**Sample essays**

**NYU**

**It's Not My Age That Matters Anonymous**

**Pick your own topic**

"Angelina, you're 18 going on 45" - that's my best friend, Bailey's, favorite expression. What

most people don't understand, though, is that those qualities of mine that make me seem older are simply the result of a rather unusual upbringing. Of course, saying that usually brings on the

ever-popular phrase of "You didn't have a childhood, did you?" No, I did have a childhood; it just wasn't the typical childhood.

While most ten-year-olds were in bed by 9 on a Friday evening after watching their favorite

Disney movie, I was at the Metropolitan Opera House with my father and about 1000 bejeweled widows. After a two-hour car ride, I would sit in the front row of our box, my eyes never leaving the stage, trying to make sense of Puccini's La Boheme. The Met wouldn't be putting in subtitle boxes for a few more years, so any translation I made had to be solely drawn from the variations in the music. Even if I didn't catch on to every detail of the story, I was completely taken in, and ever since then my parents haven't been able to kick me out of "my" seat at the opera.

When not at the Met, I spent my free time watching foreign films with my mother - Cyrano de

Bergerac, Cinema Paradiso, The Seventh Seal, and Breathless were our favorites. Being

surrounded by all these languages combined with taking French at school since I was ten years

old allowed me to quickly pickup on what the characters were saying. By the time I was 13, I

would, somewhat cheekily, tell her that the subtitles weren't translating the French correctly, and subsequently give her the "real" translation. Even today, I'll be watching a French film by myself and suddenly my parents will hearme from the next room shout, in true movie-critic fashion,

"Nope, translated that wrong, too!"

Now that I'm 18, my friends all get a good laugh when I say that I like to sit in smoke-filled hotel

lounges, listening to piano players with my dad for kicks. Well, I've been doing it for years, so why stop now? I remember sitting on my dad's lap listening to "Piano Man" countless times in bars around the world - it is still the one song that makes me think of home. Of course, when I was little, I thought the song was more amusing than it really is, because the line about "putting bread in my jar" always invoked the image of someone stuffing a roll in a shot glass. If you

know the song, I'm sure you can figure out where else I may have perked a confused brow.

Either way, being able to just sit there, totally relaxed, surrounded by the swingin' over 40

crowd, listening to songs I grew up with makes me happier than going to any party ever could.

So maybe I didn't have the typical childhood; maybe I do enjoy activities people my age usually fight against experiencing, but that has never hindered me from finding my niche in school, nor has it stopped me from getting my friends to at least appreciate the things I love. Moreover, I

know that I only evolved into what I am today because of the opportunities my parents offered

me. Without their trust in my maturity, I may just have had that type of childhood my friends are so aghast that I lacked - and sometimes I really wonder if I would have been better off playing

with Barbies and watching cartoons. But I can't change who I am now, and I really wouldn't if

someone gave me the chance; I can only change what I will become. Therefore, no matter where I end up in college, I want to be able to continue to experience things outside of the norm and

share what I've grown to love with others. Wherever I can do that will be the perfect place for me, be I 18, 45, or anywhere in between.

**My Time in France David Sauvage**

**Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.**

My father was born in a little village in the south of France called Le Chambon in 1944. In that village, 5,000 Christians saved 5,000 Jews, including my grandfather, my grandmother, and my father.

Last summer, I visited Le Chambon for the first time. I went alone, proud of my fluency in

French, and proud of the fact that I was alone. I stayed in a little camp a mile north of the town, and everyday my cigarette-smoking French friends and I would walk to the historical village,

plant ourselves in the wooden chairs of the local bar, and watch the older people walking by, smirking at us.

The days passed just as the days pass in the beginning of most short stories - slow, repetitive,

pleasant. I would look at the stony buildings, noting the arcane architecture, wondering whether my grandparents had noted the same thing. I would look at the old faces of the village, imagining them 50 years younger, when they were the most simple, straightforward manifestations of

goodness the world would ever forget. None of this however stirred me even enough to put a word of it in my journal.

I was then cordially invited to the house of the woman who had sheltered my father and grandparents. My father had alerted her by letter that I was in town.

When I walked into her room - and she had only a room - she was playfully mixing her own

jelly. She jumped up, as much as a woman of 97 can jump up, and hugged me and kissed me

until I shivered like a cynic. Skipping introductions, she hobbled over to a drawer and then over tome, carrying in her lacerated hands lost pictures of the village in the 1940s, of my father as a baby, and my grandparents as refugees.

Madame Broche then started crying, coughing out these words in French: "You are like your

father. You are like your father. How I love your father!" It all seemed melodramatic tome, and I think I rather wanted to point at the jelly on the counter and laugh. Then she calmed herself by

fumbling with the cross around her neck, until she said tome, "I know I scare you. But thankyou for coming."

"Thankyou," I said.

"For what?" she begged. The fact that she considered my coming to her door as deserving of a thank-you, and her saving my father as deserving of a silence, made me shake and stare into her tunneled eyes and wish and wish that she could understand the magnitude of what she had done forme. Then I smiled,then listened, as she spent the following hour telling me about her own

children and how I was about as tall as her grandchild.

Madame Broche has since died. My father went to her funeral. I told him to tell her children -

who of course are no longer children - that I had considered her brilliant, that she made excellent jelly, and that I was very thankful.

**Harmony Anonymous**

**Describe a creative work (as in art, music, science, etc.) that has had an influence on you, and explain that influence.**

Entering the music room in LaGuardia Community College for the first time, I sit down before the upright piano and take out Mozart's Fantasy in D Minor. It is a simple piece, but one of my favorites. It consists of three parts, the first with a slow tempo that allowed me to get used to the keys. My fingers stretch from one chord to another, regaining their flexibility after months of

idleness. As I step on the pedal, the melodious pattern of notes produces a heavenly harmony. It was then that I forgot the aggravations of piano, remembering only why I found peace in the

mellifluous sounds of classical music.

I remembered that it was only six short months ago. I watched with a growing grin as the U-Haul truck headed down the road, carrying my piano to its new home. After ten years of playing, I

gleefully thought to myself that the vexation was finally over. I would no longer have to practice for two hours everyday; nor would I have to play one or two lines of music repeatedly, only to

give up in complete frustration and force myself to try again the next day. With an almost intense hatred of the piano back then, who would have thought that I would begin to miss the music? Yet there was an aching in me that kept growing stronger. I had felt the piano calling tome, tugging at me with stubborn hands.

I dismiss my thoughts in a split second, realizing that the second part of the fantasy is

approaching. The melody slows and becomes waltz-like, with bounces of high notes that

immediately walk back down to the lower keys. My heart pounds with the music, and the

feelings that had been forever restrained spill across the piano in vibrant colors. I absorb the

music as I never had before; I find myself in a world between feelings and sensations, between the imagined and the real.

Soon after, I begin the third and last part of the piece. Its gaiety seems ready to bring a delightful end to the composition; the dance that my hands perform atop the keyboard was happy and

uplifting. To finish,there are four chords, played forte - loud - that produce an abrupt yet final

effect on the entire piece. Keeping my fingers on the piano after the last note, I feel the vibrations of the music traveling through my hands.

Surprised that I finished the fantasy so quickly, I do not want to stop playing. I realize my

reluctance to leave the piano is more than a momentary whim. It is the resurgence of a love of music that I developed as a child, but failed to recognize. The piano always produced a strong sense of comfort and peace in me. Its music flows as glistening spring water from a waterfall, creating images that are crystal bright and blinding in my mind's eye. Now, each time I play, I am amazed that beauty and grace have been captured in the few pages before me.

Every since I played Mozart's piece a few months ago, I have eagerly anticipated each piano

class. Weekends, when I have leisure time, I travel to the college for a few extra hours of

practice. My love for the piano has rejuvenated and is stronger than ever. Certainly, the piano

can sometimes be frustrating; being unable to play a few lines after hours of continuous practice is extremely discouraging. Yet there are also those days when my fingers have minds of their

own. They race up and down the keyboard, creating harmony, melody, and rhythm of the utmost perfection. Those are the days that keep me going. Those are the days that make me feel alive.

**Friends William Gibbs**

**Option C: Television sitcoms often revolve around the interactions of a group of people with unique personalities. Write about your**

**interaction with your friends and explain why you and your friends might become the next great sitcom, and describe your role in the**

**show**

An over-achieving comically jubilant class president, a hypochondriac vegetarian, a quietly

cynical artist, a pair of environmental and social activists who use their intellect and incredible

ability to convey propaganda to save the world from evil, a scatterbrained business-conscious

computer geek who at times needs to be saved from himself, and an assortment of mediators and devil's advocates lying somewhere between two extremes who, at times, save the rest of the

group from total self destruction. Sound like the cast for the next hit TV sitcom? Well, perhaps they maybe. But for now these people are just my friends.

While some personal opinions within the group restrict the actuality of starring in a TV sitcom with my friends, it is interesting to think about. I can confidently say it would be an interesting show. With such contrasting beliefs and personalities, I don't think we would even need a script. Heck, we wouldn't even need advertisements, people would drop everything and run to the TV when our show came on. Viewers would be on the edges of their seats waiting to see what the

next great argument will be about; what random pranks will be pulled on parents, friends, and the general public; who is dating who and how the last piece of collaborative artwork or dinner party turned out. It would be like a reality show, a soap opera, a news broadcast and a comedy rolled into one half-hour block. But you are probably wondering where exactly I would fit in.

I typically find myself playing the role of mediator, which in my opinion is the best position to

be in. As some arguments within my group hit critical levels, and some ideas and plans reach

incredible levels of danger or stupidity, it is often necessary to bring things back into perspective. The reason I have no objection to doing this is because it gives me a chance to absorb

information from both sides of the debate. In some cases I can look on the issue as a whole, not

just from one point of view, and make a more informed decision (This aspect carries over into all aspects of my life.) It's also a great alternative to taking sides, something that happens often in

my group, which sometimes results in temporary breaks of friendship.

Hopefully I haven't lessened anyone's opinions of my friends or myself through this

contemplation of showbiz. Everyone of my friends is wondrously unique, creative, opinionated and intelligent and I feel that they have contributed immensely to the building of my real-life

character. I have gained manythings from them and hopefully have given something to them.

So, in the end, who does it take to create a love, laugh and thought inducing hit show like Friends? The answer to that question, my friends, is in fact, my own friends.

**Life Changing Experiences Jon**

**Describe an experience or experiences that have changed the direction of your life.**

Helpless, the fuzzy, fat caterpillar floated in the creek near our house, wriggling bravely in avain attempt to swim to shore. I took a stick, knelt down and extended it towards him. The caterpillar latched onto it eagerly, then hesitated a moment, as if to catch his breath before scurrying up the stick toward my hand. I scooped him up and stroked his soft, furry back, feeling a special bond

with this creature I had rescued. At the age of four, I marveled at my newfound power - I could actually save a life.

Suddenly, I became a backyard EMT, searching for creatures in distress. To my parents' dismay, I brought home a series of injured birds, chipmunks and other victims of our cat's hunting sprees. Shoeboxes became hospital rooms for small, incapacitated animals, and a reading lamp became an incubator for eggs from an abandoned bird's nest. Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and Nintendo no longer captivated me. My life had new meaning and purpose.

After exhausting neighborhood rescue opportunities (and my parents' patience), I discovered that animal shelters provided a whole new outlet for my missionary zeal. I spent many satisfying

weekends handing out treats, filling water dishes and walking homeless dogs.

In middle and high school, my interests expanded from four-legged to two-legged creatures.

Reading stories to children at our local library or taking them on nature walks at the Five Rivers

Environmental Center occupied much of my extra time. Volunteering at Environmental

Advocates, the New York State Legislature, and the Attorney General's Office have also enabled me to make a small but positive difference. Through my work at Environmental Advocates, I had the opportunity to research a variety of environmental issues and to compile statistical analyses

of New York State Legislators'votes on environmental legislation. At the Legislature I assisted with constituent correspondence and researched legislative issues; at the Attorney General's

office I staffed consumer information booths.

Six years ago, my mother was diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer. I remember feeling powerless as I watched her battle the disease with surgery, chemotherapy and radiation.

Recently, I found away to regain a sense of control by using that experience to help others. Interning at To Life!, a local breast cancer association, has afforded me the opportunity to

provide peer counseling to other children of breast cancer patients who feel the same sense of helplessness that I once felt.

Is it possible that changing the fate of that seemingly insignificant caterpillar altered the direction of my life? Perhaps. For,through public service, I intend to find ways as an adult to replicate on a much broader scale the positive feelings that came from my childhood kindness to that simple creature.

**Trying Not to Escape Stephen Hirsch**

**Personal Statement. Tell us something about yourself.**

I'm the last one into the room. I was busy responding to an "I remember you" from Airianna, a

five-year-old girl I had tutored a few weeks ago. I remembered her too; remembered how much I had liked her name, remembered getting none of her work done, remembered playing her version of tic-tac-toe, which consisted of a playing grid of 112 squares and no apparent rules, and

especially remembered her asking me if I was a boy or girl, for she thought I was a boy but my "fancy hair" was throwing her off. So I am last into the room full of the other weekly volunteers. The room, this whole place in fact, seems to sag with an exhausted sadness and defeat at the

hands of age and neglect.

Adam, our leader, reflects, "It could seem that there's not a lot of meaning in making dinner for these people or sometimes even in helping a kid with homework. I mean, how are you supposed to find meaning in cooking cheap macaroni and cheese, value in washing filthy dishes, or beauty in kindergarten math? But that's the challenge. That, what we do in that kitchen, that's a mess. So finding meaning in the mess, finding value and even beauty, is the challenge. If you can do that, or even try to do that, you'll grow. You have to really get in the mess to find what you're looking for."

I am opposed to Timothy Leary and the Countercultural Revolution of the 1960s, as I have become truly averse to its prime doctrine: "turn on, tune in, drop out." This doctrine of

enlightenment through separation makes the counterculture comparable to monasticism,

although a monastery for the weak in which mind-altering drugs, and not disciplined fasting and meditation, are used as a crutch to hobble towards new levels of consciousness. And so hippies are neo-monks. I admire monks. In fact, the lifestyle is appealing tome. I would sit around all

day in beautiful and isolated nature settings, meditating, fasting, prostrating, studying the

idiosyncrasies of small woodland creatures and then developing a rudimentary form of

communication with them, being unhindered by the silly material world, and ultimately attaining

divine insight before sundown. I would answer to no one. I wouldn't care if no one knew I

existed, and in fact I would have probably already gained a depth of insight into the nature of

existence itself that would make my apathy justified. I wouldn't be writing this essay. Or perhaps I would, but I would be carving it on stone tablets and purely as an exercise in self-discovery and self-elevation. But I am writing this essay, and I'm typing it on my computer, and because I've

been coaxed into it, and because "turn on, tune in, drop out" is an excuse to hide. Disconnecting from this world isn't the path to enlightenment; it's a cop-out, because this world's a mess and I'm tempted to hide from it everyday. But by disconnecting and hiding, I forfeit all the value and

beauty of this world, however imperfect and troubled, and I solve nothing. How am I supposed to find what I'm looking for if I don't even begin to search? And so enlightenment escapes.

I am reminded of the story of Daphne. I met her the last day of school sophomore year, and

throughout most of the summer I chased her through a confusing forest where brilliant shafts of light occasionally blasted their way through the treetops. But in the end it was a big mess, and, as she transformed into a tree in front of me, I was angrily confused. I am a person, with all the

complexity, value, individuality, and importance that entails. How could I be shrugged off? How could I be forgotten or ignored? How could I be cut out of a stack of photographs and tossed into her trash can? But me sitting here being bewildered by her disconnecting from me is me sitting here being a hypocrite. Because the truth is she's a person too, and so how can I forget about and ignore her, how can I have so negatively biased an opinion of her, how can I dismiss her as a

"crazy bitch?"

The plastic stars stuck to the bedroom ceiling seem funny tome as I think of them as an

expression of frustration at the idea that roofs are necessary. Travis is talking about Christie and Michigan, and because it's a slightly similar situation to mine, the conversation leads us to talk about her.

"And her dad started yelling at me too!" I'm saying hours later. "They don't even get along, but they seemed to have an all right time teaming up against me. And always I'm real confused, like I don't know if it's her depression or..."

"That's stupid," Travis interrupts. "You're sixteen years old. You don't need stuff like this; you should just be out having fun. My advice is to just get away from her."

I remember about two or three weeks ago, I was sitting in front of the TV but not really watching because I was thinking about her and my confusion. My mom started talking tome about dinner or something but her maternal instincts told her I was sick and dying somewhere inside.

She concluded poison, slow and acting upon the heart, and said, "I don't know exactly what's going on between you and her, but you can come tome about anything.""I'm too sensitive for this," my self-pity mumbled as she left the room.

And so tonight I fall asleep with "I don't deserve this" as my mantra.

