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.

"Are you coming with me?" my mom asked as we finished dinner.

"To where?" I gulped.

"America," she responded.

In a daze, I looked at her face, ensuring I had heard it right. The palpitations throbbing in my heart were louder than ever. As the confusion spread across my face, she lamented, "I know you have many questions, but this motherland doesn't welcome us. Maybe America will."

My mom and I lived in a small, mountainous town in Vietnam, surrounded by farms. Witnessing the depths of poverty, we saw middle school being the highest level of education achieved. Traditionally, men farmed in the fields while women stayed home to raise the children. My father's absence, however, meant my mom had no choice but to take his role; for this reason, she dreamed of escaping the limiting lifestyle of being a farmer.

At the age of 12, I had to choose whether to live with my grandma and become a farmer, or follow my mom toward the American dream.

I was scared; the dispute between my two answers engulfed my mind. Yes...No? Simple things in this town brought me joy. I loved wandering around the farms with my peers, harvesting crops with my uncle, or playing traditional games with my neighbors every weekend. My connections with my community made me want to stay.

"But will I be satisfied with living as a farmer for the rest of my life?" I pondered as thoughts of my childhood appeared.

Witnessing my mom working every day motivated me to be a helpful child. I started learning things my dad was never able to teach me–from cooking meals and washing the dishes to crafting the shelves. I enjoyed expanding my knowledge and was enthusiastic about solving new problems. Realizing that my understanding could help my mom with various necessities fueled my curiosity beyond household chores. How were machines created from the bare hands of technology? How can I build one that can be useful to society?

Longing to find the answers to my questions, I left that wonderful town. There was so much that I had yet to explore, and I wanted to test my limits, thrive above my imagination, and further my intellectual capabilities.

When we came to America, cultural differences and language barriers caused socializing to be a daily dilemma. Pointing at the menu was my trick to help us order at McDonald's; Google Translate became an essential tool everywhere I went. If you asked me how many times I've

heard people mocking me for my English pronunciation, I would've told you to forget it. However, as little as I had, I remembered why I chose to come here.

With so much curiosity left unquenched, I decided to ignore the laughs and put my mind to better use. I took classes that helped me understand the science and mechanisms behind every appliance. After endless English-speaking tutorials and grammar books, I could finally comprehend the teachers' lessons. I discovered the software used in engineering to build and prepare site details, and I utilized this knowledge to help several organizations design their facilities' plot plans and blueprints. I also began chasing the answer to my childhood question, how can I innovate the world with my creativity? I sketched many different products but have failed to create them numerous times. I realized I needed to expand my technical knowledge. Otherwise, I would never be able to reach my goal.

For a boy who thought he was destined to be a farmer, I can finally recognize how far I've come. I know that in the future, I'll fail hundreds more times. However, I already took one of the biggest risks in my life five years ago, and I'm unafraid to take another. I will keep striving until I've achieved my ambition of becoming an engineer and pioneering humanity with my fantasy.