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**Sample essays 2017**

**University of Richmond**

**Upon Leaving Home Anonymous**

**Discuss some issue of personal, local, national, or international concern and its importance to you.**

Here is Burma in the spotlight’s glare: cheap Chinese products, bad roads, on-and-off electricity, censored internet, starving people, useless education, brain drain, corrupt government, no freedom of expression, and hopelessness. This is what it’s like in my deteriorating country, a land deep in turmoil.

I very much hated my country. And I wished I were somewhere else.

Now I’m about to go off to college and away to America. I suddenly become conscious of a vast change that I’m soon going to experience in my life. Am I relieved because I finally get what I wished for? Yes, because I am leaving poverty behind. But no—because I’m leaving my native country, a country that is dear to my heart. The thing is I am happy with where I was born. Burma may be under a ruthless dictatorship and one of the worst places in the world to live. Yet it is my home, and when I’m away from it, I’m going to miss it—everything from its food, people, culture, to the air I breathe.

Burma is where I’ve spent all my seventeen years of life, and every particle in me is compounded of Burmese soil. It is where I’ve learned the cultural values that define part of who I am—to be tolerant, respectful, and responsible to my family. It’s where the New Year is celebrated with my favorite Water Festival. The people speak the familiar Burmese language that is music to my ears, and eat the piquant flavored food that I’ve always loved. It is home to my family, friends, and people that I care about, and me too. It’s a hidden gem being squeezed by greedy hands, a place that is embedded in my soul.

With the realization of me leaving sinking in, I’ve finally learned to love and appreciate what I have. I now understand that there’s more to a country than having the best living standards. I will surely benefit from the modern ways in America. But I know I’ll never feel the same warmth and sense of belonging that I have for Burma.

Fifty years ago, people from Southeast Asia had to come to Myanmar for their higher education. Now we have to leave Burma for our own higher education. Burma can become a country with good roads, schools, hospitals, and someday—a government that cares for its people. It can be where people from other countries come to have a better life, and stop being a bleak home for my people. And I hope to be one of those people who will help bring this change to my country, making it a welcoming place to live in. I want to take care of my country and make it a true home. I want my children to be able to get a good education here and not have to leave their home country as I’ve had to do.

**sking Why Not Robert Nogay**

**Some students have a background or story that is so central to their identity that they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.**

One year ago, on a muggy summer morning, I boarded a plane with some of my classmates and teachers, headed for Ecuador. The trip was intended to reveal a different world to us, as well as aid a local elementary school in a state of disrepair. A week into the trip, after sightseeing and living in the jungle, we took a short canoe journey up the Amazon River to what appeared to be a death trap disguised as stairs. Shoeless children led us down a path forged of worn planks laid across swamp-like terrain, until we spotted what looked to be an abandoned building, which in reality was their school. Wasps’ nests lay deep inside holes in the wall, bullet ants dashed along rugged borders, and nail-length splinters poked out of the handful of wooden desks. The closet-sized bathroom stood within 15 feet of the drinking water and reeked of a smell I could only recognize as the aroma of a port-a-john after an NFL game. Screaming children laughed and clustered around a damaged soccer ball as two adults approached us with ear-to-ear grins as if they had just received a great gift. Despite the horrific conditions in which they lived, these people were some of the kindest and most joyful friends I have ever made. They expressed a rare form of friendliness I usually encounter only on holidays. Everyone exhibited the same kindness. This local school had nothing, yet everyone was tremendously happy and grateful. I learned from that thankfulness because it was something I usually did not express or exhibit.

This experience enabled me to gain an appreciation for the most basic of life’s gifts. I am given many privileges at my school, such as dedicated teachers, unlimited academic opportunities, and a flourishing community that constantly encourages success. People in Ecuador and other countries all over the world do not have most if any of these gifts. Following my trip in Ecuador, I used this newly found appreciation and applied it in my life. I did not see immediate results, but after building a stronger work ethic and persevering through old habits, I continued to push myself academically. I began to see immense improvement not only in academics but also extracurricular activities. My grades improved noticeably, and in sports I dug deeper and worked harder than I had before. I started working as if I had a goal in my life, no longer working only to finish. I developed a passion for my actions, which I am practicing today. Committed to perfecting my habits and ethics, I am on an upward spiral that I have every intention of maintaining.

Other positive impacts from my trip to Ecuador, as well as a subsequent trip to New Zealand and Australia, include a craving for world exploration, a desire to experience other cultures, and dismantling of my often-hindering shyness. Other societies teach as much about themselves and their values as they help us learn about our own culture and ideals. I learned that people from all over the world have different experiences and lessons to share and teach. Exposure to other cultures, I believe, is a necessary part of the process of growing as a person. Diversity is a great part of humanity, and the trip to Ecuador helped me shake off my shyness and taught me that meeting other people always provides a benefit. I now look forward to meeting new people. I used to operate in the world constantly asking why? But now I tend to ask the question, why not? I am looking forward to meeting a diverse group of new friends in college, traveling abroad, and discovering new aspects of the world and myself based on interaction with people from all over the world.