As "I didn't deserve that" quickly replaced "I don't deserve this," I "dropped out." I disconnected and isolated myself from that world, that mess, created by her and me. And that's a total cop-out, because by turning my back on and disconnecting myself from that mess I'll never find what I'm looking for, never find the meaning, value, and beauty that are there. I didn't search the mess

when I should have, in fact I renounced it, and now I can't: I've forgotten how I felt. I tell the

story of Daphne to people, few people, and always end it with, "In short, she broke my heart." But when I say that I do so jokingly with a half-smile on my face, because it's a fitting and

comical cliché, and because I "dropped out" and thus lost and forgot any true feelings that ever accompanied that statement. And so enlightenment escapes.

But now there's Julia, intertwined with my life and thoughts in away that elates, very often

distracts, and ultimately escapes my understanding. I wonder why a phallic symbol one of my

stupid friends scrawls in the frost will reappear on my window a week later, but Julia's window- writing never noticeably comes back to fill my car with joy. I envision myself in some unknown future, on some unknown and desolate stretch of highway blanketed by winter darkness and

cold. Headlights approach from behind, illuminating my rear window. As I glance into my

mirror I see it, sublimely reincarnated from those frosty warm nights, the slender and beautiful

finger-width line dancing and looping itself playfully into that tri-syllabic representation of joy in my life. And then I either cry or laugh or both, and people ask me who Julia is and why she

deserves that tattoo, and I can't tell them anything just jokingly or without a half-smile of

sincerity and longing rather than apathy and forgetfulness. That's not only the challenge, but a legitimate path to enlightenment.

**Nothing is Given on a Silver**

**Platter Douglas Liu**

**The best writing is often very personal. All kinds of experiences- serious, funny, unexplained, fleeting - can influence our lives and help shape who we are. Tell us about a person, place, or event in your life that has particular meaning for you, and why it is**

**important to you. We'd especially like to hear about someone or**

**something that has affected your life that may not have affected or even been noticed by other people.**

The saying that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree is more than just a hackneyed expression. In actuality, it still holds an ounce of truth. My father has always been the family man, an

honorable person who unwaveringlycares for and supports his only lifelines, his wife and

children. From humble and lowly beginnings, my father came to America seeking the "American Dream." He found it, mostly. Emigrating here from China in the 1960s, my dad lucked out and

became more than just another no-name refugee finding a safe-haven from turmoil. He became the personification of struggle, determination, and ultimately success.

Ever since my early childhood, my father has always tried to instill in me a sense of decorum and

responsibility. At the dinner table is where I remember him always trying to teach proper

etiquette and table manners. I never really understood the purpose behind stressing over how to eat dinner properly or how to fold your napkin neatly. In addition, he always pestered me about my academic life and wished that I could finish my work on time and get that magic 100 on all of my tests. His steadfast and persistent approach to discipline was something I never could

grasp. Looking back on it, I wish that I had listened and put more effort in my work and my

studies. It is only now that I have the wisdom to understand that his teachings were only meant forme to learn to be virtuous and to be honest with people.

Consequently, I have inherited my father's approach toward life. What I learned from him is that nothing in this life is handed to a person on a silver platter. If one wishes to buy that car or house or to gain someone's respect, one has to earn it. Only through hard work and perseverance can

one truly obtain something valuable.

Before I was born, my father suffered an incapacitating stroke that left half of his body unable to function. Nonetheless, he recovered and was still able to provide for his family of six.

Considering the circumstances that were pitted against him, he made due with his recovery and provided forme as any sensible family man would. It is with this sense of will and resolve that I

yearn to better my own self and to learn from his example of continuing even through the toughest of times.

**The Loss Edgard Duche**

**Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.**

Sweat poured down my face as I struggled to breathe. I was dehydrated and exhausted, and I was trying as hard as I could not to give up. From the bleachers and the sidelines, the eyes of every

member of the crowd were focused intently on me. One side of the gym hoped I would fail, and the other side prayed that I would succeed.

The muscles in my legs were undergoing uncontrollable spasms. It seemed that I could not

continue, but if I surrendered to the pleas of my body, I would not only be failing myself, but failing everyone on my wrestling team. All I could think about was winning my match. I

absolutely had to win. As I looked around at the large crowd in my opponent's school

gymnasium, panic struck me, but then I convinced myself that I would win this match no matter what.

The piercing noise of the referee's whistle split the air, and I knew it was time to continue. We

had reached double overtime, something that I had never seen occur throughout my four years of

competitive wrestling. The importance of this match was very clear. Each point the judges

awarded could mean the difference between winning and losing the tournament. If I could

control my opponent for thirty more seconds, I would be walking out of the ring with my chin up.

The first ten seconds of the match passed quickly. Then, seemingly time stood still. The other

team began chanting to inspire my opponent. Each second seemed like an hour. I felt eternity

pass by. My opponent stood up, but I maintained the control. My team began to count down the last five seconds of the match. My mind and my body were fighting their own battle. As my

teammates yelled "Two," I let go.

I lost the match by two seconds. The points awarded to the other team for that win gave them the lead. Because of my failure to physically endure those final two seconds, our entire team lost the tournament. This momentous loss taught me in a very striking way about the importance of

preparation and training. In retrospect, I knew if I had set a more rigorous training schedule for

myself, I would not have lost the match. This lesson is especially valuable because it can be applied to everything. In every challenge-in academics, in athletics, and in life, the more

prepared and well-studied opponent will emerge victorious.

**A Message to a Terrorist Vetan Kapoor**

**Topic of Choice This essay was written in response to the terrorist attacks in New Delhi, India, on Oct 31, 2005**

Confusion and panic were clearly visible. People were running around frantically, shouting and screaming. Everyone was in a hurry. Nobody knew what was going to happen. We were all

scared. Fall Fiesta was almost upon us.

The thirty or so students that were at school on that Saturday afternoon were responsible for the organization of Fall Fiesta, an annual event held to benefit our community and attended by

people of all ages. At about 5:20 pm, just as the last of the preparations were completed, we all gathered around the stage. Mr. Caemmerer, the Student Council advisor, congratulated us on our hard work. "The most important thing today," he said, "is to make sure that nobody leaves

feeling disappointed. Do whatever you can to make sure that people have a great time."

My first assignment at Fall Fiesta was to run an activity called the "Velcro Wall." My job was to dress participants up in a Velcro suit that would enable them to stick to a soft wall. Although

business was slow at first, the activity quickly became popular among the smaller children. Parents clapped and cheered enthusiastically as the watched their offspring hanging upside down, screaming and giggling with excitement.

Just before my shift was over, a young girl (probably not more than six years old), ran over to the Velcro Wall and proudly handed me a "Play" coupon. "It's my turn now," she exclaimed, a huge grin lighting up her face. "I want to go upside down." My friend and I chuckled as we watched

her shout with delight at the prospect of being suspended upside down in midair. The Velcro on the suits was a bit coarse, and an hour of lifting up little children had made our knuckles red and

sore. We laughed with the little girl as we gave her a "Prize" coupon. As we traded places with two more volunteers, we decided to find some water. "These kids are definitely enjoying

themselves, buddy," my friend said tome.

As I walked around exploring the other activities that had been setup by my peers, I couldn't

help but feel a little proud. Our fear, it seemed, had been unnecessary. Everything was working out just fine. I watched children walking with their parents and heard the music of the school's jazz band. The scent of cotton candy hung in the warm air. Everyone was having a fantastic

night.

As I approached the "Cookie Decorating" booth, Mrs. Fischer, our high school guidance

counselor and the advisor for the Senior Class Government, came toward me with a strange look on her face. "Vetan, start cleaning up and go find Mr. Caemmerer," she said. Without another

word she walked off, leaving me in a state of confusion. I stopped someone near me and asked, "What's going on?" The boy, someone whom I had seen playing soccer on the field earlier that day, replied, "Some places in Delhi just got blown up. They think the school might be next.

Everyone is leaving."

The next forty-five minutes or so were surreal. It felt as though I had entered a dream world from which there was nowaking up. Everyone was in a hurry. My thoughts turned to my 13-year-old sister, Mahika. I looked around, hoping to catch a glimpse of her or her friends. I had left my

mobile phone at home. I borrowed somebody's phone and called my father. One ring. Two rings. Three rings. Nobody was picking up. I called my mother. One ring. Two rings. Three rings. Still nothing. Trepidation built up inside of me as I circled the area once, twice, three times. As I

quickly navigated the crowd, I bumped into a small child. "Where do I goto get my prize?" he

asked. Believing that nothing should tarnish a child's innocence, I determined to forget about my apprehension and led the child to the prize booth, where there was a line of kids waiting to

collect their rewards. I gave him his toy, and heran off.

As I headed towards the gates of our school, a parent approached me and asked me where the microphone was. "I need to find my daughter," she said. I directed her toward the microphone, and told other people to start making their way towards the exit. I borrowed another phone and called my mother. One ring. Two rings. "Hello?"

"Mama? It's me, Vetan. I can't find Mahika. Do you know where she is?"

"She went with her friend's parents. She is safe. Dad is at the Diwali party at the office, he will come to pick you up."

"Mama, the school is not safe. I'm going over to Gaurav's house. Tell Dad to pick me up there." With that, I hung up the phone and ran towards the exit, where I saw confused, scared people

trying to reclaim their money.

As soon as I got out of the school, I ran to my friend's house. Panting, I arrived to find him

watching the news. There had been several explosions in various markets. Sarojini, where my

sister and I often shop for clothes. Govindpuri, the market behind my grandmother's house. Fire, terror, fear, chaos, anger, tears. A reporter, standing bravely in front of a camera, exposing the

tragedy to the world.

My Dad returned from his party ten minutes later, and we left to pickup my sister from her

friend's house. The ride home was uneasy, the silence punctuated only by the sound of my sister crying. I looked over at my father. Through his hardened exterior, I could see a side of him that he usually kept hidden. He was scared. How to console him? How to console my crying sister?

When I got home that night, I ran up the stairs and fell into my mother's arms, crying like I used to when I was a little boy. We stood in the kitchen for over twenty minutes. We didn't need

words. I felt safe and relieved. For the first time in my life, I prayed to God. I asked Him to

forgive me for not believing. I told him that I was forever grateful to Him for keeping my family safe.

I want to thankyou, the terrorist who brought such destruction to my city. I want to thankyou

for reminding me about the importance of family. I want to thankyou for teaching me about the importance of faith. I want to thankyou for showing me just how strong humans can be. I want to thankyou for showing me that the world is bigger than anyone individual. Today, you have won, for today, my family, my city, and my people are frightened. But your victory will only

make us stronger. Our community is resilient, and our resolve has never been stronger. Our

student council will organize more Fall Fiestas in the years to come. Every death that you have caused will be avenged through acts of kindness and consideration. Unlike you, we are not alone in our struggle: all of humankind stands with us. May God be with you.

**Driven Vetan Kapoor**

**Describe a significant experience in your life.**

It was an exhilarating moment that set my heart aflutter. I had in my head an image of James Bond, speeding down a foreign highway in pursuit of justice, a dazzling femme-fatale steering

the car ahead of him. As soon as the car stuttered to a start, however, the image in my mind was quickly shattered. I realized that like so manythings, driving looked a lot easier in the movies.

My decision to learn how to drive came about after a conversation with one of my friends from America who had excitedly informed me of her new possession: a car. I asked my father to sign me up for driving lessons. At only 100 rupees a day (approximately $2), the lessons were at least financially plausible.

It was on my third day of driving lessons that I first saw him: a scrawny-looking boy with

unkempt hair and a dirty white shirt who sat quietly in the back of the car. My instructor

explained to methathe had just finished his driving lesson. I glanced at him through the rear- view mirror and smiled politely when his eyes made contact with mine.

Back at the instructor's office we began talking, and I soon learned that the boy was as old as I was. He explained to methathe was learning how to drive so that he could apply for a license. He would have to lie about his age, he said, but after receiving his license he would be able to start driving a taxi to help his father earn some extra money for the family. He proudly told me that he had saved money for a year to be able to afford half of the driving lessons, and that he hoped to learn enough to skip the other half.

My new-found friend, Rohan, presented an interesting contrast. While I hadn't thought twice about asking my father to spend money on me, he hadn't thought twice about pursuing this

endeavor to help his father earn money. My fantasies of being able to speed down a freeway seemed shockingly immature in comparison to his dreams of being able to support his family.

A few months later, I was in the backseat of my car, when we abruptly halted at a red light. A

small "Ambassador" car pulled up beside us. The black-and-green coloring gave away the

identity of the vehicle as one of the many old taxis in the city. I looked across at the car, and was surprised to see Rohan looking back at me. When his eyes made contact with mine, my smile

was one of warmth and respect. If my eyes had spoken that day, they would have thanked him for teaching me the importance of pursuing selfless goals. They would have thanked him for

teaching me that sometimes it is necessary to sacrifice and take risks. They would have thanked him for teaching me that sometimes we have to learn to drive so that we can give others a ride.

**Music Therapy Huan Wang**

**Personal statement**

When I was in elementary school, it seemed like everyone was learning how to play a musical

instrument. My mother insisted that I jump on the bandwagon. I considered my options, and my interest was piqued by the idea of learning how to play the violin. Although I possessed a natural talent for playing in the beginning, I never became more than a mediocre violinist. The

instrument became an expensive toy that I played for relaxation. I let the notes flow naturally, and the harmony was my home remedy for stress relief. Overtime, I even learned how to play songs byear.

My experience at Johns Hopkins Hospital taught me how to use my violin not only as a source of entertainment, but also as a tool. During the summer before my senior year, I volunteered at the

hospital and worked with young patients. When the child life specialist, Marichi, discovered that I played the violin, she suggested that I spend my Wednesday afternoons playing music for the

children. I came by that Wednesday, and Marichi introduced me to the children in the playroom. Trying my best to please the children, I took requests. These children asked for a variety of songs ranging from TV tunes like the Spongebob SquarePants theme song to Sunday School music.

After the playroom, Marichi took me to patients'rooms. The patients and their families loved the live entertainment, and labeled me the "Violin Girl."

Each week I went home with new, touching stories. One day, I played classical music by Bach and Mozart for a shy, blind girl, and for the first time since arriving at the hospital, she smiled. Another girl was attempting to walk after surgery, and some soothing "Canon in D" helped to

distract her from her painful task. A roomful of children requested Christmas songs and sang

along to them, causing the visiting clowns to come into dance to the music. Marichi even asked a young nurse to tap dance to my Celtic reel. She turned beet red when the doctors and

pharmacists popped their heads into witness the event. The children and I giggled as she zoomed out of the room.

After this wonderful experience, I realized that I truly have a gift. I have the gift of sharing my music with others and making them smile. I was not a virtuoso and could not play the songs

perfectly, but to the patients, the songs were perfect. This great opportunity enabled me to bring my skills as a violinist to a new level and spread my positive energy throughout the hospital.

**A New Life Konstantin Drabkin**

**Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.**

I still remember it like it was yesterday. After seven days of grueling labor pushing my body to its limits, I was proudly walking - no, strutting. As my clean and pressed uniform held my new ribbons for the world to see, I looked up to the stands to find the people I cared noticed, and

there they were, proudly snapping away with their cameras as Captain McClelland announced my name. Earning a spot in Leadership Academy, an NJROTC boot camp, is a privilege;

graduating is a life-altering circumstance.

In the first day, the drill instructors broke us down, removing the protective bubble wrap of the

individual, leaving behind raw, primal beings. We were then left on our own to fix ourselves. For the next seven days,we would be nothing more than mosquito bait in the blistering sun. Many

tacitly accepted the situation, concerned with simply surviving the week; I chose to rise up and use this chance to improve myself. All of life's tedious little lessons I thought I knew began to

truly make sense. Suddenly I could not picture myself as anything other than a perfect

gentleman, complete with self-discipline and a well-developed code of honor. That was my rebirth.

As I left the stadium following the graduation ceremony, I sped by my new friends, quickly

exchanging goodbye's and congratulations. I was a man on a mission. I had to take my family to the restaurant; I owed them a proper meal. As I would do for my guests so many times later, I

held the door for my family, waited patiently for them to begin eating prior to enjoying my first

real meal of the week. The pangs of hunger gave me strength. It felt great to behave like a gentleman. As I go about my everyday life, I take every chance to help someone else. My motivation comes from knowing what is right.

"Act like there is a camera fixed on your face, with your family watching 24/7," my Drill

Sergeant, Chief Petty Officer Morales, told me. During Leadership Academy, personal honor

was an object that was graded on a daily basis. Thievery, disrespect, and dishonesty were not

tolerated, and troublemakers were immediately sent home without the coveted completer's cord.

I take personal pride in upholding the highest standards of morality. Though my ideals often face ridicule in the world that widely accepts complete lack of effort and motivation, I standby my

beliefs. The only gratification I need is knowing that I am representing my family, my school, and my country to the best of my ability. This is not to say that such behavior always comes naturally, but I have learned that self-discipline almost always pays off in the end.

According to the United States Army, "Pain is weakness leaving the body." Rigorous discipline is a key factor in nearly everything I accomplish, from fitness to academics. Following my

graduation from Leadership Academy, I knew that I was capable of doing anything I set my mind to, and with only four months of training I won my age division in the Paul Bunyan

marathon. Upon my return to school I was disappointed to find out I had already completed all of the advanced placement courses I was pre-qualified to take. Rather than face a lack-luster year, I decided to take on an array of new A.P. Courses. Without ever taking a computer class or

Spanish III, my A.P. Computer Science and A.P. Spanish courses are an uphill battle, but one I am winning. Though the week I spent at Leadership Academy had a very powerful effect on me,

its permanent change comes from the choice I make everyday by defining myself as a disciplined, honorable gentleman.

