***University of Michigan***

**Everyone belongs to many different communities and/or groups defined by (among other things) shared geography, religion, ethnicity, income, cuisine, interest, race, ideology, or intellectual heritage. Choose one of the communities to which you belong, and describe that community and your place within it. (Required for all applicants) (300 words)**

Sitting on the floor of my bedroom with a laptop propped up on my lap, I waited for the screen to load to a Google Meet. My mind ran amuck with the endless possibilities of why, exactly, the leader of my school’s newspaper club would want to meet with *me*, a scrawny fifteen-year-old who only joined a few weeks ago.

When the meeting eventually loaded, the leader said that she was going through my article. “I liked it,” she clarified, “but the school admin—maybe not as much.”

My article had been about whether cameras during online learning should be mandatory or not; it was bound to be polarizing, but not *that* polarizing. The confusion on my face must have been clear enough through the pixelated screen because she elaborated, explained that it wasn’t the subject matter but rather my style of writing. I needed to learn to hide the resentment behind my words and approach it in a way that wouldn’t anger the audience.

Initially, I didn’t agree. Does “student voice” exclude the emotions behind it? What happened to freedom of speech? But as I grew, I learned that my role before, as the angry student who didn’t care for two-sided arguments, was no use in getting others to *listen*. The key to any good communication, I realized, was balance. As a writer, I began to incite conversations with diplomacy and passion intertwining my words that aim to educate rather than attack.

This skill translated to my role as an editor and co-executive in the same club a year later, equipped with more knowledge than I did before. In my tight-knit team of six, I was the one willing to give both sides of the argument a chance, voicing my opinions in a pragmatic way. Through my ever-changing roles in my school and club community, I became the one to empower, building others up in a constructive manner than knock them down.

Hi Natasha! I love how you’ve highlighted your growth as a writer in this essay. As a member of the club, it is clear that you’ve now made greater and more meaningful contributions. To highlight your roles as a principal member in your newspaper club, it’d be great if you can write your contributions to the club in a greater detail. Since there is a word limit, it might be better if you shorten the intro part and focus more on the articles you’ve written and edited. What was the best piece of article you’ve written? How did you positively change the dynamics of the club as an editor and co-executive?