Background

Hello everyone, and welcome. Allow me to introduce myself—I am Kaleab E. Alamnew. My life’s journey began on the 17th of July, 1998, when I took my first breath in the bustling metropolis of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. My formative years unfurled in the picturesque village of Mekanisa, a hidden gem that holds an irreplaceable corner in my heart. Here, I resided in a secluded, three-story haven, void of immediate neighbors, which offered me the sanctity of solitude.

Picture a young boy, navigating through life on a bicycle, each pedal stroke propelling him not just down the road but also further into his own thoughts, dreams, and aspirations. The relative quietude of Mekanisa’s lanes was the ideal backdrop against which my imagination came alive. I experienced a unique kind of freedom, as expansive as the skies above and as intimate as the tales I would one day share. Let me quote Paulo Coelho here: "Freedom is not the absence of commitments, but the ability to choose—and commit myself to—what is best for me." Mekanisa gave me that invaluable freedom to choose, to dream, and to become.

Life presented me with a new chapter when I moved to a sprawling condominium complex situated in the heart of the city, near the iconic Semen Hotel and closely monitored by three police stations. Imagine transitioning from a serene village to an animated microcosm of hundreds of families. It was a breathtaking contrast. Day in and day out, the condominium was a lively tapestry of social engagements, communal laughter, and unforgettable shared experiences. The essence of community was no longer a concept but a vivid, palpable reality. I was surrounded by neighbors who would eventually become more than just familiar faces—they became my extended family.

It's crucial to mention my educational milestones, as they form the cornerstone of my intellectual and emotional growth. My school years began in Betelhem, setting the academic foundation before I shifted to Jiva High School in 2013. This school wasn't merely a place of learning; it was a second home. I succeeded academically, certainly, but Jiva gave me more than grades. It bestowed upon me friendships that I treasure, memories that I hold dear, and life lessons that have shaped my moral compass. Gratitude fills my heart when I think of every teacher, every friend, who contributed to my transformation. They didn’t just teach me; they believed in me, and in doing so, changed the trajectory of my life.

Then came 2017, a watershed year. Fresh off the high of achieving stellar grades in Ethiopia’s Matriculation exams, I transplanted my dreams and ambitions to the fertile grounds of the United States. With each passing semester, from an anonymous college to the hallowed halls of UCLA, my character was forged through rigorous academics and soul-enriching friendships. The journey, I must confess, was both challenging and exhilarating. Yet, every obstacle conquered made the triumphs all the more rewarding. As I walked across the graduation stage in 2023, I realized that my American dream, once a flicker of possibility, had been brilliantly realized.

Today, I revel in the life that I’ve created here in the USA. I stand here, as a living testament to the power of dreams and the indomitable will that turns them into reality. Like the iconic Maya Angelou said, "I can be changed by what happens to me. But I refuse to be reduced by it." My journey, filled with its ups and downs, has not reduced me; instead, it has enriched me in ways too profound to articulate.

So, why do I share my story? I share it as a canvas upon which you can project your own aspirations and challenges, a tale of relentless ambition, and unyielding resilience. It is a reminder that each of us is the author of our destiny. In the narrative of my life, you might find the inspiration to be the hero of your own.

Thank you for allowing me to share this voyage with you. Until the next chapter.

Education History

Back in time around 2012, one of my old middle school friend who named as Ezra, we used to love in the same place just like neughborhood to each other at the condominuuim and we used to go to Betelhem school. So, one day, it was lunch time and we had to meet for lunch and eat at the lunch time. We ate and started to talk and have a fun. He asked me a deep question what would be my goal in the future. In that time, I didn’t know what I wanted to be in the future. I asked him back that question and he replied “I hope one day I wanted to be Astronaut”. I don’t even know what is that this and I tried to memorize it for later to search up after school. In the mean time, I luckly got a mirror which it can reflacted by sun and passed the mirror and there was a share a single light spot in the ground. I will to pu my hand on it and my skin felt hot then I put a soft leaf on the group and spot the light passing through the mirror. The light made a hole on the surface of leaf. I then started to think something different like why don’t I studdt about plannet. Around the globe or world, many people know what is the living thing and non living things. But there are some people or rare that they know few about plannets and whats there outside the space or universe. I used to think what if there is a chance to become an astronaust if I am too at calculation and physics. I kept asked myself and imaged myself to be astronaust one day and I started to dreaming it. Then I went back to my old frind int eh next days and told him that I wanted to become astronaust too and he said it would be hard and tried to make me feel down. So, at this time, I was annoyed and at the sametime, it gave me motivation to get up and work hard to get what I wanted to success in the future. Later in that year, My old friend moved to another place and I went to USA and unfortunately we never talk or meet again. That’s where it began to learn more about planets, rockets, what is out there inside and ourside universe. It is just amazing to know as extra knowledge as erevrone including me learn in this world with anything if we wanted to. So, my goal was to work inside NASA or Rocket Lab or SpaceX or something like this to get or achive what I wanted to be. I knew it was easy to come this far but I was strong enough to make impposible things to possible especially if you are too smart at anything to do your own risk and surprise the world by seeing your action that nobody nor scinectis did ever in the past decades. I wanted to learn everything if God gave me an opportunity to learn and teach the world what I knew or learnt. Here are the three mainly reason I wanted to become aerospace engineer then become astronaust. First of the most, I sometime read and heard that some scintists disappred from space that they went to investigate somewhere in the space and I always asked myself what caused them and what was the reason it happened like that way and how can we know for future if some kind of strange happen for our future astronomer even for myself I become astronaust one day. So, the first reason was to study and find a solution to this kind of situation. Second, I wanted to investigate a planeets if there could be a living thing in the moon or mars or others. If there is nothing, I wanted to create any tech that could make a living things in one of plants which could be essential for life. Third reason is to bring any useful like minerals or anything like piece of rocks or asteroid and anythignt that make a history and to know if it is worth to bring more to our life essential and produce for oil or fuel to the world. These are the main reasons for what I wanted to become astronoust and sometimes I always wish that I woudlve been astronaust by now and proud of myself.

