**Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story. (650 words)**

Growing up I’ve always felt uneasy about my existence. I've never really fit in anywhere, split between geeks in the anime cliques or the athletes in my swimming team. On top of that, my parents move me to a new school every three years. As an introvert, I would mostly break off contact with whoever I hung out with prior to my move. Every time I transferred, I'd just brush it off as if it was nothing, eventually the numbness of change caught up to me. Maintaining past relationships seemed to be a bore and useless.

As a student athlete, my life was also encapsulated with a bombardment of activities. I'd fill my days with the same continuous routine of morning swimming practice, afternoon gym training and school revision at dusk. It engulfed my energy and soon enough I had run out of “social battery” – unable to really socialize with anyone. This vicious cycle shut off those around me; I had become so dedicated to fabricating my own path that I viewed others as insignificant. No, even worse: a distraction. My refusal to participate in social pastimes outside school forced me to seek comfort in solitude. Sheltered from the dramas of school life, I had become accustomed to the comforts of lingering at home with my hot cocoa and piles of books. While it sounds good from the outside, I learned first-hand how being alone for too long hardens one’s heart.

Desperately clinging onto this conceptual bubble I made for myself, I had not much to complain about in life. But I also felt no fulfillment from such a life. Although my occasional successes in swimming competitions and tests gave me a sense of pride, they were short-lived. When Covid hit, I realized how little those moments mattered to me. A single individual victory seemed pathetic in my eyes as I observed others achieving monumental things in other areas too. One time, I who won gold was even jealous of those that won bronze after seeing their celebration with their beloved. The feeling of spite overcame me as I enkindled my own weaknesses as it got brighter by the day.

I didn't want this to last. Staying as an observer wasn't an option, just watching the world unfold in third person evoked a compulsion inside me. I wanted to connect with others. The first step was the hardest: approach. Shortly after school finally opened from quarantine, I tried approaching a new student: Fabius from the design & technology class. We didn't share many interests, but these strained talks caused us to expose more about ourselves, be vulnerable with each other. As I got to know more about him, he faced the similar struggle of being enveloped with the pressure and standards he set for himself. Through this I realized how those small talks can ease the burden of going through life problems alone. I saw myself in him and that feeling of numbness seemed to gradually disappear as we talked.

This journey of regret of our past selves opened my eyes to the way I seek prospects. You could say, he became this fated glimpse of light ahead signaling me to change. Quickly I realized the absolute elucidation of my life; it sought interactions with others to begin with. Although my cautious approach to life gave me closure, the thing that really gave me meaning was the potential impact I could bring to someone's life. I took up projects that had been deserted and managed to form a team where we helped underprivileged orphans learn math every Tuesday. I volunteered in academic competitions where it required more group efforts, something I loathed with passion in the past. By fighting against my instincts, I wasn’t merely freeing myself from the unhealthy fixations on invisibility but shaping my whole life to leave footprints in my community.

Hi Amos,

I love that you’ve stayed close to the formula of personal growth, and yours is quite a relatable story, especially for students your generation. This particular prompt means that there is no direct question, so you have to ensure that your story is unique and sets you apart from your peers that might go through a similar situation of feeling isolated because of the COVID era. You’ve mentioned that you had to move schools often, and the reason for doing so will definitely pique the interest of the committee. By providing more backstory, your character set up in the intro will give you more layers.

What realization or achievement has been integral in shaping who you are today? You want to leave “footprints” or legacy in the community, so the ending can be more impactful by closing off with how your interactions and contributions have set up your future ambitions/visions.

Best wishes,

Melinda