**My China, My Japan Taro Kuriyama**

**Personal statement, written for the Common Application.**

Approximately sixty years ago, during World War II, Japan invaded and occupied parts of

China, committing many atrocities. I learned something of these events in middle school, but

didn't give them special thought at the time; WWII seemed marked by so many horrors. A recent

event, however, forced me to reflect on my vaguely learned school lessons and on the importance of history.

The occasion was the Asian Soccer Cup held in China this summer. The Japanese team played

well and captured its second consecutive title, but throughout the tournament it was constantly

harassed by heckling Chinese fans. Before each game, Chinese booing virtually drowned out the Japanese national anthem; and after the title game, Japanese supporters were forced to remain

inside the stadium because of threatening Chinese mobs. The city of Beijing, it was reported, had to deploy as many as ten thousand policemen to keep order.

It is perhaps understandable that Chinese should harbor animosity towards Japan. The young

spectators may have heard stories of the suffering of their relatives during the war. But I felt that it was misguided to jeer at and intimidate the Japanese athletes and supporters who themselves, after all, had done no harm. They were separated from WWII by at least one or two generations.

Most of them, like me, had no direct knowledge of their ancestors' crimes. Weren't these spectators being overly vindictive?

The Japanese government lodged complaints, and the issue threatened to strain Sino-Japanese

relations. Forme, however, it was also a personal matter. My mother is Chinese and my father is Japanese. I feel more attached to Japan-I have lived more than half of my life in Japan-but I am very close to my Chinese relatives as well. I thus found myself torn in the recent conflict, unable and unwilling to side with one country or the other. But then, why should I have to choose sides?

It has become increasingly common in recent years for people to migrate across national

boundaries. I myself was born as a result of this trend. On the surface, the world appears to be moving toward a borderless future of shared views and values. The events of the summer,

however, taught me that this trend maybe deceptive. Even as young men played soccer together, their fans were still divided by old grudges.

We cannot live outside of history. Even those who neglect the past cannot escape its burden.

Relations between Japan and China are becoming more intimate by the day. Yet the rancor

manifest at the Asian Cup reminded me that the bitterness of old conflicts is astonishingly slow to fade. I am still uncertain to what extent we must answer for the actions of men and women

before our time. I do believe, however, that for the people of Japan and China to share a common future, they must continuously grapple with the legacy of their divided past.

**A loss that has changed me for the better Anonymous**

**Describe an obstacle that you have overcome.**

I always looked forward to June 17, the birthday of my only living grandparent. Every year I

spent the day composing corny jokes that made her to snort with laughter and murmur loving

approval. But in 2002, in a matter of seconds, my associations with June 17 changed forever. My friend died that day, an event that will influence my actions for the rest of my life.

That summer, my friend Sarah and I were eager to enter high school. I had been accepted in the International Baccalaureate program at South Fork; Sarah had gotten word that she made the

cheerleading squad. We celebrated our accomplishments and good fortune with glasses of sparkling apple juice and trips to themall. Our excitement made us oblivious to the idea of

suffering or loss – until the hot night when a drunk teenager sped from a local party, ran a stop

sign at seventy miles over the speed limit, and slammed into a car filled with girls and their uncle as they returned home from the movies.

As my mother told me what happened, I couldn’t comprehend her words. Sarah was doing

everything right; hanging out with the right people, getting straight A’s, and even sitting in the backseat of a responsible adult’s car wearing her seatbelt. If she wasn’t safe, in that situation, then none of us were. The pain and sadness were overwhelming and numbing. The loss of

someone so young, bright, vivacious, and full of promise seemed agonizingly unjust. It was a daunting task to simply get through each day.

A few weeks after the funeral, my sadness turned into anger and frustration. Attorneys for the

teenager driving began blaming the victims of the crash in the local media and most members of our close-knit community quickly chose sides. It seemed the entire county was angry. People

protested the prosecution of such a young defendant. The papers were filled with angry letters to the editor. I was disgusted by the parties suing liquor stores, parents, and car companies in an

attempt to “right the wrongs.” The public bickering and accusations only served to deepen my

sorrow. Sarah would have never responded in that manner. I feared that I would never recover if I continued on this negative path of blame and anger. I had to find a positive outlet for my

feelings of helplessness.

It was then that Sarah’smother and I began working with a newly formed chapter of Mothers

Against Drunk Driving, or MADD. We began promoting a new youth division of MADD called Youth in Action, YIA, which targets underage drinking as well as drunk driving. Meeting adults and teens with similar experiences and goals has been healing, entertaining, and exciting. The

group has met with local law enforcement agencies and provided refreshment for officers at DUI checkpoints. I watched in amazement while impaired drivers attempted simple sobriety

exercises. More teens need to be made aware of the affects of alcohol on drivers especially since we have such little experience behind the wheel.

I continue to work with MADD and the YIA today. Recently I met with state troopers and

legislators in our state capital to encourage stiffer penalties for impaired drivers, especially

repeat offenders. We run a one-week summer camp to recruit middle and high school age

students, which continues to be a rewarding and motivating experience forme as a counselor. I am encouraged by the increasing number of teens receiving and responding to the positive

messages from MADD. Also, I am a paid investigative aid for the Martin County Sheriff’s

Office. I work with detectives and deputies to arrest convenience store clerks who illegally sell alcohol to underage patrons. Punishing those who break the law will make access to alcohol

harder for teens in my community and therefore reduce underage drinking,

While I am optimistic, there are still many obstacles to overcome. For example, a wonderful new multimedia show, The Spot, uses a teenage perspective to deliver a compelling message about

the true effects of drinking and driving. Our local school board rejected MADD’s request to air the message in middle and high schools. Their lack of cooperation was disappointing, but not debilitating. MADD and YIA are collaborating with religious groups and community business leaders to sponsor The Spot for over a thousand youth in our area in the spring of 2006.

Now, June 17 stirs many emotions forme: happiness for my grandmother, of course,

accompanied by profound sorrow and anger. But since I became engaged in efforts to curb

underage drinking and drunk driving, June 17 also symbolizes forme the positive action and

change that tragedy can catalyze. What fuels my passion for YIA and life in general is my

dedication to Sarah’s memory, and the understanding that no one, not even the brightest and

most promising of children, is safe from harm. The perseverance I have developed since the loss of my friend will undoubtedly serve me well in college and all future endeavors.

**Family Photos Young Kim**

**Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence.**

Nonchalantly browsing through family photos, I hastily flip through the pages when I suddenly get a paper cut. Blood slowly flows from a small slit on my finger and onto the plastic film. The blood lands on a particularly bland picture--but it instantly catches my attention. Humbly

dressed, a younger version of my father stands with a stern look on his face while my mother grasps onto his hand, half-smiling.

Looking at the picture, I can't help but wonder: Why did they choose to make so many sacrifices to come to America and decide to start a family here? I jump from my couch with the album to find my mother. Holding up the picture, I ask the question.

In response, my mother’s eyes well with tears. With a quivering voice, she sits down, takes a

long look at the picture, and asks me if I am content with my life. She explains that she and my father had made the tough decisions to leave their family, home and lives back in South Korea all so that they could raise a stable family in America. With an unstable government, ambiguous education systems and a bad economy, life was not stable in Korea. Needing a quick decision,

my parents took a leap of faith, hoping to make it in the “Land of Opportunities”.

Leaving all of their comforts behind, they gathered their meager savings, purchased two tickets and packed what little they had to go to the foreign land. After 20 hours of flying, they squeezed their way through the doors of an airport in Phoenix, Arizona, luggage at hand, and asked a

stranger in broken English where the nearest affordable place to stay was. After several

frustrating minutes of flipping though a translation booklet and using body language, they

headed towards to their hostel. Upon arrival, they entered a dark, disheveled, and tight room with a closet sized bathroom. With big sighs, they quietly accepted their circumstances as they placed their bags in the corner.

Right away, my father attempted to read a newspaper to look for a job. Having no success in comprehending the advertisements, he decided to search by visiting random businesses. After days of painstaking searching, my father finally found a job as a dishwasher in a small diner. Because he took on the workload of two men, he asked for a raise but the manager denied his request. Even though he could not communicate, he knew he was being manipulated and

deceived. Not wanting to give up his dignity, he stacked up the dirty dishes and left.

Meanwhile, my mother was pregnant with me. I was born several weeks before my father found a job as a janitor in a grocery store. Working 18 hours a day and leaving my mother home with me, my father struggled to maintain his goal of building a stable family. My father walked every day to work because he couldn't even afford to buy a car. At times, a police officer would take

him to work and home.

Because he didn't have enough money, he sacrificed his own health to sufficiently feed my

mother and me. While he fed us, he was malnourished and sometimes stole food as a last resort. My father worked efficiently and was very dependable. Being a victim of racism, my father was discriminated against and mistreated by his boss. Eventually, he quit his job again and went

home. Because my father covered 18 hours a day, his boss had to find four people to cover my father's previous shift.

Tired and eager to starthis own business, my father established a janitorial business. After five years, he yearned to go a step higher and searched for help from his sister in Washington State. After several days of business there, my father signed a deal and bought a small motel. Because of my father’shard work and my mother’s care, everything progressed from there. Our family continued to move around the state and work hard to keep that dream alive.

Without a doubt, I would say that my parents’ dreams have come alive. As I heard the end of the story, I realized that I had nothing to complain about in my life. Although the paper cut still

stung, I knew I could not complain.

The blood that crept out of my finger and crawled onto a picture that led me to a discovery I will

never forget. I hold onto the picture because it reminds me of the story everytime. It is through this picture that I am reminded of the great trials and struggles my parents went through, and I feel blessed and grateful for such strong parents. Whenever I feel like everything is going

downhill and I want to give up, I whip out that picture and remind myself I should persist and keep my priorities straight to reach my goals.

Because my father always wanted me to be the best, he set very high standards. Ever since I was younger, my dad made it clear that it was important to not slack off and excel in my academics. I worked hard and received straight A’s, was constantly admitted in the honor roll, and received

academic recognition throughout school. Although I managed to meet these standards, there

were many other standards he established. Most of the time when all my friends went out and

had fun, I was expected to stay home and study more. Although at times I felt like socializing

with my friends, I obeyed and studied at home. As a result of my hard work and many sacrifices under the constant surveillance of my father, I ranked at the top in all of my classes.

The man in the picture, throughout my whole life has influenced me to work hard, to be persistent, and to never give up. Without my father, I would not be where I am today.

**Speech and Language**

**Pathology Anonymous**

**Why did you choose your program of interest?**

Archimedes once said, “Give me a firm place to stand and I will move the earth.” Similar

sentiments resonate within my mind as I embark on the penultimate round of my race to my goals. Strength is the lot of a few good men, but perseverance sifts the chaff from the grain.

Strength of mind and hard work has been my forte all through my academic years. I take great pride in my commitment to the cause and dedication to see the job through. My confidence is never shaken because I firmly believe that the answer lies within each individual. I have set my sights on my goals and am willing to do all within my powers to reach out to them.

I come from an extremely education-inclined family, and have consistently ranked in the top percentile of my class. However, my education has not been without focus since I must

understand first and then learn. From asking my professors the right questions during

discussions, to having a soft spot for practical learning experiences, I have tried my best to gain an all-round education experience. Majoring in Science in my high school has given me a strong foundation toward my subsequent educational objectives.

I have been equally active outside of the classroom. My hobbies are a balance combination of indoor and outdoor activities. I have played football and participated in several swimming

competitions at school level. I am a very caring and compassionate person by nature, which I

feel will hold me good stead in the years to come. I enjoy traveling and meeting people from

varied backgrounds to share ideas and experiences. Furthermore, I love learning and am able to imbibe the right values from my interaction with others. My family has always been supportive and encouraging, which has had a conducive effect on my personality.

“Man is a social animal,” as a thinker put it, but I tend to disagree with this statement. A casual glance at the way we treat each other today would test anyone’s belief system. The plight of the physically challenged in today’s world leaves much to be desired. They are left to the mercy of a complicated, under-funded system most people would prefer to ignore, and not enough is being done to help them lead a normal life. All that society needs to do is show dedication to their

cause, show that they really do care. With this concern in mind, I have decided to pursue a

Bachelor’s degree in Speech and Language Pathology. I wish to contribute all I can to help the physically challenged lead normal lives.

With the knowledge that I will gain through an in-depth education at your institution, I am sure I will be able to fulfill my dream of working for those with language disabilities. I understand the high level of commitment that your program demands and attest to my readiness and strong

desire to succeed within it.

**Grammasaura Lactate(s) Resin: Anagrammatical TreasuresAnonymous**

**Write about a topic that interests you.**

The letters comprising the word “conversation” can be rearranged to spell “voices rant on”; the phrase “debit card” shuffles to spell “bad credit”; “statue of liberty” jumbles to spell “built to

stay free.” Anagrams of words can reveal insightful, or perhaps coincidental, truths. Forme,

rearranging, reorganizing, and reversing words have always been favorite pastimes. Since I was young, I have always found myself altering the syntax of sentences and combinations of letters to form new and unintended meanings.

I firmly believe there exists a connection between the fields of mathematics and language. This understanding has always come tome intuitively; yet, every English teacher I’ve ever had has

asserted a dislike or even downright loathing for numbers. My math teachers, too, will often

justify typos in handouts by saying, “That’swhy I’m not an English teacher!” Only my Algebra II teacher in eighth grade, Ms. Steffero, confirmed my theory that the two disciplines can in fact coexist peacefully. I admire her for being an avid, lifelong student of both mathematics and

literature.

Whenever I see any word, phrase, or sentence, I immediately search for patterns and hidden

meanings in the text. Perhaps there is a higher being that slips these messages into the writings of humans and entertains itself by watching me puzzle over them. Every aspect of writing takes on a special significance forme: I scrutinize sentence structure, capitalization, and even the spacing of words to see if I can extract another meaning from the possibly random combination of letters that lies before me. Couldn’t every sentence in existence arguably have been created by the

proverbial monkey on a typewriter? Why, then, should there not be multiple meanings to every potentially random sequence of letters and words?

Gnikaeps sdrawkcab sirehtonatibah fo enim (speaking backwards is another habit of mine). By challenging our perceptions of the English language, I believe it is possible for humans to

expand their linguistic capabilities. Words shouldn’t be interpreted linearly or narrowly; they can

take on multiple meanings, even beyond those of synonyms. My habits of rearranging,

reorganizing, and reversing words have unquestionably strengthened my command of English. I can instantly glean certain facts about any word, including the number of letters it contains, its anagrams, and what it sounds like backwards. Surprisingly, these peculiar practices have helped me recall the definitions of words more quickly and better guess the meanings of words I don’t yet know.

My extreme case of logophilia forces me to constantly search for obscure words to bring up in

conversation and publication. Unfortunately, the limited vocabularies of others cause me to

experience bruxomaniac tendencies; my dentist has advised me against grinding my teeth so

frequently in frustration. To ameliorate this linguistic affliction, every week I publish an informal pamphlet for my peers, which, among other things, includes a “word of the week” section.

A cryptography course taken through a Johns Hopkins University program one summer formed my initial interest in the field. The final exam consisted of an all-day scavenger hunt trailing

through the campus. The journey culminated in my group's excursion to the bottommost floor of the library, where we found and cracked a cipher in Edgar Allan Poe's short story, “The Gold-

Bug.” This process of analytical thought and gradual discovery is what intrigues me about cryptography, and has inspired me to prepare for a career in this field by researching in

mathematics and linguistics. Years from now, when you stop to wonder who ensures the security of your e-mails, or to curse the aggravating puzzlemaker who wrote that impossible cryptoquote, remember me.

**My life defining moment Anonymous**

**Personal Statement**

My mother was diagnosed with cancer. It all started in April of my sophomore year when she

complained of exhaustion, nausea, a back ache, and bad breath. I remember the day perfectly. It was Easter morning and my mom was scheduled for a procedure to examine what was predicted to be a blockage in her bile duct; it was also the Easter we found out that it wasn’t a blockage or buildup, but rather a tumor. A tumor that would require four surgeries, three months in intensive care, and the rearranging of her whole digestive system. But out of those one hundred and twenty two days spent in ICU alone, the moment that sticks out in my mind was the day I walked in and no longer saw my mother.

The woman that was in front of me in noway physically, mentally, or emotionally resembled the strong female figure that raised me. Her once fiery red hair was now dulled. Her porcelain white skin looked grayish. I was scared to hug her or even touch her because her once sturdy body now looked so breakable. They barely fed her. All they gave her to eat were ice chips. The moment I walked in ready to tell her about my day at school, I could hear her begging, pleading for more

ice chips. She had already sneaked in more than she should have, and when she thought no one

was looking, she would drink the forbidden water that would melt into the bottom of the bowl. In that instance, a bitter sweet feeling overcame me: that was the woman I knew and loved; she saw what she wanted and went after it. That feeling soon disappeared. I heard her scream out in

agony “It hurts, don’t do that, it hurts" as the nurses pierced her skin with a pain reliever. I've

always disliked injections, but that made me loathe them. When it became too much to bear, my father ushered me out of the room.

