***Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.***

Throughout junior high, I was always consistent in one thing: being both the shortest and smallest in my basketball team. My skinny, 5’2” stature meant that I lacked power and my opponents could easily swat away my shots. As a result, I ended up getting benched for most of the games. But my passion for basketball never falters. This led me to question myself: Why do I like playing basketball? Is it because of the thrill? Or is it the sweat? Or, really, is it because I relish in the triumphant sentiment following a victory?

As the pandemic struck, I felt a budding desire in me to look for an answer. Every afternoon, I would listen to the loud, mocking thumps of dribbling from outside my house as I stayed locked and confined in lockdown. As days passed, I grew more and more uneasy, yearning for the times where basketball was part of my daily life.

I chose a quiet time to sneak out and play basketball alone. In a small basketball court near my house, I took a couple of shots and practiced some moves. It gave me a sense of relief, yet something still felt lacking. I realized then that my attachment towards basketball wasn’t just something physical, but something of deeper philosophical sense.

At home, I proceeded to scour through old photos of my basketball team when I came across one that stood out: a pregame photo of my team before the championship finals. There, kneeling next to me was Bobbie, my closest teammate, a talented shooter who was quick on his feet and one of the team's core playmakers. Standing behind me was Rayner, the Dennis Rodman of our team. Though not the tallest or the biggest, his dedication to put his own body on the line makes him an exceptional defender. Next to him was Dillon, the heart and soul of our group. A great leader who trusts his teammates and who motivates us with his positive optimistic spirit.

Looking at the pictures made me realize that it wasn't the game that I fell in love with.  Neither was it the thrill, nor the sweats, nor the victories. What mattered most were the connections I established with the incredible individuals in my team; getting to know them alongside their strengths and weaknesses, and making up for one another's shortcomings while developing together as a team. I loved basketball because it allowed me to connect with people.

Upon discovering the answers to my questions, I proceeded to search for alternative activities to fill in the void left from being unable to play basketball. I first gravitated towards school organizations like the student council and school event committees, starting as a member but gradually earning the respect of the group as I invested my time and efforts. In the following years, I was entrusted with leadership positions which allowed me to connect with more people. Afterwards, I started approaching organizations out of school and participated in social activities to satiate my prevailing appetite for a community.

Upon re-immersing myself in positive communities, I was finally able to feel complete again. I came to understand how this had improved me as a person and helped me find purpose in my life. Being part of different organizations allowed me to meet and connect with more people than basketball. I was able to learn about different cultures, their perspectives, observe their ways of living, and concurrently, adopt the ones I find most beneficial and righteous. Ultimately, this shaped me into a more insightful and open-minded person and allowed me to build a positive network of friends throughout Indonesia.

I aspire to study abroad at an institution with a diverse student body so that I may interact and connect with diverse people from around the world, learning something new from each one of them while developing myself as an individual.