1. Tell us about your experiences as a New American. Whether as an immigrant yourself, or as a child of immigrants, how have your experiences as a New American informed and shaped who you are and your accomplishments? (?)

During March in the central highlands of Vietnam, the crisp winter air slowly changes into a cool spring breeze. In the spring of 1975, that breeze was accompanied by loud firecrackers and smoke, one would think that the lunar year was being celebrated late this year. As the firecrackers and smoke got closer, it was accompanied with screams and running. The firecrackers and smoke came from tanks from the Viet Cong destroying everything in their path. My grandparents took their 4 children and ran towards the neighboring province of Phu Bon. My mom was just a newborn at the time and as they were escaping, a tank shot and burned her face. My grandparents assumed she had passed and wanted to find a safe place before they buried her. They ran on Highway 14 onto Route 7B, to cross the Ea Pa River via a bridge. That bridge was blown up and fallen U.S soldiers laid along the river. With no VC’s in sight, my grandfather picked up a bi dong a loan word from the French bidon meaning canteen to use the water to baptize my mom. As they were digging her grave, my grandfather poured the water on my moms face and she started to blink. This peace was short lived as they were later then captured by the viet cong and my grandfather was sent to reducation camps as a prisoner of war. At home, my grandmother was raising 4 kids on her own. My mom didn’t see my grandpa for nearly a decade when he was released. Though the war ended, it’s affects were long lasting. Due to my grandpas political stance, his family was discriminated against. He coulnd’t find a stable job. Him and my uncle would walk 3 kilometers everyday to collect firewood to sell to local bakeries. My grandma would make sticky rice to sell to morning commuters. My mom and aunt would wake up before the sun rose to cook and clean for a wealthy family. Where they would eat their scraps after they finished their meals. Through the Hat O program Humanitarian Operations Program, allowed my family to start a new life in America in the 1990’s. When they came here they traded their struggle for a different one but had the opportunity for something greater.

They grew up in Section 8 housing and government assistance. Growing up that was no different. Food insecurity, late bills, utilities being cancelled were common occurrences growing up. Despite this, hearing these stories at a young age, I was so grateful for all the opportunities that I had.

1. Tell us about your current and near-term career-related activities and goals, as well as why you decided to pursue the specific graduate program(s) and school(s) that you have. (?)

Short term my goal is to focus on my research on autonomous formatin flying

1. For tips on writing your essays, please visit the PD Soros essay writing guide.