That was the day of her first emergency surgery, and the day she almost didn’t comeback alive. I remember feeling so helpless, as if I was a child again. I had to keep reminding myself that I

wasn’t a child. My mother had raised me to become an intelligent, mature, and brave young

woman. In that moment, I would have to act as the person my mother raised me to be; a person my mother would be proud of. In this difficult time, I learned a lot about myself. I learned I

possessed as inner strength. I learned to be patient, and to ignore all the petty dilemmas I once deemed life altering. I learned how to deal with fear, frustration, injections, and surgeries. But most importantly, in seeing my mother's fierce bravery and independence, I learned that I was very much like her.

**Autism Danielle Spano**

**Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.**

"English, math, chemistry…" I was panicked over all the work I needed to finish, which had

become increasingly difficult after doubling my hours at the barn. Overwhelmed, I just wanted to get home. Then, after I finally mastered my barrel pattern, my trainer, Denise, came and asked if I would volunteer for a program involving autistic children. She said most others were frightened away, but she had confidence in me. My cousin Nicholas had just been diagnosed with autism,

so I felt some sort of obligation mixed with unease. Though it would have been easier to claim I was too busy, I relented.

On the first day, eighteen-year-old Michael threw his enormous frame on the ground, injuring himself and the horse he was riding. I felt vulnerable around these children, when I was

supposed to feel helpful. I looked forward to finishing the program.

Ironically, however, I began to find myself at the barn daily. In October, two brothers, Luke and Adam, joined the program. When we met, Luke stared blankly. I bent and introduced myself. He gazed at me but returned only indecipherable noises. Instead of sensing accomplishment for

reaching out, I felt what must have been his horror. Thoughts and words wanted to emerge, but he lacked the capacity to communicate them -- or at least communicate "normally". I imagined the terror of having something to say but lacking the capacity to do so.

I did not feel I knew much about autism, but I quickly learned the importance of routine. One

day, I watched Luke cling to his mother’s arm. An instructor grabbed his hand. Luke began

screaming and crying. I wanted to make the instructor stop, to take Luke and comfort him. Luke felt me near and wrapped his arms around me. We walked off together. For the next month, our new routine consisted of my holding Luke on every trail. I would talk. Luke would respond with gurgling and humming. Occasionally, I made out words, but they did not translate into much.

Because our director had repeatedly told us to "make sure they hold the reigns," I kept placing them in Luke’s hands, only for him to drop them. One day, though, he gripped the reigns and never let go.

Before our next session, I spotted Luke petting a horse. He began singing "C is for

cookie…that’s good enough forme." I smiled and starting singing with him. He laughed, the first such sound I heard from him in our months together. He repeated that line from Sesame Street continuously for the hours we spent together. At the end of our session, we hugged.

The next week, Luke’smother asked bewilderedly about the previous session. For the first time, Luke had not fought her about getting dressed or going in the car. I described our last meeting, then knelt down and asked Luke about his day. He responded "C is for cookie!"

As we walked off together, I realized, autistic or not, we all are speaking the same language. Some people just use different words.

**A Newfound Nostalgia Katherine Perry**

**Describe an aspect of your childhood/upbringing that shaped the person you are today.**

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In a navy blue Volvo station wagon my entire childhood evolved. Inside, memories rested alongside the hardened French fries and squashed fruit snacks that lined the plastic leather interior.

Growing up I had two older brothers. Brian was two years my senior, and we flat out did not get along. At the root of our constant fighting were our intrinsic similarities - we repelled each other like two homologous poles. Michael, two years older than Brian, was extraordinarily aloof. He

was always a spectator during our petty battles, never taking sides or responding to the action. I often pondered how it was possible for him to ignore Brian's and my constant quarreling. In time I realized this trait was simply part of who Mike was, and we all loved him for it.

During family car trips we’d find ourselves playing our Gameboy consoles for ten minutes

before breaking into complete sibling warfare. My father would try to overwhelm the cacophony with his newest Bruce Springsteen cassette, but his attempts were always futile.

Through the constant combat, my parents’ personalities shone through. My mother’s solution to all sibling-related problems involved an incredible amount of yelling. My father wasn't as vocal. Once the Boss had failed him, he'd opt to jerk the car to the side of the road and coolly stand

outside until the battle ceased. This technique usually worked. Brian would direct his negative anger athis game of Tetris, Michael would lose himself in his Walkman, and I would stare out the window and daydream.

The car changed with the family, and as we acquired parts, so did it. When the Volvo

approached its second birthday, my sister Erica was born. The meager five-seater could no longer hold our family and a fold-up trunk seat was added as a result.

The years passed, and like us, the Volvo began to age. The navy paint lost its luster and small

regions of rust developed. Inside, empty juice boxes and X-Men trading cards lay preserved

beneath the floor mats, creating an unintentional scrapbook of memories shared by my family in the car.

One subzero February day our car began its dissent to death. As we pulled out of our driveway something felt awry. The Volvo was making strange noises - it had finally trekked its last mile.

A short time later,we purchased a spacious new Honda minivan. No longer crammed in the

backseat, arguments between Brian and I dissipated and finally ceased. We pretended to love the newfound maturity, yet in our hearts we all wanted to go back to the days of pulling hair and

bickering to no end.

The Volvo represented our youth, and when it died, our childhood went along with it. From

gummy bears and Gameboys had somehow evolved four children who had just about grownup. Now as I stand at the cusp of adulthood, I’d give anything to relive those days — yet I know this is an unreachable desire. Childhood is a one-way street, and there is no turning back.

**On Being a Middle Child Jacqueline**

**Davalos**

**"Define something about yourself"**

On Being a Middle Child

As our annual family picture day approaches, disputes about matching attire, scenery, or whether or not our pets will be included continue to dominate our dinnertime discussions. I’mnot keen

on, nor do I oppose, this occasion. Pose, say cheese, smile, click and it's over. Though, looking

back on previous family photographs, there seems to be a pattern in each of them: not the

awkward smile, nor the significant height difference, not even the chewing gum evident in my

left cheek, but rather my spot that always remains wedged in between my two sisters and two

younger brothers. Somewhere in between, a glimpse of a smile, neither haughty nor coy, is

evident, but only just. It’s mine, indicative of my rankin the family. The middle child. Simply

average. My life as a middling has been a journey through the obscurity of a middle child’srole, a struggle for recognition, and ultimately a pursuit of my own identity.

I cannot debate my second class status of being the middle child; mathematics would argue that

three is the median of five, clearly placing me in the middle of my siblings. Thus, the

responsibilities of an older sibling have long been unclear and the position of the youngest short- lived. With this uncertainty of what role to assume, finding and adjusting to a middle ground is

difficult. With no authoritative role, nor the sympathy of being the youngest, my expectations as a middle child have often been ambiguous. This lack of clarity prompts two questions: should I be responsible for finding that middle ground on my own? Am I responsible for fulfilling unclear expectations? Answers to these questions may seem obvious; however, as a middle child, I was not given the option to answer “no” to either of these. While the eldest and the youngest

delighted in their pre-cut mold and all its explicitness, I did not have the same sense of pride in my non-existent role. Often met with disappointment and lectures, the much sought-after middle

ground is one that I eventually chose to shy away from; partly because it was so hard to detect but chiefly due to the failed attempts at discovering it only further substantiating its inexistence.

Whatever the conclusion, simply dismissing the existence of a median proved dissatisfying. In

attempts to find and secure a place in between, my search for recognition began. As a middling, I wanted the same attention that my siblings received, perhaps even more. The eldest and youngest

felt entitled to it regardless of their accomplishments simply because they marked the first and last. With these set precedents, excelling was no longer revered, but expected. Inevitably,

competition and sibling rivalry ensued.

I recall being on the same soccer team as my sister one year, both of us forwards, with only one field to share, fighting for the name our mother would yell from the stands. Cynthia or Jackie. “It’s my time to prove myself," I would think. Call it motivation or sheer madness, it was

apparent in the way I ran toward the goal. I envisioned the image of the ball passing the

goalkeeper as she failed to stop it, the stands cheering “Jackie! Jackie!,” my raising my arms

triumphantly and yelling “GOAL” as I ran across the field like a legendary Pele, my teammates carrying me off the field, tapping me on the back as if I had finally lived up to the potential I had in me all along. Madness indeed. In truth, I never scored in that game, but the motivation was

present. It wasn’t the craving for attention that propelled me; it was the promise of the

acknowledgment that would follow, like a salute indicative of recognition. Lacking certainty regarding my place in the family, I was many times robbed of this thrill. Being the one in the middle entailed an invisibility that I thought could only be counteracted with defiance or

excellence.

The mediocre standard middlings are subjected to is, after all, due to a random shuffle in the

birth date deck. I wasn’t always a middle child; there was a lovely point in time when I was the youngest, enjoying the liberty, attention, Christmas presents and everything that accompanied being the baby. Nonetheless, this was short-lived. I was deposed by my younger brother in an undisputed coup d’etat. I watched as he played with my toys, relished in my attention and

delighted in the best Christmas presents. This was my spot. I couldn’t argue or protest, I simply had to yield. I had begrudgingly signed a silent covenant to render my throne to the next heir.

As I found myself overthrown, I was forced to adjust to a role that was essentially indefinite. It was once again necessary to start from zero. Beginning something is indeed difficult; like an

essay, the first few phrases are always the hardest, but once that first sentence is penned, the

blank page is more than just bare, and it becomes an image full of potential and creativity. The prospect of being amiddle child is relatively similar. It resembles a limbo of uncertainty, vague expectations and roles -- but, most importantly, a blank canvas, pending a masterpiece.

Ultimately, being a middle child entails knowing what to make of this bareness. Whether to

remain arrested by the thought of finding a place amongst others or to conceive one of my own is the real question. The frustrations and doubts of being the middle child are simply incomparable to the ultimate benefit: an identity. An identity shaped by my own ambitions and dreams, naked of expectations and finally, rising above to claim its own place.

Needless to say, dreading our family pictures is a thing of the past. Being in center seat does not define me, nor does it confine me to any certain role. I have room to become a work of art from a blank canvas; and I know New York University will be my first step in fulfilling that endeavor.

**Debate Struggle Gokul Agrawal**

**Newton's First Law of Motion states that an object in motion tends to stay in motion in the same direction unless acted upon by an**

**external force. Tell us about an external influence (a person, an event, etc.) that affected you and how it caused you to change**

**direction.**

It was a less-than-exciting afternoon in the waning days of junior year when the mess began. My

name, along with the names of two other speech and debate officers, was called over the

intercom. We were wanted in the principal's office immediately. As the policy captain of our

speech and debate team, I was confused as to the reason, but nevertheless entered Principal

Kew's sparsely decorated office and took a seat. The reason for the meeting was soon apparent: the administration had learned our plans to establish a speech and debate camp that upcoming summer and considered it a liability hazard to the school. Therefore, the club would be

suspended for the following year, with all club assets frozen. I balked. What liability? The

summer debate camp, although independent and entirely student-run in actuality, might be seen as affiliated with the school because of its name. My fellow officers and I had spent months

organizing this camp, hiring instructors, finding a suitable location, advertising to dozens of schools, and filling out paperwork. Principal Kew, however, seemed to think that these

accomplishments were dispensable, and thus decided to wash them away in the span of an hour. We tried to reason with him: couldn't we just shut down the camp and continue the club? No, the club had inadequately completed some newly required forms, and had also taken some shortcuts by not asking permission for fundraisers. Principal Kew remarked that he hoped a one-year

suspension would teach the club to follow the rules.

Unfortunately for Principal Kew, he had chosen to start an argument with a group of students

who argued their way into the league championships. Despite my approaching AP exams, school responsibilities, and obligations to the golf team, I came back week after week to meet with him to explore alternative options. A suspension of the club would have devastating consequences for the debate careers of over a hundred debaters. I also felt a tinge of remorse as I selfishly thought of my own debate career and how much I would miss the national tournaments that had formed such a significant part of my life for the past three years. For the first time, I was not only

directly confronting school officials, but I was actually fighting for a cause which directly

impacted my life and the lives of my peers. Each meeting proved frustrating, however, as the

principal always found some form we had not turned in or some deadline we had not met. A few weeks later it seemed as if my options had run out.

However, experience as debate captain and participation in school activities, has taught me that even the most bureaucratic obstacles can be overcome with persistence. After two weeks of

pondering over the possible paths the officers and I could take, we decided to present to the

administration with a solution: we would have students compete at tournaments as independent

debaters officially unaffiliated with our school. I presented the speech I had prepared requesting the principal's approval of my solution, and for the first time since the beginning of this dispute, I sensed a willingness to compromise from Principal Kew. After extensive assurance that I would keep the administration informed of all further proceedings, the principal agreed to my terms.

This outcome was far less satisfactory than my initial hope for a functional club funded by a summer camp, but my primary goal of giving students the opportunity to debate had been

accomplished. Although we would just be a dedicated group of students rather than an actual club, my efforts had paid off.

In fighting, reasoning, and eventually, compromising with Principal Kew, I have learned that

even the most formidable of obstacles can be overcome with calmness and determination. Even

now, I have a long journey ahead of me to find a means of acquiring funds to pay for

tournaments without school funding, but my refusal to give up thus far allows me to remain optimistic.

**The General Brian Ingram**

**Who is a person that has had a major influence on your life? How has this person impacted or changed you as a person?**

I have experienced the scene so many times that all recollections of the event blend together into a single, unforgettable memory. The seasoned, old general, with an eye for perfection, conducted his troops, me included, through daily, often mundane exercises. Any man who lost focus or

made a mistake was so sternly reminded that even the slightest of errors could spell disaster, not just for the recipient of the general’s ire, but also for the other men who were counting on him.

In reality, my memory pertains not to war, but rather football practice. The general, Coach

Walter Barr, was preparing us for our weekly game, not an international conflict. Though the

stakes involved in football and war are not comparable, the values and ideals needed to reach

victory are almost identical, and Coach Barr constantly reminded us of this fact. Traits that

Coach Barr demanded, such as respect, accountability, and hard work are necessary for success in regards to anything. Coach Barr did more than build a winning footballteam; he changed me into a young man ready for life and the real world.

Saying I played for Coach Barris a gross understatement. A more true reflection is to say I

committed to myself him, his system, and his values. Before I met Coach Barr, I had no concept of giving everything for a cause. After listening to him speak and participating in off-season

conditioning, I decided to stick with the team, regardless of the situation. However, the first week of practice greatly challenged my assertion. Practice lasted eight hours, and the

temperature and humidity combined to create avast, blanketing heat which made any task seem several times tougher. To make matters worse, I was a sophomore competing against seniors

who were much more experienced and physically mature. In addition to the demands during

practice, it was expected that we spend our own time memorizing plays and formations. I had no hope of seeing the varsity playing field. Questions began to arise in my mind over whether my

investments were worth the returns. The defining event of this period of uncertainty came when several players quit the team. Calling the remaining players together shortly after it occurred,

Coach Barr chastised the quitting players for abandoning their peers. His words triggered an

immediate reaction. At that moment, I decided I wouldn’t be a quitter, and I have never looked back. As a result of Coach Barr and his arduous practices, I feel I can accomplish anything, and there is no struggle that I cannot overcome.

Prior to Coach Barr’s influence, I would characterize myself as tentative. Instead of being

proactive and creating opportunities for myself, I waited for special chances to fall tome and

allowed my natural skills to carry me. Coach Barr quickly taught me that this attitude will not

generate success, as competition forces us to create our own opportunities, whether it is during a football game or in life. Since I acquired a “go-getter” attitude, I have experienced much more

than I would have with my previous demeanor. The most tangible example of this is my current internship with Susquehanna Technologies, a company that sells software solutions. Over the

summer, I researched the company, contacted the president, and ultimately secured the

internship. Before my experience with Coach Barr, I likely would have merely yearned for an opportunity such as this instead of making it happen.

One of the final, and perhaps most important, lessons I learned because of Coach Barr deals with personal growth. Before my senior season, Coach Barr retired, which was hard to fathom, as he had been involved in many aspects of my high school life. At his retirement announcement, he

told us that he will be with us in spirit and to remember his teachings, as they are more important than him personally. After pondering this statement and reflecting upon all my time with Coach Barr, I realized that it is always necessary to be prepared for change. Coach Barr was an

excellent leader and coach, but he cannot always be there to guide me, which is why I have to be my own person. This same sentiment applies to college and moving away from others who

greatly influence me, such as my parents. As I prepare for the most major change in my life so far, I am thankful for Coach Barr and all that he has taught me. Under the General's watch, I

transformed from an unsure freshman to a confident young man, ready to tackle the challenges of college life.