**The Golden Circle Anonymous**

**From small, faculty-led classes to funded undergraduate research, the University of Richmond offers the benefits of both a liberal arts college and the opportunities and resources only found in large research universities. Tell us how you would utilize these resources in order to reach your goals.**

One of my favorite business mantras is from Simon Sinek: "people don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it." This idea is based on what Sinek calls the "golden circle" of business. The outside of the circle is the "what," the middle is the "how," and the inside is the "why." Sinek argues that in business you must start from the inside, the "why," and work your way out. I know that to succeed I will need to master all three of these important aspects of business -- the "what," the "how," and perhaps most importantly the "why."

The Robins School of Business is exactly the right place to conquer all three levels of the golden circle: after all, without the right people behind them, companies have little chance of success, and the Robbins School consistently produces leaders across business fields. While the material resources and research opportunities at the University of Richmond are fantastic, it's the intangible resource of great minds that is the most valuable asset. Access to these great minds is the crucial "how" of any UR student venture.

I often dream up ideas for businesses and products, but run up against obstacles when I don't know the right coder to bring the website to life or the right graphic designer to get that Kickstarter campaign going. Without the ideal people to create a product or service, there can be no "what." At UR, I would simply enlist the help of a computer science student, find a cozy place in Whitehurst, and start bootstrapping. I love the fact that Robins School of Business students have access not only to all students at other schools within UR, but also to classes at those other schools. This interdisciplinary education will allow me to explore the endless possibilities of the "what" of my future business endeavors while also helping me discover, of course, those elusive "whys."

Failure is an unavoidable part of business, but is always accompanied by invaluable lessons. One of the best lessons I have learned thus far came from my first failed company, HashStorm. The plan was for a Bitcoin "mining" farm funded by people who would purchase partial ownership of hosted ASIC Bitcoin mining operations and their respective Bitcoin revenues, enabling investment in Bitcoin without the necessity of purchase through an exchange. I had believed that Bitcoin would change the way people banked, and had wanted to create a way for the less tech-savvy to be a part of the Bitcoin ecosystem; this was my "why." There was only one problem: I needed to create a first-rate website. My coding skills were hopeless. Though I searched for someone who was willing to work for equity, I simply didn't have the right connections. Two months later Cloudhasing.com went online, providing a similar service and doing so with much success. I learned the hard lesson that in business there are very few new ideas; what matters most is how well ideas are executed. With HashStorm, my execution suffered because I lacked the resources I needed, the knowledge that would have equipped the business to thrive -- the kind of knowledge I will gain through firsthand business planning experiences in courses like MGMT 350 - New Venture Creation.

I'm often divided between my love of entrepreneurship and my desire to pursue a finance career. When I was researching the Robins School's courses in these fields, I was delighted to find that I would not have to choose between my interests, but could complete intensive studies in each one through the management and finance concentrations. Entrepreneurship and finance have much overlap, and the Robins School's interdisciplinary curriculum will allow me to excel in both. With entrepreneurship fueling my desire to innovate in the finance field, and finance guiding and refining my entrepreneurial ventures, I will be able to create a truly meaningful "why" that will drive all of my endeavors.

**Along Came A Spider... Randi Purser**

**Tell Us about spiders.**

Did you know that arachnophobia, the fear of spiders, is one of the most common fears in the world? It affects approximately 10% of men and 50% of women worldwide, myself included. This past July, a man residing in West Seattle attempted to kill a spider in his home using a can of spray paint and a lighter, resulting in a fire and $60,000 worth of damage. Although this man ended up with many more issues than a simple spider on his laundry room wall, his bravery is commendable. When such situations arise involving these small 8-legged demons, I find myself yelling out for a family member to “come quick! It’s an emergency!”

I was once tanning outside in my driveway when quite possibly the largest spider in all of Radnor, Pennsylvania, crawled onto my stomach. If the track coach here at UR had seen the speed at which I sprinted out of my pool chair into my house, I would have been recruited on full scholarship no questions asked. Another day, I was relaxing in my bedroom when I happened to notice a terrifying jet- black spider in the corner of where two walls met. Unfortunately I was home alone, so I was forced to take matters into my own hands. I ran into the cleaning supplies room and grabbed the Swiffer sweeper (the extendable pole for those hard to reach places had never been so convenient). When I returned, however, the spider had magically disappeared! Needless to say I didn’t go back into my bedroom for the rest of the day, and upon my family’s return I requested a thorough search be done in hopes of finding the spider. I have enough stories about arachnids to fill a small book, but the point I’m trying to make here is not my negative past experiences with spiders, but my positive future experience as a spider.

As a Richmond spider I will not spread fear to those around me, but spread happiness with my open and friendly personality. As a spider I will not hide in corners waiting for a near bystander to notice me, but I will put myself out into the open and take risks, even if it means getting stepped on here and there. As a spider I will not spin my web in hopes of catching prey, but I will spin my web in hopes of establishing connections and friendships that last a lifetime. Most spiders tend to be solitary and aggressive even towards their own species, however some species such as *Anelosimus eximius* model a more communitive lifestyle, e.g., their sharing of webs and division of labor, and I believe that is the mentality of the spiders here at UR. The University of Richmond is a one of a kind establishment that I would be thrilled to call my new “nest” (okay, maybe that was one too many spider references). I look forward to what the future holds for me and I believe I would be a great, if arachnophobic, fit into the Richmond community.

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