* you be the future President of the United States, or an astronaut, or a pop star?

As adults, we hear these wild ambitions and don't regard the dreamer as foolish, but imaginative and hopeful.

So what changes?

You're getting ready to graduate college, and once again, you're being asked the same question over and over: "*What's next?*"

Yet, for some reason, answers like President, astronaut, and pop star are no longer acceptable.

It's time to "get serious" or "be realistic."

To that I say — trust me, I wish I could.

If there were even a fraction of me that could be content not pursuing my wild and fanciful dreams of being Hannah Montana, I would've stopped writing songs eons ago.

Music is like breathing — second nature, and necessary to who I am.

I'd *love* to have a passion that guarantees benefits, consistent hours, and stable pay.

Alas, I do not.

I share this to remind anyone who will listen how important dreamers are.

Creating and storytelling are not just hobbies — they are necessary contributions to history and culture.

So think twice before discouraging someone from chasing a dream.

This isn't to discount how difficult the road is.

I think of it like running a marathon.

Naysayers are the people standing in the middle of the course yelling:

"Those aren't the best running shoes,"

"Are you sure you trained enough?"

"Maybe try a 5K instead."

The one who signed up for the marathon *knows* it's not easy.

They know how long the journey is.

They're not asking you to run beside them or make a sign with their name on it — they're simply asking you to *get out of the road*.

Dreamers matter so deeply.

Let us champion those whose imaginations are a little less practical.

Let us encourage those whose hopes have an unpaved path forward.

So in case you were wondering:

My name is Shan.

I'm 24 years old.

And I want to be a pop star when I grow up.