**Paradiddle Eric Deraney**

**Describe a person who has influenced your life in some way.**

Paradiddle. When someone mentions my father, this is the first word that comes to mind. You see, my father was a drummer, and this term describes the rudimentary basics of his hobby. As every good role model would, he utilized every mention of music, no matter how small, as an opportunity to persuade me to never follow in his footsteps.

He made sure to ramble on for hours about the horrors of getting to “gigs” early and setting up hours before the first audience member even set foot inside the venue. Perhaps, he said, I should learn to play harmonica, because all I have to do is take it out of my pocket.

Of course, as every good son would, I began drum lessons as soon as my mother could arrange

them. Understand that my parents were divorced, and I was determined to find every advantage to this separation. This all too common drama supported my growth as an independent person,

since I could no longer depend on support from a joint parental unit. It of course came with the

added benefit of having two chances to get the answer I wanted. Before I knew it, I began to

dream of being the next Buddy Rich or Gene Krupa, dazzling stadiums overflowing with adoring fans, clamoring to witness my peerless drum skills - lighting-fast fills and booming double bass induced crashes.

My first pair of sticks came tome from, in true musician style, the virtually unknown Victor’s House of Music. Once I acquired the tools of my noble craft, I set about learning the most

important skill a drummer should possess -- the ability to twirl sticks between my fingers. With that essential skill conquered, I immersed myself in my lessons with an overwhelming fervor,

mastering techniques in a short span of time that would take others twice as long. From that

point on, I was hooked. In the next couple of years, I found that drums alone would not satisfy my hunger andthat I had to turn to other instruments; guitar, bass, even piano, in an attempt to satisfy it.

It wasn’t long before I realized that if I could conquer music, I could conquer anything. Before

studying at Don Bosco, I attended a private school in a different state, and I didn’t know a single soul in the new community I was soon to become apart of. This did not hold me back, however, for I had been transformed by my new passion. I immediately set out to find people to connect

with, and soon I was rewarded for my diligence. I met people through wrestling, football, the

various clubs I joined, and even the school musicals. Before I even truly comprehended what had happened, I was elected President of my class. Since that time, I have excelled in everything I

have attempted all due to my first love: music.

So I thankyou both, my loving parents, for providing the catalyst to open a new door to my life and the means to sustain it. My seemingly minute fit of teenage rebellion has led me to my true passion, and the determination that now drives me to succeed. And of course, without you, Dad, I never would have known what a paradiddle was.

**Every Saturday Night Anonymous**

**Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence.**

I used to sit in my room staring at the wall, hoping for action, drama, comedy, or even romance. I did experience all of these things eventually, but through a screen, not directly. Every Saturday night was always another night at the movies. The Jewish Sabbath would end and it was time for me to recharge my batteries. A movie was something to look forward to during the gruelingly

long and boring hours of prayers and nothingness, before I could truly appreciate the rest. As

soon as the sun set, I waited outside my house for three stars to appear. According to biblical

texts, three stars meant the Sabbath was over. I could then turn on the lights, watch television, or even write. I was so anxious for those three stars to appear that it felt like an eternity. Finally,

those three glorious stars would appear and lead me back into the house. Everything was normal again; everything felt like it was in my control, once again.

My mother and I then always drove to pickup Abba from the synagogue. I never called my

father Dad; he was always Abba tome (Hebrew for father). One time, in defiance, my sister decided to call him Dad and he didn't react well. He hoped to be everything American, except Dad.

Every minute I had to wait for him was another hour of emptiness, but Abba promised an end to it. Abba promised me a movie every Saturday night, an escape to another story. One night I was Tom Cruise fighting off the bad guys in Mission Impossible; another night I was Jackie Chan,

investigating a crime and mangling the criminals. These movies gave methoughts, inspirations, aspirations and quality time with my father. When I look back on these times, which I consider to be the happiest and most innocent of my life, I can only smile.

A few years after my pre-teen movie-watching days, everything changed. The Saturday night

tradition ended, but it wasn’t my father who ended it. I did. As all children do, I grew up and

started to spend all my time with friends. I continued the tradition of Saturday night movies, but always with a friend. My father would come home from temple, stars shining, to find my room empty, already at the theater. I never thought that I left my father; I just thought that we could

spend time together elsewhere.

Life went on and I grew further and further apart from my father, and he grew further from my

mother and eventually me and my siblings. Finally, my parents separated like bacteria. We were no longer united; I would spend one weekend at my mom’s, breaking the Sabbath, and the other with my father, sitting in a chair for three hours and eventually in my bed for another five just

waiting for the Sabbath to end. I no longer stood outside the house looking at the sky waiting for those stars. Now, I spent those last few minutes confined in my room waiting for the time to pass and life to resume.

Looking back, I never realized I had the capacity to hurt my father or how a movie every

Saturday night could be such a meaningful tradition. We were driven further apart until one day it felt like we were roommates.

As time passed by, I grew up. I realized a passion for film, but I know now that if it weren’t for Abba and those Saturday nights, I may have never found it. As an aspiring filmmaker, I laugh at the movies I used to adore as a little boy and finally appreciate them for the effect they had on

me. I only wish that I could go back and rekindle the tradition that shaped my life and my

relationship with my father. I should have known that the best relationship anyone can have is family. And as I am about to bid farewell to my family and leave for college, I can’thelp but owe Abba my gratitude for a simple Saturday night movie.

**A Month in Ghana Anonymous**

**Describe a life altering experience.**

For the first time, I was an outcast. The minority. The one who didn’t fit in. I was a speck of white in a sea of black, and everyone around me made sure that I realized that. I was in an

unfamiliar country, across the Atlantic Ocean, surrounded by people speaking a different

language, and above all, physically, I stuck out like a sore thumb. “So, this is culture shock,” I thought, as I lay down for the first time on my bed in my host family’s house. My excitement

had worn off and I began to feel isolated and disoriented. I didn’t want to go outside, see anyone,

or do anything that night. I just wanted to listen to Michelle Branch on my iPod, the only

connection that I currently had with the “world” that I came from. I was awakened the next

morning at 5:30 A.M. by the loud singing and clapping coming from the Anglican Church

service taking place literally outside of my host family’s house. I tried to cover my ears with a pillow, but to my disappointment, it had no effect whatsoever. I stayed in bed and my mind

began to wander; I thought about where I was and what I was experiencing.

Going to Africa had only been a dream, and seemed to be a silly one at that, considering all of the violence occurring in Africa. My parents had promised me, with slightly devious smirks on

their faces, that if I could find a safe program in a safe African country, they would let me go. They honestly didn’t believe that, being a 15-year-old girl, I would be able to find a reliable

program. But to their dismay, after spending hours researching, I came upon a summer mission program in Ghana, led by the American Field Service.

My dream of going to Africa was realized, but here I was, in bed, completely secluded from the community. So I made a deal with myself, that from then on, I would take advantage of every opportunity that I was given to learn about and experience Ghanaian culture. I started with the church service outside my house that morning. I felt awkward at first; being Agnostic, I didn’t know any hymns nor prayers, and as I awkwardly attempted to copy the dance movements, my neighbors burst out into hysterical laughter. However, they encouraged me to keep dancing and congratulated me for putting forth so much effort to become apart of the community. After a

while,the movements almost seemed instinctive.

For the next few weeks, I soaked up every experience that I had. My skin color began to matter less as I started to immerse myself in the culture: From circulating through all of the invasive

vendors in Makola Market, to planning my day around when the electricity would be on, to

realizing my tan lines were just dirt lines, being asked if my friend’s freckles were a skin disease, to becoming an instant millionaire (as I realized when I counted my $200 which had been

converted to 2 million cedis), and making sure not to fall into the sewers (which weren’t covered at all). I rode everyday introtros (comparable to minivan taxis full of strangers) ate fufu, kinke, and banku regularly, ran through Abeka in the rain with no umbrella, played soccer with and

taught English and Arithmetic to the children from the orphanage, and became close with a woman who owned a small mango stand from which I bought a mango every morning.

A month later, as I boarded the plane to Heathrow in Accra, I made a promise to myself that I

wouldn't just let this experience be in my past; I would make it live on in my present and in my future. I have since kept that promise, and started a branch of Keep a Child Alive at my school to help provide medication to and build clinics for those infected by AIDS. I’m also currently

enrolled in a course on Africa which discusses prejudice, current events, and general history.

I learned more from my one-month-trip to Ghana than I could have ever learned spending 5

years at home or in Europe. Living in a country where I had to adapt and force myself to

integrate into the community and where I found myself separated not only because of my culture but also because of the color of my skin, truly enabled me to discover myself, my values, and my abilities. I was able to test my limits and handle situations that I’m sure not many people have

had to handle; after all, how many people can say that they had to take bucket showers and reject 52 marriage proposals in a month from men they didn’tknow?

**Spiderman Anonymous**

**Describe a character in fiction, a historical figure, or a creative work (as in art, music, science, etc.) that has had an influence on you, and explain that influence.**

The external reflections of my admiration are subtle. A red and blue toothbrush, its handle laced with white plastic webbing, stands among bottles of makeup remover by my sink. A boyish PVC

and polyester wallet depicting an agile hero ashe swings through the city holds a few wrinkled dollar bills and frozen yogurt stamp cards. While my bedroom walls are plastered with

professional soccer players, favorite bands and actors, there is but a single image that I reflect

upon most. Flanked by David Beckham and Hayden Christiansen, my true inspiration is the web- slinger himself, Spiderman.

After witnessing the death of his Uncle Ben, Peter Parker developed a mantra that “With great

power comes great responsibility.” He becomes so burdened with doing the right thing that he

sacrifices his physical and emotional wellbeing for the oneshe loves. Peter, with all his powers, is not invincible. He is just like the rest of us. His bones break, his skin is easily pierced, he gets tired, and he faces daunting obstacles everyday. In spite of vulnerability, he uses his abilities to bridge the gap between the suffering and their salvation, to help the helpless. In my eyes, he is

the true embodiment of a hero.

While I am mostly accustomed to the incessant bickering of my parents, my younger sister is

not. As the argument’s intensity increases downstairs, she bursts into my room, eyeswelling, a look of distress on her face. I close my eyes to fight back the tears, wanting to remain strong for her. I see a masked hero diving off the edge of a building, plummeting through the night air in a familiar nose-dive to save Mary Jane, acting as the ultimate savior, giving me strength to do the same for my sister. I pull her close in a quick embrace before whisking her out the door with me, saving us both from the ever-present instability we face at home.

I have always seen Spiderman as a sort of martyr. He endures mental and physical suffering for the good and wellbeing of complete strangers, and continues in the face of being misunderstood

and even hated. Not only does he posses supernatural skill, but also uncommon strength of character. His absolute selflessness inspires me to believe that one can overcome things

seemingly larger than oneself.

The poster now hangs above my desk, where I spend much of my time at home. A pensive hero perches atop the broadcasting antenna of the Empire State building, and gazes down at the

bustling streets of New York City below. Printed in silver script above him are Aunt May’s

words to Peter, that “There's a hero in all of us, that keeps us honest, gives us strength, makes us noble, and finally allows us to die with pride.” This idea has resonated within me to such an

extent, that it has become a source of strength and comfort in turbulent times. I may not have spider-senses or super-speed, but I do have the courage and audacity to face my obstacles and adversaries with the unbridled confidence of my friendly neighborhood Spiderman.

**Fight or Flight Anonymous**

**Tell about an experience that has changed how you view the world.**

I was thirteen, chubby, and small. It was late and it was raining, and I needed to run to the

grocery store to get some oven cleaner so my dad could surprise my mom when she came home. I was stopped from completing my honorable task by a guy on a bike and his girlfriend. He

wanted my umbrella. Well, I needed the umbrella too, so I just ran into the store. He remained

outside, and I knew I was dead if I left that store. I ended up making my escape through the back of the store, walking nonchalantly out of the next-door Laundromat. I ran home swept in fear,

chagrined to the core: I let some no-good punk scareme to death, make me jump a fence in the back of a store, and lose my umbrella in the midst of it all.

I joined the closest karate school the next day. That was one of the best decisions I have ever

made. At first I only wanted to learn self-defense, so I wouldn’t have to subjugate myself to such demeaning treatment ever again. But my studies of martial arts over the next four and a half

years led to so much more than that. I was introduced to a great set of people, and made

friendships that spanned beyond the kinship of karate. As I rose through the ranks, my

confidence rose, too. I became secure not only in my ability to defend myself, but also in my own value.

The dojo became my second home. Every school day, I looked forward to heading there in the evening. And on Saturday mornings, I couldn’t imagine a better way to start off the day. This

became my passion, and seeing the people who shared my passion only fueled it further. After attaining my blue belt, I started helping my karate master teach junior classes, myself being in

the adult class. I was at first intimidated by having 15 kids look tome for guidance for sixty

minutes everyday. Yet I soon got to know them, to know their strengths and their weaknesses. I enjoyed helping impart the discipline of karate upon them. And the kids imparted something on me in return, and that was the self-discovery of leadership, the last trait I took pride in prior to

my experience as sempai, the master’s assistant.

Upon earning my black belt in December of 2007, I started teaching adult classes. This transition to a sensei, a black-belt instructor, was another milestone in my internal search for leadership.

By this time I was certainly more confident in my knowledge of karate, more comfortable in the setting, and not an utter neophyte to teaching as I had been when I was a blue belt. However,

there still were hurdles to jump, such as maintaining control of the class, and having a planned- out routine for every class I would teach. These hurdles get lower with every class, but I still

jump them to this day.

The difference is that today I know I will make the jump.

**Hakuna Matata Dmitriy Pavlyuk**

**Talk about somebody who has affected you.**

Russia had never been bad tome. My eleven years there made for a joyful, carefree childhood. I

never thought of my life as wanting despite living on my grandma’s miserly pension for three

years. During those last three years of my life in Russia, when my mom was in the U.S. and I

lived with my grandma, I never once thought of myself as unlucky or lonely or poor. My

grandma had crafted a splendid world forme, almost of fairytale-like qualities: I was sure that love abounded in the world, that everyone was as happy as I was, and I was shielded from

knowing that most of the world was immersed in warfare, that most marriages do not end

happily, that I barely survived during my first year of life because my mom and grandma had to live on food stamps because of the currency default of 1991.

My grandma was careful not to expose me to these realities before my mindset was ripe enough to understand them. Hence I lived the life of Hakuna Matata—subject to no worries, my only

duty being going to school, having everything else provided forme. I took that for granted, as

any kid does, and haven’t come to appreciate what my grandma had done forme only until these past few years of my life. Slowly but steadily, my worldview has been elucidated and my fairy tale-childhood has finally ground to a halt.

I do not regret that I didn’t appreciate the ease of life during my childhood because my grandma worked to ensure that I didn’t; sometimes, ignorance is truly bliss, and that blissfulness is the

defining aspect of all the years of my upbringing. During that upbringing I had naturally come to love my grandma and hold her in high esteem. She has influenced many aspects of my life, most importantly my will to learn: day after day, year after year the idea that doing well in school will payoff in the future was being instilled into me. I value this the most, because it allowed me to

come to my own understanding that my future is based on my education. I thus choose to dowell in school and no longer have to be forced to.

The future that I plan to create for myself has a hint of grandma as well. Her career as a doctor had a profound impact on me. My own ambition to become a doctor is a direct result of the

numerous nights I've spent listening to my grandma tell stories of doing four shifts of surgery or spending night after day on an ambulance. Her love of saving lives, despite being overworked

and underpaid, imparted on me a desire to one day have that same amount of satisfaction when looking back on my own life.

I've pondered many atime how I could raise my children and have them respect and trust me as much as I respect and trust my grandma. A few theories involved having the foresight to do

what’s best in the long run and not yielding to every demand; or maybe all it takes is respecting and trusting my children enough for them to do the same. I haven’t quite figured it out, but I've gotten the feeling that if I can endow my children with a sense of shelter from world’s realities and imbue an aura of Hakuna Matata into their lives, I’ll be off to a good start.

**"Oh, the Places you'll Go" Janki Shah**

**Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, or risk that you have taken and its impact on you.**

"You're off to Great Places!

Today is your day!

Your mountain is waiting.

So...get on your way!"

Somewhere in a far off town in Australia, these words penetrated the deafening silence that

pervaded the room in which I stood, deeply immersed in thoughts. It was my last day here and

suddenly, it all seemed like an incredible dream. Like several teenagers from the United States of America, I had spent my summer participating in an Outward Bound program, an

unconventional yet extraordinary experience that truly had an enormous impact on me as an individual.

I remember very clearly. It was nearly six o'clock in the morning and my mates and I had

gathered for breakfast around the now discolored plastic mat that had served as our portable

dining table for the past five days. The temperature was negative three degrees Celsius and my hands quivered as my numb fingers struggled to grip the spoon. While attempting to gulp the

unsavory, bland mixture of Weet-Bix and powdered milk with Vegemite on toast for the last

time, I listened carefully as the plans of the day were discussed, trying desperately to ignore the tiny vestiges of leaves and soil in my meal. Thirty-one more laborious kilometers to the top of Mount Tenet before noon, someone had said. Soreness submersed my freezing body as it ached just at the thought of positioning the twenty-two kilogram backpack on my shoulders. It was six thirty now. After ensuring that nothing had been left behind and the natural habitat appeared

untouched as it did when we first arrived, we resumed our journey.