Picture it—2012, Betelhem School, lunchtime. I found myself sitting across from my close friend Ezra, a neighbor from the communal heart of our condominium life. Our meals were more than just a time for nourishment; they were an open forum for the dreams that lingered on the peripheries of our young minds. During one such meal, Ezra posed a question that would upend the very fabric of my reality: "What do you aspire to be in the future?" At that moment, I was a blank canvas, unsure of the portrait I wished to paint for my life.

Ezra, with a gleam in his eyes, revealed his aspiration to become an astronaut—a declaration so outlandish and unfamiliar that I had to commit it to memory to explore later. In the words of Carl Sagan, "Imagination will often carry us to worlds that never were. But without it, we go nowhere." And so, stirred by curiosity and the limitations of my own imagination, my life took an unexpected turn.

As fate would have it, a simple mirror would catalyze this journey. I chanced upon a mirror that refracted sunlight onto the ground, its focused beam hot to the touch. Placing a leaf beneath this concentrated spotlight, I watched in awe as it pierced through, leaving a hole. A revelation unfurled within me—could I too become a person who explores the uncharted landscapes of the universe, from the celestial bodies that orbit Earth to the mysteries beyond our galaxy?

The universe is a vast expanse, home to known and unknown elements, explored and unexplored territories. While many are content with understanding the phenomena within our planet, I felt an unquenchable thirst to fathom what lies beyond Earth. It was the quintessential lightbulb moment: Why not become an astronaut? To echo the sentiments of astronaut Sally Ride, "You can't be what you can't see." But that day, I saw it, clear as the light I held in my hand—I could become an astronaut.

In the subsequent days, I shared this newfound vision with Ezra. He tried to dampen my enthusiasm, suggesting the arduous path that lay ahead. Ironically, his skepticism fueled my ambition, catapulting me into a determination vortex. "Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall," said Confucius, and rise I did. Ezra moved away, and our lives ventured on diverging paths. I migrated to the United States, where dreams are woven into the very fabric of its flag, and we never spoke again.

My ambition to become part of something groundbreaking like NASA, Rocket Lab, or SpaceX was a daunting mission, but I was propelled by the idea that “impossible is just an opinion,” as Paulo Coelho states. I envisioned three primary reasons to embark on this cosmic journey.

Firstly, I was driven by the harrowing accounts of astronauts lost in space. A scientific inquiry beckoned—what were the underlying causes, and how could future explorations preempt such catastrophes? Secondly, my dreams extended to the very soil of extraterrestrial planets. Could we find life elsewhere? If not, could we create sustainable ecosystems on uninhabited planets through innovative technology?

Lastly, I envisioned the extraction of invaluable resources from celestial bodies, resources that could revolutionize our industries and energy solutions on Earth. In the simplest terms, I wanted to rewrite history, challenge norms, and expand the realm of possibilities. I wanted to be an aerospace engineer first, laying the ground rules, before catapulting myself into space, physically embodying the dreams once scribbled on the margins of my school notebooks.

Sometimes, I catch myself pondering—had I pursued this path, where might I be today? But no matter the course, the essential fact remains that dreams are the stepping stones of reality. And as I inch closer to making mine a reality, I am filled with an overwhelming sense of pride.

In retrospect, the voyage from a young boy in Addis Ababa, innocently intrigued by the piercing light of a simple mirror, to a man envisioning a future in the great beyond of space encapsulates the transformative power of education and ambition. The realms of science, mathematics, and community shaped not just a career path but a life's mission. Like a rocket ship on the launch pad, I was fueled by aspirations, propelled by curiosity, and aimed towards the vast, endless possibilities of the cosmos. What began as a mere speck of a dream, barely visible on the grand tapestry of youthful aspiration, has blossomed into an unwavering sense of purpose and a relentless pursuit of knowledge. This journey—peppered with challenges, choices, and changes—stands as a testament to the wisdom of Robert Frost, who once said, "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I— I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference." As I reflect on my educational history, it's apparent that the choices made in the classrooms and hallways of Betelhem School, Jiva High School, college, and ultimately UCLA, have paved a winding, uphill road toward not just career goals but towards a life imbued with meaning and potential. I am ever-thankful for the tapestry of experiences, people, and opportunities that have shaped me, for they have all contributed to the rich, complex narrative that I call my life.