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. (300 words)

I became interested in basketball since the sixth grade. Not long after, I joined a basketball club called “Sahabat” – Indonesian for “Friends” – which comprised of peers from different schools and daily doses of drills and scrimmages. From a loner to a team player, from shy to sociable, from timid to confident: I owed all this to my “Friends.”

Initially, I was a self-conscious kid playing solely for self-improvement, a very tunnel-visioned mentality. After a few games, “Sahabat” kept suffering losses. I asked coach, “Why do we keep losing?” His answer was simple: improving one’s skill is important, but growing as a team is even more so. Thus, I put more effort into interacting with my teammates: getting to know them through chit-chats, making jokes together, sharing our day-to-day lives, and, eventually, having team dinners. As our chemistry improved, we molded into one cohesive unit. Next thing we knew, “Sahabat’s” wins gradually improved, we won the city championship and lost only 2 games the next season.

I owe my personal growth to “Sahabat.” It changed me from a reclusive to a sociable person and allowed me to develop empathy towards people different from me. The current me has made an impact on my team as the motivator inciting friendly competition: skills plus bonds equal teamwork plus wins. I’m confident I can contribute to the University of Michigan and make an impact as I‘m driven to build awareness of diverse cultural backgrounds and encourage people to step outside of their comfort zone and embrace them.