Each strenuous step, although demanding, was taken with determination and strength. With

scraped legs, sore backs, and tired minds, there, with our heads held high, we stood on the top of the summit. I cannot exactly describe what that amazing sensation was – a feeling of pride, a

sense of accomplishment, or perhaps, a little bit of both. Here, as I stood glancing over the capital city of Australia with amap in my hand and a compass around my neck, about ten

thousand miles away from home, I was more confident and sure of myself than I had ever been. I knew exactly what I wanted to do, and more importantly, how I wanted to do it.

Today, I have returned to my real world to fresh food, daily showers, and clean clothes. I wake not to crawling insects or the terror of hiking another thirty kilometers but instead to the

countless responsibilities of a high school senior. My mind floods with thoughts of looming

application deadlines, the ever so significant college essays, and of course, an exceptional score on the dreaded SAT. However, often, when I falter at such notions, I pause and appreciate,

reminding myself of the strong and determined Janki that had survived in arduous circumstances in a strange city with strange people, who soon became great friends. I remind myself of the

Janki that built her own shelter and along with her other companions convinced those that

wanted to give up to continue. And when I remind myself of this Janki that stood in the meeting hall, deeply immersed in thoughts as the instructor gave her farewell message, I am convinced that I am ready. . .ready to face with confidence any mountain that is waiting forme, college or otherwise.

**Falling Toward the Future Samantha N.**

**Gonzalez**

**This was a essay of choice on the Common Application.**

“Samantha Nicole!” my mother began. The deliberate usage of my middle name indicated she was preparing to reprimand me. I instantly knew I had been caught peering underneath my neon pink Barbie bandage. As do most young children, I chose to satisfy my curiosity over my

mother. The scrape I had received from the playground pavement was just too intriguing to

ignore. My eyes widened in wonder at the little red circle on my knee. Just a day ago, it had been brand new, and now, with the help of a modest amount of hydrogen peroxide, it was half the

size. Although as a six year old observer I had no comprehension of the complex mechanisms at work,my fascination with the body’s ability to heal was already apparent.

Scrapes were the most serious injuries I needed to worry about until last October. The Friday

before the season’s third football game, I fell six feet during a cheerleading stunt. I attempted to land on my feet, but rolled my right ankle. After the doctor exclaimed that my bruised and

swollen ankle was the worst he had seen in his career, I knew that the injury would not heal in

the amount of time initially projected by my school’s athletic trainer. Usually, a hairline fracture on atalus bone and a sprained ankle would just be two more of life’s little inconveniences. Yet six weeks with a cast has had a sustaining impact on how I think. By forcing me to change my perspective, my first broken bone has forever altered my outlook on life.

Although I have always wanted to be a doctor, the many trips I made to the physician's office during those six weeks allowed me to better understand what the profession entails. Medical

doctors are respected for their intelligence and inexhaustible concern for their patients. While many seek the title of physician for its large paycheck, the best doctors are those that have

passion for the profession. For as long as I can remember, I have dreamed of becoming a

physician. Being aware of the hard work that is required of a medical doctor only strengthened my drive.

In addition to looking toward the future, I began to appreciate the present. While on crutches, I

learned to value the gifts life gives everyday. I was upset that I could no longer participate in

cheerleading, but my daily struggles forced me to realize that there are people that will never

have the chance to do physical activities. I began to realize I never saw how difficult little things like opening a door or getting up the stairs could be. Now, completing these tasks was something of which to be truly proud. Choreographing my actions so that I could move around my house

was a tedious task. Without planning, I could easily climb the same flight of stairs three times, each trip returning with another forgotten item. Not only was it tiring and time consuming, the loud thuds that resulted from the hop to the next stair were never well received by my family past ten o’clock at night.

The moment I was able to walk without crutches, I noticed how much easier life actually was. I had forgotten what it was like to open doors by myself. I could climb the stairs quickly and

quietly. I was able to go into small rooms without worrying about falling over on an out of place item of furniture. My regular life seemed so much more exciting and fulfilling with this

independence. My newfound passion for life could only have been achieved through the removal of what I had taken for granted.

I have discovered so manythings from breaking my ankle that I no longer look backupon the

situation as negative. In fact, I now lookupon negative situations in my life as the best and most impactful type of learning experiences. I failed to realize that the awareness that had served me so well in the discovery of my first passion, biology, was slowly fading away. By slowing down and focusing, I was able to uncover daily treasures that were passing me by. I pride myself on

the maturity that I have gained as a result of this disguised blessing, and know that what I have learned was well worth six weeks of inconvenience.

**Northville-Lake Placid Trail Dylan**

**Brown**

**Personal Statement for the Common Application**

Two years ago at summer camp, I hiked the better part of the Northville-Lake Placid Trail.

No one from camp had gone on this trip since sometime in the seventies, so we had a certain air of bravado. We were a group of 14 and 15 year olds attempting to match the endurance of what were, according to camp lore, seven foot giants with beards like rhododendrons.

When it rains in the Adirondacks, water cascades in wholly indecent chunks. If you're on a trail, you cover up as best you can and keep going; there’s naught else to do. Your pack absorbs water, as does anything in it that hasn't been waterproofed. Boots will stay dry, but only if you keep to the shallow puddles. If you have to sleep in a tent, you aren't going to enjoy it.

Operations commenced well and ended wet, tired, and with the unmistakable odor of a dozen teenagers who hadn’t bathed in a week.

To maintain the trails over swamp, long logs are split in half and laid in pairs across what the path ought to be. When wet, these logs are slippery, and when slippery, oversized football

players have a tendency to slip on them.

Incidentally, one such footballer was on our trip. George slipped, bellowed in pain, and punched open a small tree. The new source pain didn't seem to distract him much.

In these situations, standard procedure is for most able counselor and most able camper to find

help. An hour or two later, once George was safely propped in a tent a off the path, my counselor Chad and I embarked on an eighteen mile stroll to the local ranger station; through mud and

ferns and the occasional flooded stream.

Eighteen miles in post-rain dreariness is a long time. When we left, George was no longer writhing in agony, which did surprisingly little to alleviate our concern. The foliage wasn’t particularly interesting, which left us six hours of talking about anything and everything to distract us from the gravity of a wounded camper in a wilderness zone.

So I heard about paper chemistry, where a project was to make a boat sail from a few cubic

inches of wood. About a professor who taught genetics but would call in teaching assistants for evolution—he didn’thold with such nonsense. And there was Pearl Jam, Chad’s favorite band at the time, our shared appreciation of The Clash, and my favorites of Queen and Led Zeppelin.

Six hours.

The ranger station was empty, but we got a ride from a resident in the direction of town. Halfway there, a familiar van stopped us and we met the camp driver. Camp knew what happened to

George about twenty minutes after we left: a hiker had come by with a satellite phone. We were driven to camp to spend the night, and the next morning were flown in by the same seaplane that would carry George out.

Walking out the second time, over a period of two more days, really rankled. But that was just something that had to be dealt with.

That trail was thenascence of a quiet confidence. The nagging voices in the back of my mind are farther now from casting doubt, and instead suggest that my potential is far from limited. I know myself a little better, know that I can handle tough situations. There was no overwhelming

difficulty, just a task that needed doing.

And while I still don’t have a flowery beard, for a little while I felt a lot more than seven feet tall.

**An International Childhood Anonymous**

**In order for the Admissions staff of our college to get to know you, the Applicant, better, we ask that you answer the following**

**question: are there any significant experiences you have had, or**

**accomplishments you have realized, that have helped to define you as a person?**

As a result of my father’s business, my family moved to France in May of 1995. From France,

we moved to Singapore, back to France, to Spain in 2001, and finally to our current location on a farm in rural Upstate New York in late 2002. Over the course of my seventeen years, I have

lived in eight municipalities and have attended six schools. Because it was the first of my foreign peregrinations, I credit the initial move to France as the crucial turning point in determining the kind of person I have become. Living and traveling throughout different parts of the world has

been an experience and opportunity with which the majority of American high school students have not been graced, and has provided me with knowledge one can only attain through

empiricism.

The pilgrimage to France created a domino-like effect. I made new friends, and then learned a new language. My parents did not tolerate or subscribe to any television, so I learned to spend my time in ways that were much more educational. The subsequent moves and trips simply

added new dominoes to the chain. I made a whole new set of friends five more times, and

learned what it was like to live in the suburbs of a major European city, in small towns, in the country, in the tropics, in the snow, and on an island. In Singapore, especially, I went to school and became friends with children from all over the world. My three closest friends were an

American, an Israeli, and a Venezuelan. I have learned what it is like to go to a small French

private school, a small public school, and a large international private school. I have learned how different the culture of India is from that of Italy, and Italy’s from America’s.

Having grownup in France, Spain, and Singapore, and having traveled to nations such as India,

Italy, Japan, Denmark and several more, I have learned to appreciate other cultures, and to

incorporate others’ opinions and views into my own. In essence, I have learned to open my mind. When I first moved to my present home in Salem, New York, I did not realize how important my expatriate experiences had been to shaping my being. Now that I am older, however, I have

noticed that many of my peers have a somewhat parochial view of the world. This is not because they are uneducated or less intelligent than I, but because I have been gifted with the opportunity to experience other parts of the world.

These immersions in other cultures have provided me with an education unparalleled by that

which anyone school or one region could offer. A picture maybe worth a thousand words, but an experience is worth a million pictures. I can never repay my parents for the worldview they have provided forme. My international experiences and family history have set me on my path. My maternal grandfather, Fred Wacker, was Assistant Secretary of Defense, Comptroller of the Pentagon, and Vice President and Treasurer of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. My

paternal grandfather, Louis Padgett, was a steelworker, and my father worked his way up from humble origins to become a successful lawyer, business executive and entrepreneur. Like my

father, I am not motivated by money. There is nothing wrong with wealth, but I do not intend to waste the time of my life simply accumulating money. Rather, I know three things: I wish to

achieve great success in the field I choose; I plan to contribute to society; and I will strive to have an interesting life.

**Growing Up Anonymous**

**In order for the Admissions staff of our college to get to know you, the Applicant, better, we ask that you answer the following**

**question: are there any significant experiences you have had, or**

**accomplishments you have realized, that have helped to define you as a person?**

Getting up early simply hurts. Getting up early in the summer hurts even worse, and getting up early in the summer to do work is close to torture. This past summer I had to do just this. Every morning, except for Sundays when I was lucky enough to sleep in a little before church and the occasional Saturday, I would getup around 6:30 and get ready for a day of hard physical labor. I had three jobs this summer: to clear two separate roads through dense woods, and put up a fence along the road by our barn. Because I am still young, my father decided that it would be a good learning experience if, for all of the jobs, I was permitted to use only semi-primitive tools;

nothing electric, nothing gas powered. This meant that for clearing roads through the woods, I

was allowed to use a saw, clippers, an axe, a shovel, a pike for moving large rocks and the

physical labor and companionship of my three younger brothers. For putting up that fence I was, thankfully, given the right to use a posthole digger, albeit an old handheld one.

So, most days I told my friends no thanks to going to the movies, or no thanks to going out to

have some late night food or ice cream. I knew that the following morning would be an early

one, and if I did not get enough sleep I would be miserable or might even hurt myself with some tool. At first this was something that irked me significantly, but as the summer wore on I became accustomed to working and even began to enjoy it quite a bit. My brothers and I had a goodtime talking as we worked and, as we made progress, we were very proud of our work. It was like

weight lifting with a larger purpose. I felt like a pioneer, clearing the first roads through the

dense Upstate New York woods and putting up fences in the rocky soil using only hand tools.

Many good things came out of these jobs. First were the roads and the fence, which look very

good and are useful. I learned how to use my hands and work efficiently with my brothers. I

learned how to have enough will to get myself up from bed and goto work when my father was not there to wake me. I learned how to enjoy work. Most important of all, however, I learned that

getting up early in the summer is apart of growing up, and the lazy days of sleeping in is something one needs to learn to leave behind [well, mostly] with one’s childhood.

**Life Changing Experience Andrew Ahn**

**Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.**

Smack! Within a fraction of a second, my life was changed forever. A homemade slingshot

snapped and launched a funnel and water balloon at an unimaginable speed directly into my left ear. Once I’d been hit, an incredibly loud whistling screamed through my head as I opened my eyes and staggered to my feet. Realizing what I was losing, I became overwhelmed by fear and hopelessness, desperately plugging my ears to escape the high-pitched wail. Days later, the

fading whistling finally disappeared into the chilling silence of “severe” hearing loss. As I struggled to cope with the devastating impact and difficult changes in my perspective, I

discovered the gift of music, something that would affect me far more greatly than any measure of hearing loss.

Since my loss six years ago, I’ve learned that the most punishing consequence of the accident is the difficulty to hear the subtle and fine points of speech. Compared to watching television with captions, speaking loudly unconsciously, or hiding my hearing aids in embarrassment, nothing is worse than repeating “what?” three times to someone and most often, still not ever fully hearing and understanding. The defeat in clearly hearing but failing to understand others heavily

outweighs all the other burdens of my hearing loss, at times leaving me feeling more isolated and disconnected with the world than in any other moment with or without hearing aids.

But since my discovery of music, all the worries and difficulties of my hearing loss have faded

and diminished into a trivial cost for a genuine passion for music. Listening to the power and

emotion in a single chord or melody, I see music as a profound and romantic language that goes past the complicated and indistinct spoken word. The great range of emotions of Beethoven’s 6th symphony, expressed clearly through immense power yet such delicate melodies, best defines

what music means tome. The elegant melodies, moving harmonies, fluctuations of dynamics,

and perfectly placed notes create a profoundly amazing and overwhelming depiction of nature. From the imitation of sensitive birdcalls and flowing waters of the brook to imitation of intense thunderstorms and falling rain, Beethoven has not only created a crystal clear picture of nature, but also reflected the peace and fear we feel in nature. This is what I love about music. To me, music goes beyond words as a universal language that we can all understand. Underneath all the vowels, consonants, and thousands of different spoken languages, we are all harmoniously

connected. By pursuing my passion in music to connect to the world around me, I feel limitless and unbound by my hearing loss. Nowhere else do I feel that I can truly hear and listen to the

world and have a sense of security, connection, and most importantly, happiness, the happiness in having something to escape the desolate isolation and struggles of hearing loss.

Over the years, I have experimented with several instruments in bands, orchestras and formal

training in music theory and learned that no matter how well you can play or how much you

know, music will always be from the heart. The accident took not only my hearing, but also my sense of communication with others and through music, I gained more than I had lost: a more

powerful expression of ideas, stories, and emotion.

**Climbing to Confidence Anonymous**

**Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.**

What motivates someone to bungee jump head-first off bridges, crawl through rock tunnels miles below the surface of the earth, or tackle the white crags of Mount Everest? Not everyone escapes these experiences unscathed, leaving many questioning why people are willing to risk life and

limb for daring stunts, but the answer is clear tome—the struggle entices those who want to test their limits, but these tests are as much a test of mental endurance as they are physical feats of

strength.

I didn’t always understand the appeal of testing my mental endurance. As my seven-year-old self looked at a wall of over-sized, multi-colored rocks at the local climbing gym, I wanted a reward that was a little more tangible. I was motivated to finish my first climb by a box of tootsie rolls at the top of the rock wall.

Tootsie rolls aside, I became an adrenaline junkie over the next few years because of climbing. I loved nothing better than getting my feet off the ground, using whatever means necessary.

Unfortunately, my newfound craving for height led to some sticky situations. One adventure in my grandparents’ oak trees left my grandmother sprinting for the ladder to help me before I

broke a bone. But, no matter how many times I slipped, stuck, or scraped, there was always someone to catch me. I was fearless climbing on the rocks, because I knew that I could try anything and someone would make sure I only fell a few feet if I made a mistake.

When amateur climbing was no longer enough of an adrenaline rush, I decided to learn how to lead routes, which is where the climber is less dependent on and supported by the rope. Lead

climbing was a little more hazardous than anything else I had tried, and I eagerly anticipated my class at a place aptly named “Hospital Flats.”

Leading was a whole new experience because, if I were to make a mistake, I would fall more

than just a few feet. For the first time, I had to assess my ability and decide, “Can I finish this

climb, or is it a foolish risk to try?” Each time I was forced to make this decision, I found myself lacking in self-confidence. I was known for an unflagging determination to conquer the rocks,

but I didn’t finish a single climb that day. My former illusion of confidence had been a sham because someone else had always taken up the slack for my mistakes.

The next day, I returned to Hospital Flats to try again. I stood at the bottom of the first climb of the morning, barely hearing my instructor’s litany of reasons as to why lead-climbing is so

difficult. Only his last words caught my attention: knowing you can finish is half the battle. We then exchanged the series of commands by rote, and I began.

The route was tough, with only half-inch finger holds to support the entire weight of my body.

