**Instructions for Short Answer: Please respond in 500 characters or fewer to one of the following questions.**

*4b) What would you like to initiate in the NUS College community?*

(Max 500 Characters)

Everyone accepted into NUS highly values their education. Undergraduates dream to participate in project opportunities, yet it’s almost impossible for first years, as they’re new to their field of study. I’d like to form a team in the NUS College community that creates projects and research opportunities for all first-year students, allowing them to understand the process of research, steps they need to consider, practicing skills for years ahead when they’re more qualified to conduct projects.

**Instructions for Essay: Write an original essay of no more than 3000 characters on one of the following topics. (For reference, 3000 characters approximates to 430-750 words). Not only should your essay be original, but we urge you not to reuse essays that you have written for other occasions and purposes. You can assume an intelligent but non-specialist audience: thus, you may want to avoid overly technical topics, or at least write about them using more generalist language. Your essay should give us some insight into you and your thought processes, and help us consider if the NUS College is right for you.**

*What new "fact" or bit of "knowledge" did you recently learn on your own, outside of your classroom instruction? The fact that you identify does not need to be "new" in itself (what matters is that it was new to you), and you can have learned or discovered this fact from anywhere at all (it does not have to be from a "learned" or "academic" source). Tell us: how you came upon this fact; why is it interesting to you (and/or why you think it should be interesting to the larger community); how (if in any way) you feel your life (or the world) is changed by the knowledge of this fact; and anything else you feel like telling us about this fantastic, interesting, possibly important, new-to-you knowledge or fact.*

I was preparing for the National Medical and General Biology Competition (NMGBC) held by the University of Indonesia, where I began studying for the skin chapter their curriculum required. It was the usual jumping through internet sources, websites and videos to summarize it all in a document. After a good 30 minutes of learning about melanin, I came across a Ted Talk about “The horrible effect of skin bleaching”

I was confused. Such things exist?

It was a talk by Dr Vivian Oputa, who is a medical practitioner and specialist in aesthetic medicine, surgery and dermatology. Melanin is a pigment present in your hair, skin and the iris of the eyes, making these parts have a darker color. It’s main use is to absorb harmful UV rays and protect our cells from being damaged. However, due to the beauty standards media features and their bias on lighter skin tones, the mindset of needing to have lighter skin is born. She stresses out just how dangerous this process of “color correction” is, giving worrying details that made me stop what I was doing and research deeper into this case.

I was shocked. Turns out, skin lightening products make up almost half of the entire cosmetics industry in the world. Despite many countries having already banned these products, the power of media and real-life situations drives people to find every way possible to lighten their skin. We have media personalities making news for their lightened skin tones, people advocating skin lightening treatments. Hence, why people are so driven to wanting access to privileges and social status that white people seem to have easy access to.

What makes the situation even worse, about 90% of women who use skin bleaching products are unaware of the many risks involved when using these products to remove melanin from their skin. Skin bleaching products contain many harmful chemicals such as mercury, hydroquinone, steroids and many more, which may damage the liver, kidney and other body organs. So aside from the thinning of skin and permanent scarring, there will be an increase in risk of getting many diseases, psychosis and even cancer.

After learning all about this, I couldn’t possibly just let it pass. I knew racism and white-privellege have been implemented for a long time, but I didn’t know just how much of an impact it has on the global community. Hence, I decided to put this topic into the instagram platform, Listen Louder, that I co-founded, which aims to shine a spotlight on underrepresented issues such as skin bleaching. I wanted to do my part in giving awareness to this issue, and hopefully, people will start to realize that we must put an end to this color bias.

Hi Nathasya,

Both your essays are very well written. For the second essay you have successfully answered all the parts of the question in my opinion, now it is just about fixing the grammar and elaborating more on some parts of the essay. I think at the end I want to know more about how you used Instagram as a platform to promote these issues and if anything came out of it (i.e maybe some people told you that they had never heard of this and are shocked to learn about this) and also what specific content you made on it. Of course add this if you have space (and time). Otherwise, both really good essays and good luck for NUS!

* Anushka