By the time I was half-way to the top, my fingers were bleeding and my limbs shaking from the physical exertion. My instructor called for meto slow as I reached a no-fall zone on the rock— the last place before the top of the climb where I could be safely lowered without severe injury. The choice was clear: I had to finish, or descend. The ten feet above me were bare, with almost no purchase for my hands and feet, and I was already exhausted, but remembering the previous day’s bitter disappointment, I refused to tighten the rope and prepare for descent. I continued the

route without a thought toward my fingers, fatigued legs, or how far I would fall if I missed a hold.

My climb at Hospital Flats was no Mount Everest, but now I understand why people are willing to take a risk. I finished the climb that day, but even if I had fallen, I would not have dismissed it as failure. The physical battle was merely an afterthought, because I had won the mental war.

**Learning Curiosity Anonymous**

**Please briefly elaborate on one of your extracurricular activities or work experiences in the space below or on an attached sheet (150**

**words or fewer).**

When my Academic Decathlon coach distributes materials in June—hundreds of pages of

history, poems, research topics, and more—it is with the tacit understanding that students have

just seven months to synthesize, analyze, and otherwise own this knowledge. Through Academic Decathlon, I have had the chance to dive into the legacy of Chinese empires, unearth the political deceit of the Borgias and their rival families from the Italian Renaissance, and examine the

intricacies of our planet’s climate. The competition is invigorating unlike any other academic

experience, because it is a pure contest of whether or not a team can learn and understand a

topic. Teammates must use each other’s strengths and compensate for each other’s weaknesses in order to successfully compete, creating the ultimate test of individual as well as team strength;

however, the learning process does not end with the competition. I have discovered that

Academic Decathlon opens a door beyond its curriculum. For example, my next-to-nothing

understanding of Chinese history has permanently been exchanged with a new passion and

curiosity. I continue to visit museums to examine historic jade and bronze pieces like the ones we studied, and I dream of traveling to China. Academic Decathlon exposes avid learners to ideas beyond atypical high school curriculum, creates a co-dependent team and—most

importantly—inspires curiosity and a need for further exploration.

**My Conflict Anonymous**

**Include something about yourself not readily apparent on other parts of the application.**

The idea of the character haunted my mind for days. I couldn't shake the feeling that while

reading this novel, I had heard the ideas portrayed somewhere before, somewhere all too

familiar.The first book I was ever to read in German struck a nerve so closely, that now, a year later, my thoughts still sometimes drift back to the innocent yet deeply confused young Tonio Kroeger.

My grandmother handed me the book, the day before my first day at my new school, with

nothing more than a casual "Hier, das sollst du mal lesen." You should read this, she said, and

went on to describe the book as a staple of German literature. I have to admit, I was initially

disinterested. It was a daunting challenge and I had better things to do, mainly go out and meet my new schoolmates. I didn't want to stay holedup in my room with some book, I thought too myself. But as I began to establish myself at the school, I decided I could use a little practice in reading in German, so I sat down and immersed myself in this story.

"Tonio Kroeger" was written by Thomas Mann, a prominent figure in pre-war German literature heavily influenced by Nietzschean values. It follows the life of a boy, the son of an Italian artist and a German banker,who constantly presents himself with conflicts that in reality, are all just in his head. He inherits qualities from both sides of his family, which seem to clash in his

personality. He has a taste for the arts from his mother and a pragmatic, sometimes cynical,

approach from his father. The predominant question in the book is that of art versus life, or art

versus intellect, as Tonio tries to fulfill both callings. This dilemma resonated with me, as I have put off this question for a while myself - a career in the arts or in academia? I have ultimately

decided for the latter, but I'm sure will always be drawing and painting on my own time.

It seemed the plot was taking ages to comprehend; it felt as if it was only compromised of little stories and anecdotes which seemed to have absolutely no meaning. It wasn't until I came across a specific scene that I fully understood the running theme of isolation and confusion in the story, of being shut out of a world purely by your own means. I knew what this felt like, as a kid,

wondering why it was so hard forme to jump up and join the other kids dancing around at birthdays and parties.

In that scene Tonio Kroger, still young, is forced to attend a ball-room dance class. He is

horrified b y the scene, anxious and trepidant, yet still somehow mesmerized by the goings-on

around him. He feels both intellectually above them and at the sametime deeply envious of their innocent energy and spirit and what he deems to be naivety.

And while I felt this way often, mostly throughout middle school, whether it simply due to

anxiety or something more, I feel that that has changed greatly over the years, and especially

thanks to my trip to germany, I've had the chance to see myself in other worlds and through other people's eyes. Now I jump at opportunities to get outside, do new things, and above all, meet

new people. I view every day as a blank page forme to write my name on; as atest forme to prove what I am capable of, whether it be artistically inclined or otherwise.

**Success In Humiliation Anonymous**

**Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.**

It was May 3, 2007, a warm, bright day. Every field was filled with blooming flowers and all the trees were covered with lime green leaves; everything seemed beautiful and normal besides this madness. I was in the back seat of a police car that had picked me up at my school. All I could

see ahead of me were the metal cage and a busy hand of the police officer who was constantly typing something in his laptop while driving. Embarrassing. Humiliating. These two words kept ringing in my ears during my entire ride. Seriously, who rides in a police car just because she

missed her stupid school bus?

I had been in America for only three months at that time, yet I was doing well in my school. I

worked hard, received fairly good grades, socialized with people, and earned a good reputation

with teachers; I seemed to achieve all these things despite the wall of language differences.

However, those accomplishments were meaningless in front of the harsh reality; the bus was

gone, my phone service was suspended, and no one was going to give me aride. After thirty

minutes of desperate wandering in my school, I finally went to a reception assistant lady for

help, but the situation did not improve. As the time went by, I became hysterical, and the hysteria gradually influenced the lady; she started speaking even faster and in a higher pitch. Frustrated

and terrified by the whole situation, I was ready to cry. When the lady noticed the expression on my face, she brought me back to her room and asked me very seriously, and slowly; “Dooo

yoooouwaaaannt tooriiiiide a poliiice caaarr?”

A what? A police car! I was stunned for a moment, but still conscious of the fact that I had no

other options. I nodded helplessly. Then the next thing I knew, I was heading home, pretty much barricaded in the backseat of a police car.

By the next day, I was terrified. I felt everybody in my school was whispering about it, and

making fun of me, which was even a greater humiliation than the incident. However, I did not

bring myself down. After all the things that I had accomplished so far, I thought it was not fair to displace them just because of this one mistake. Therefore I moved on. Because I knew I was

going to be haunted by this experience for a while, I only looked forward and concerned about

what lay ahead of me. I consistently did my work and kept socializing with new people. As a

result, the initial embarrassment gradually faded away with each week, and I finally regained my confidence by the end of my freshman year. Furthermore, I was not embarrassed by the incident anymore; it became another proud struggle against the odds in America, and a guide that rescued me from every disappointment and despair that I went through after the incident in past three

years.

Also, since then, I have never missed the bus.

**Responses For NYU**

**Supplement Anonymous**

**1. In addition to any work experience that you listed on your**

**application, please tell us how you spent your most recent summer**

**vacation. 2. If you had the opportunity to spend one day in New**

**York City with a famous New Yorker, who would it be and what**

**would you do? (Your New Yorker can be anyone -past or present,**

**fictional or nonfictional - who is commonly associated with New**

**York City; they do not necessarily have to have been born and**

**raised in New York.) 3. Write a haiku, limerick, or short (eight lines or less) poem that best represents you. 4. In the year 2050, a movie is being made of your life. Please tell us the name of your movie and**

**briefly summarize the story line. 5. Please tell us what led you to select your anticipated academic program and/or NYU**

**school/college, and what interests you most about your intended discipline.**

1. I spent entire my last summer in Burlington County Footlighters, which is a small community theater. I was involved in two shows: The Secret Garden and The Odyssey, as a pianist for The Secret Garden rehearsals and a violinist for both shows. I did get paid for The Secret Garden as a musician. Also I received compensation for playing the violin at one wedding in a Catholic

church, Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish.

2. “With great power comes great responsibility.” It would definitely be my favorite superhero Spiderman. I would hang on him and fly between buildings, and ask him if he could make a

giant web forme to lie on. However, I should talk to Mary Jane Watson before I see him... I don’t want any drama.

3. Dark hazel curves

Heavenly delicate sounds

My beloved instrument.

Cold white shines

Never ending trails

My most passionate sports.

4. This year, Homecoming will fill your heart with laughter and warmth. Hee Sun is a foreign

student who has just arrived in America. As she goes to an American high school, she encounters numerous incidents that are caused by her oriental way of understanding situations and, mainly,

by her accent. However, she overcomes them by her "gifted" sense of humor and finally succeeds to survive. Then she finds herself calling America as her "second home."

5. Last summer, I saw NYU Law School while riding on NYC tour bus and thought it was

beautiful. So I visited the website after the trip and found out that there is a pre-professional specializations program, which includes law, and academic programs that include economics, music, and politics. Also, I was excited to see many professional organizations, such as

Economics Club and Pre-Law Society, because they will help me to understand my academic courses better and prepare me for my future career.

**Pipo Sara Claro Piwko**

**Tell us about someone who has made a difference in your life.**

I’ve lived with my grandparents all my life. My grandfather, whom I call “Pipo,” is like a father tome, and he is absolutely, no-doubt-about-it my favorite person in the world. He is intrigued by

everything academic and has a photographic memory. He can do math in his head without pencil or paper and he knows about every incident in world history. All my life, he’s encouraged me to be the smartest person I can be. When I was five, he taught me how to read the poetry of José

Martí. When I was 13, we memorized the capitals of all the countries in the world together. When I was 15 years old, Pipo made a comment in the car on our way to school that changed everything forme. As the radio news blared from the speakers, he absentmindedly remarked something along the lines of, “There are a million things happening in the world today, and everyone of these stations only knows about Castro and what he ate for dinner yesterday.”

To understand how intensely his words affected me, you have to understand our relationship. I

didn’t meet my biological father until I was seven years old, but, tome, Pipo is my real dad. Pipo was there for my piano recitals. He was there for every scraped knee and every paper cut with a bandage ready. When I moved to the United States with my mom, Pipo was the one who gave up his position as Head of the Textile Industry and very comfortable life, who convinced my

grandma to leave Cuba and follow us to a foreign country. His devotion tome is only challenged by my own admiration of him. When I was small, I lived on his every word, and now that I’m

older, he and I are incessantly discussing our diverse point of views on politics and current affairs.

I've been engulfed in the world of mass communications since before I could walk because my grandfather watches, reads, and listens to the news 24 hours a day- literally. He has the radio

news on all night as he half-sleeps. He's always complained about "yellow journalism" and how reporters love to scandalize their stories, meanwhile avoiding the crucially important things. His seemingly insignificant comment about Castro made me realize all the opportunities that

reporters might pass up by concerning themselves with canards. At that moment, I felt as though

it were up tome to become an honest reporter whom news-philes like Pipo can trust with

delivering accurate information. Ever since then, I’ve taken every reporting opportunity I’ve

come across, like becoming an intern at the Miami Herald and participating in a journalism

summer program at BU, and I am set on continuing that trend by going to school at a great

university. I want to be able to repay Pipo for everything he sacrificed to watch me grow up by becoming a renowned and respected journalist.

**Jan the Troubadour Anonymous**

**It responds to the quote:"Destiny is no matter of chance. It is a**

**matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved." -William Jennings BryanDo you agree with this quote? What experiences have you had that seem to reinforce the above (or render it completely false)?**

Three months into my exchange year in Germany, my friend called me, a little dejected. She wanted to go downtown, and it was clear why. There was still something incredibly rousing, mysterious, and exciting about the European city that had recently become our home. Even as the weather cooled and the throng of people thinned, something drew us to its center,

Schlossplatz (Castle Square), our thinking being that the myriad of as yet unseen faces and the

layering of voices might callus out of a slightly less exciting day-to-day existence and present us

with some small adventure. Kafka once wrote in his diary, “Life’s splendor forever lies in wait about each one of us in all its fullness, but veiled from view, deep down, invisible, far off… If you summon it by the right word, by its right name, it will come.” Going to the city was our

clumsy way of tugging at the veil, or maybe it was the hope that the right word would be whispered to us there.

On that night we were lucky. We met someone we believed had pulled off that veil. His name

was Jan; he was perched on a stone between two buildings, singing his heart out. It was

fascinating. Of course, street singers were nothing new—but usually their profession was a last resort, and it showed. Jan was different; he was talented, spirited, well-dressed, clean. His eye

wasn’t glued to his guitar-case, which was glittering with more than just a few two-Euro pieces. People gathered around him, wide-eyed, smiling. He was an under-cover pop star and the tickets were free. Soon he announced that he’d had enough and it was time for a coffee. The audience

had dwindled to my friend and I, and some oldman babbling about Hollywood. We landed in “Café du Théatre” and waited for exotic anecdotes. Jan told us about his life and what had

brought him to the city. He’d followed love there but lost it soon after. Why did he singin the streets at night? Because he was a poet born in the wrong century. We didn’t think to ask what he did during daylight,how he lived, and where. He was a real renegade. Soon the last trains were leaving. The three of us skipped through the wide, empty street, singing with an abandon that one doesn’t find in the suburbs, “Que sera, sera.”

At the train station, no promises were made, no numbers exchanged, no plans for next week

emerged. My friend and I headed back to our side of town, pleased and exhilarated with the tiny adventure just given us by the generous gods of youth. We soaked up enchanting personalities, added them to our database entitled “The Richness of Life” and clicked the “save” button. We didn’t expect to see Jan again.

My exchange year continued in monotone. Winter brought on bouts of a certain pervasive

drabness, periods in which I would measure the progress my heart had made on the continuum of time. I wanted change, but I didn’t knowhow to entice it. There was a foggy desire for a catalyst, an explosive event that would change me, that would mark the dazzling appearance of “real life.”

One day, passing Schlossplatz, I spotted a small crowd of people and, floating above it, was the vigorous voice of Jan. The gods of youth had dropped him in my lap again. With him were three punks, a businessman, and a Turkish man who, though unable to understand the lyrics of his

music, was dazzled, and rocked, eyes closed, from side to side in front of the singer.

It seemed as if the universe placed Jan in my path just at the moment I most needed him. Jan was less a person than a symbol forme, a sign from the stars that “the real” wasn’t far away. Singing in the streets with him was a strange sort of communion. I was getting closer. I was dreaming of a beautiful youth, filled with brilliant anomalies and bursts of light.

Nearing the end of the year, I returned to have a look at the city where I had spent so much time, the city that housed so many moods and revelations forme. I also wanted to bid Jan farewell, but he was nowhere to be found. I hardly understood it. Jan had to be there; it simply couldn’t be

otherwise. Didn’the realize that it was a fateful day, that this really was the last time we would

see each other? And then ithit me, poignantly, something I’d been learning the duration of my

exchange year—if I wanted something to happen, I would have to take responsibility for it. This was the border between childhood and adulthood, between a magical view of the world, filled

with faith and expectation, and an adult one. Of course Jan wasn’t there. I hadn’t called him: I

didn’t even have his number. Fate wasn’t watching over me, sending me everything I needed and the cues to search for the rest. The age of troubadours was over.

I suddenly remembered the other part of the story that Jan had told that first night at the Café du Théatre—that he was far from reaching his dreams; in the evening, he sang his heart out, but in the daytime, he was a mechanic, dirtying his musician’s hands with grime, oil and tears.

Recalling Kafka, I understood something: Life’s splendor was still attainable, but I could no

longer naively rely on circumstance. Indeed, I had to become “the summoner.” I had to begin to perceive my freedom as responsibility.

**Who IAm: My Interests and**

**Aspirations Daniel Dolgicer**

**Please write a brief essay about your foremost academic interests, and how you plan to utilize -- and develop -- these interests as an undergraduate student at NYU.**

Maturation is a long, tedious process, as thrilling as it is challenging. Each stage of a young life poses its own set of unique challenges: the toddler taking his first clumsy steps, slowly

progressing towards two-limbed balance; the first grader reciting the alphabet with gusto and pride; the high school student writing, editing, andre-editing his personal statement for college admission.

The pinnacle of coming of age, however, is perhaps the tail end: the collegiate years. This span of life, relatively short yet flush with personal growth, contains within it a slew of choices--forks in the road--that one must tackle. Decisions made by college students involve core issues that

have dramatic impact on the years moving forward. These decisions set the tone, and the course, of life as an increasingly independent young adult.

I am flush with enthusiasm, ambition, and academic knowledge, yet lack the finesse and wisdom that comes with life experience. Thus the choices that I must make as I approach my senior year of high school studies are, to state it lightly, most daunting. I must decide on the institution at

which I will spend the next four years, as well as the course of study that I will pursue there.

Onwards to my academic interests, which are varied. My foremost fascination is the culture of lands near and far, the ways of life in foreign countries. I devour information on the customs, costumes, work habits, holidays, and attitudes of Argentineans and Bolivians, Austrians and

Bulgarians. For instance, that Spaniards eat a light dinner much later than most of the Western world is to my fascination.

The cuisine of a nation -- the food itself and the habits around its consumption -- is, in my

estimation, the most telling and colorful slice of culture that a nation offers. To know what a

people eats is to know much about the people's history, religious beliefs, agricultural output, not to mention the meteorology and topography of the land in which they roam. I can spend hours-- well, maybe 90 minutes at a time--browsing Wikipedia for photographs and descriptions of

regional fare and national dishes; recently I delved into the traditional fare at Japanese baseball stadiums (where greasy hot dogs sit alongside bento boxes of eel, rice balls, and shrimp chips), while on another occasion I immersed myself in the contents of--and differences between--the

traditional 'Full Breakfasts' of Ireland, Scotland, and England. The contents of Spaniards' late

dinner--mostly tapas, and most popularly a dense potato omelette--is even more fascinating than the time at which these savory treats are consumed.

Traveling is thus apassion of mine, and experiencing the world is an aspiration to which I am dedicated.

Within this realm of social sciences, I am, too, fascinated with the law. The intellectual

challenges of lawyering -- and the oratorical artistry of litigation, in particular -- appeal tome. Lawyers have nearly unrivaled power to solve problems, and to quell fears. Lawyers offer

comfort and protection to their clients, yet elicit fear in their adversaries. Lawyers, too, can make a handsome living.

I have always envisioned myself pursuing a career in law -- and incorporating within this career my passion for all that is international. I envision that my studies as an undergraduate student at New York University will afford me the opportunity to explore who it is I am, and who it is that I want to be; I fully intend to ask the tough questions, take the most challenging of classes, and

seek advice from the most mentoring of faculty -- so as to probe how to best weld these interests, and hone in one my skills.

**The Power of Exposure Anonymous**

**Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.**

It’s 107 degrees and the sun’shot rays are beating down on a family trekking through the busy

streets of Dhaka. People, rickshaws, and goats alike are all rushing off to reach theirrespective

destinations. As the parents of the family encourage their two daughters through the maze of

bodies, the younger of the two whines for an ice cold mango lassee to alleviate the unbearable

heat. They finally reach the car, breathing a sigh of relief as they enter the refreshingly cool

vehicle, and as they begin to talk about their plans for the day, a traffic jam forms ahead of them. But of course, being in Bangladesh on vacation, this is no ordinary traffic jam; it starts because a rickshaw swerves into a jeep in order to avoid hitting a family of chickens crossing the road.

With the entire street covered in debris from the crash, people impatiently honk from their cars to get an ambulance there faster. Half an hour passes by and it still has not arrived, and the little girl is still craving amango lassee. Begrudgingly, her father agrees to go buy her one. They leave the car and the mother is left with her older daughter. As they sit in the car, the girl begins to drift off to sleep…when she is suddenly startled by a rapping knock on her window. Her head snaps

around, and her jaw drops at the sight outside of the car.

Seeing that I was only ten years old, it is understandable that I screamed when I saw what stood outside my window that day in Bangladesh. Immediately, just from looking at them, I knew that the two men standing there begging for spare change were unlike every other person I had ever seen doing the same thing. For starters, one was perched on the others shoulders; strange, but at second glance, I realized that it was because he had no legs. The other man? He had no arms.

Both were wearing ragged clothing and were truly all skin and bones, with their shoulder bones sharply jutting out of their bodies.

I leaped into my mother’s arms and instantly felt guilty, for the looks of utter misery on the

men’s faces drooped even lower. Never had I ever felt a stronger need to give a person some sort of compensation, because it was in plain sight that these people truly needed it. Begging my

mother for permission to give them some spare change, she allowed me to do so. I opened my tiny clasp purse my grandmother had made me and looked into my modest collection of

Bangladeshi coins I had collected thus far on our vacation. At that point in my life, I had been collecting foreign coins for many years, and coveted every single one that went into my

collection. I thought hard about what was more important; expanding my already extensive

assortment of coins, or giving thesemen a few dollars to buy themselves some source of strongly needed nourishment.

When wereturned back home to America later that summer and I told my best friend all about

my vacation, she was astounded that I had decided to give my coins to two complete strangers.

My other friends agreed, that they would have just kept it for themselves, and told the men to ask

someone else. They all asked why I had made such a decision, and at the time, I told them that I simply felt it was the right thing to do. However, it was the plain fact that I had physically

encountered poverty, right in front of my face, that had driven me to make that choice.

In my life, I constantly hear of impoverished people from third world countries who go hungry for days, live in scant housing, and are more prone to disease than any average person living in America. I’ve seen programs on television that show such people who are much less fortunate than me, and naturally, it saddens me to know that they will never have the opportunities that I am privileged to have in my own life. However, despite the fact that I know that these kinds of situations exist in the world, it never really hit me until that day that was I on vacation with my family in Bangladesh, at the young age often. I knew, when we first arrived in the Dhaka

airport, that this would not be like any other vacation we had been on.

My family has traveled quite a bit in the past, and Bangladesh was unlike any of the other

countries we've been to, because the extremes were plainly manifested right in front ofour eyes. We visited the villages, where sheep and cows roamed the streets, and the thick air smelled of

ghee and straw bales. And we spent time in the city, in which the crowded, pebbly streets were

occupied by people walking, bustling along in rickshaws, and rumbling by in cars. In both of

these parts of the country, the poor were everywhere. It was impossible to not encounter a beggar on the side of the street every five minutes, and it was equally impossible to not be shocked at

the extreme poverty-stricken conditions that you saw them living in. Children with enormous

tumors protruding from their bodies played on the streets, people missing limbs – like the two

men – made their way around with no assistance from passersby, and elderly citizens took their time limping through the maze of bodies in the packed, sweltering city. I had always known that poverty existed, and I knew that it was awful; but to see it right in front of my very eyes? That

really hit home. And it made me realize just how terrible some people have it, making me feel guilty for all of the blessings that I have in my own life. Constant running water, food, shelter,

clothes. All of these things that I had taken for granted my entire life, suddenly became privileges that other people would give anything to have in the smallest amounts.

That day, I rolled down my window slowly and reached my tiny, plump hand out to the man

perched on the other’s shoulders. He spread out his bony, wrinkled fingers with his palm out, and in it I placed one, two, three shiny dollars coins. I looked up to him and when our eyes finally

met, his thin lips curled into a grin I would never have imagined would have fit on his thin,

hollowed out face. Giving both men a genuine smile in return, it was ironic that the emptiness in my little purse was the complete opposite of the gratifying feeling that was growing inside of me, expanding until I couldn’t stop smiling.

Since that experience, I have been a strong believer of the idea that being physically exposed to a concept is far more effective than simply being told of it, or watching it on the other side of a

television screen. I’ve incorporated this philosophy into all aspects of my life; when I work in the summers at a day camp on a local farm, I constantly use animal and plant encounters as learning opportunities for the children, instead of simply having discussions about them or reading a

book. I now stop and appreciate moments that make me love the life I’ve been given, instead of disregarding them as nothing special. I’ve learned to appreciate life as it comes, because I now

realize that once-in-a-lifetime experiences are given to us a lot more often than we think they do.

**For the Love of the Script Jonathan Lee**

**Hopkins**

**Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, or risk you have**

**taken or an ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.**

Three A.M. I still smell like the chicken-soaked grease of a shift spent working at Chick-Fil-A, but I’vehit aplot snag. My character’s stuck in Boston, I’m stuck on page 78, and I need to

figure out how to get us both out before I’ll let myself shower and goto bed. If I had been thinking rationally, I might have wondered what I was doing. All I knew at that moment,

however, was that I was consumed with a then-70-something-page screenplay that had stretched my imagination and creative ingenuity to the limits for the past few weeks.

Over the past several years, I had often casually mentioned to my family and friends that I might want to write movies someday. Their responses were similar and disempowering: I should spend my summers working at a “real” job and focus my sparetime on something more ordinary. I

probably wouldn’t be able to get past page five anyway, they said.

Yet plots kept creeping up on me. Ideas, characters, and images consumed my dormant mind, teasing my imagination as I bagged drive-thru orders of breaded chicken. As these ideas slowly evolved into stories, I realized that I didn’t just want to write -- I had to. Thus, a few days into the summer, I began writing. From the time my evening shift ended into the early hours of the next morning, I wrote in secret, pensively at first but always passionately. I lived to find

intricacies in relationships that didn’t yet exist, to wrap my mind around a new character and find the soul in a scene. My imaginary settings existed independently and unknown to the rest of the world, but they were still vibrant, active, real. Late in July, as I began to wrap up my script’s

loose ends with only one scene to go, I realized a fantastic truth: I had not only written a movie, but I had also discovered a passion.

The surprise on the faces of my friends and family when the freshly printed and bound script hit the table in front of them brought a smile to mine. The fact that I had written a script -- that I had actually completed a feat that most merely aspire to -- changed their attitudes toward my passion for writing. Immediately, their doubt shifted into support, and the next few weeks were a tizzy of queries, rejections, and editing suggestions: a harsh baptism into the world of cinema. I’m still

searching for that first lucky break; my script may never find a home, or it may hit screens

sooner than anyone would have ever guessed. To me, however, it doesn’t matter. I didn’twrite a movie to prove anything, to get rich, or to satisfy my friends and family. I wrote it for the plot

and for the characters. I wrote it for the joy I felt in each crafted scene. I wrote, and will continue to write, for the love of the script.

**Fighting Ignorance Anonymous**

**Are there any significant experiences you have had, or**

**accomplishments you have realized, that have helped to define you as a person?**

A wave of feelings crashed through my mind as my eyes confronted the horror. Living, breathing animals were reduced to commodities before my eyes as workers shoved turkeys into crates and slammed piglets headfirst onto concrete floors. I could not look away. I will never forget the

sickening feeling I experienced the day I first discovered a PETA factory farming video.

It’s remarkable how a short series of clicks on the Internet led me to that previously unknown

place. The information was always readily available, but until then, I had never cared to look for it. How had I let that happen? Why had I mindlessly shoveled carcass after carcass into my body without question? The video brought me intense discomfort, but that was its mission: to inspire. At once, I became vegan. It was not easy to do, for I received criticism and humiliation from

friends and family members, but the video compelled meto live beyond what I had previously

accepted as normal. In addition, I developed a quality of inquisitiveness that motivated me to

delve further into everything I learned and experienced. I could not stand the thought of choosing to live in a state of ignorance, and I could not stand the thought of my peers residing in that same ignorance from which I had just been freed. Thus, I made an attempt to share what I had

uncovered by recruiting friends to watch the video. Some who viewed the clips had similar

reactions to mine. Others were unmoved. What struck me most was the third group of people

who actually refused to watch. That shocked me. Those people have implicitly acknowledged

“Ignorance is bliss” as an acceptable mantra. Ignorance, however, is representative only of

irresponsibility. I was appalled as to why anyone would choose to be so inert. Passivity gets

civilization nowhere; pure acceptance of ideas stops us in our tracks and confines us in the same way that dogma halted the advances of the Enlightenment. There is no reason for ignorance to

exist in today’s society when torrents of information can be transmitted in the blink of an eye.

Technology in media has reached an outstanding level, and we need to take advantage of our

situation. With such powerful contemporary resources, the world should fight ignorance through immersion in the humanities, the sciences, and the arts. History teaches that progress is possible, but it is only possible with the aspiration to discover.

I was lucky to undergo such a significant paradigm shift through my experience with the PETA video. After the horrors that I witnessed had penetrated mynaïve and trusting innocence, I

evolved. I now live with a sense of skepticism that allows me to gain all that I can from each situation I encounter. I am pleased with what I gained from that incident, for it has given me immense insight into the value of awareness and innovation.

**Regrets Evan Chethik**

**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.**

It was the McCarthy era. Attorney General Tom Clark had just announced a list of fifty-six

“subversive” organizations that were supposedly part of the communist crusade. My grandfather, vicepresident of the History Society at Tilden Senior High in Brooklyn, thought it would be a

good idea to invite a few of these alleged communists to speak before the Society. The principal heard of his free speech series and shut it down. Grandpa admits now he was intending to be

provocative. Nevertheless, he wrote a letter to the Daily Compass denouncing the censorship by his school. The next day, Grandpa and his father were summoned to the principal’s office.

My grandfather defended his position and his right to state it publicly. That’s when the principal told him that he knew the president of Brooklyn College, the only affordable option inner-city

kids had at the time. The principal assured my grandfather that there was little chance he would get into the college unless a second letter was written to the Daily Compass recanting his charges of censorship at Tilden High.

My grandfather was torn. With a thick Yiddish accent, his father had always emphasized

education. He’d barely let my grandfather do manual labor for fear he would like it and not goto college. His father said, “Enough! Do what the principal says!” But my grandfather knew that

caving to the pressure would cost him. There was a cogent duty my grandfather assumed as VP of the History Society and as a young man to be courageous.

Grandpa did end up going to Brooklyn College where he became a front-line Freudian,

extensively studying psychodynamic techniques. He met and married my grandmother there. Later, he became a professor, wrote a well-regarded textbook, and taught thousands of

University of Michigan students. All of this was possible because he did write that second letter retracting his charge of censorship. In spite of all of these successes that college made possible, he still regrets writing that letter. He says it is his biggest regret.

That my grandfather even has regrets shocked me at first. He is so full of wisdom and grace in the way he speaks and moves about this world; it’shard to see him as a boy my age with flaws and teenage angst. It makes me realize that I, too, will have regrets.

As I enter adulthood, I want to keep this story of Grandpa in the forefront of my mind so I

remember to listen to myself. I want to learn to trust my gut when making big decisions. I may not make the most courageous decision everytime, but I will be able to live with what happens, regrets and all.

**The Gift of Translation Anonymous**

**Describe a historical figure or a creative work (as in art, music, science, etc.) that has had an influence on you, and explain that influence.**

One of the most important books in the world is The Records of the Grand Historian. Written by Sima Qian in the first century B.C., it elucidates more than two thousand years’ worth of Chinese history. The story behind Qian’s masterpiece is fascinating. After offending a harsh emperor,

Qian was forced to make a terrible choice between castration, and living as a court eunuch, or

taking his own life. Conformity deemed it more suitable for him to take his own life, and in that way retain his honor. However, during the time of his punishment, his book was still unfinished, and so he chose to embrace dishonor in order to see its completion. In a letter he explained his

reasoning: “If [my book] maybe handed down to men who will appreciate it, … then though I should suffer a thousand mutilations, what regret should I have?”

His quote has stayed with me for years. Qian’s dedication to spreading knowledge moves mein a wholly emotional way. However, the quote is also notable because it doesn’t belong to Qian. Not quite. The quote was written by a translator named Burton Watson.

Here is the lovely gray area of language. The quote is Qian’s message in Watson’swords, a

linguistic duality that winds the emotional with the intellectual seamlessly. Translation, in this

way, is enormously human. It requires respect. In a world full of noise, where many talk but

rarely listen, translators pour their mental energies into the words of another. Translation is also selflessness, the gift that gives twice: The writer receives a broader readership, and readers live in a world made more vivid by the extra piece of media that is now available to them. It could be said that the true genius of translation is that it transcends mortality. While I’m a supporter of

multilingualism, it’s not feasible for everyone to learn every language. For example, with my interest in Latin, French, and Japanese, I may not have time to learn Qian’s tongue. Due to

Watson’s incredible contribution, I don’t have to.

Spreading information is one of the noblest aspirations, whether one sacrifices his honor for it, as Qian did, or earns a degree for it, as Watson did. I want to write words and spread information

more than anything. I want to work hard to make something valuable, and give the world more of the world. I’m already lucky enough to be a native speaker of English, the modern lingua

franca, and I would be proud to translate worthwhile words in a language that is comprehensible to a large percentage of the world’spopulation.

I know of only one portrait of Qian. In ithe has bold brows, long ears, and a wise face. I imagine how that face might light up – in delight or knowing satisfaction – if he knew that, even now, his work is being handed down to those who appreciate it.

**My Confusing Cultural**

**Identity Hannah Khan**

**Explain a struggle you have faced in your life that helped define who you are**

“Aapmeri choti shezadi ho, Hannah,” my Pakistani grandfather told me before I moved to the U.S. from Saudi Arabia. I was later able to translate his loving Urdu words into English: “You

are my little princess, Hannah.” I am a Pakistani-Burmese-American, and I have been culturally confused my entire life.

Walking to school every morning in a pair of blue jeans, I am American. I say the Pledge of

Allegiance, speak English, and seek company and am influenced by my American peers. Yet, the moment I step foot into my house, I am greeted with “Asalamualiakum,” and I am Pakistani

again. The spicy, nose-opening scent of biryani and the beautiful native tongue of my mother are what make my house my home. My closet has a separate section for shalwar kameezai, and my

television has a multitude of Urdu channels. At my family reunions, I am reminded once again of the hardships my brave Burmese grandmother and her family encountered as they migrated from Burma to Pakistan. I am Pakistani, Burmese, and American. This lineage shapes who I am today.

My cultural identity used to be away forme to please others by obediently following customs. I would dress in a shalwar kameez to please my parents and speak a few words in Urdu to please my grandfather. As a Pakistani immigrant to the U.S., my mother could not understand my

separate American identity. Overtime, I became adept at reconciling my starkly different

cultures. As I grow older, I feel less and less obligated to follow a cultural norm, but instead feel the need to integrate my culture and identity into one. No longer do I feel trapped within these

cultural confines. Instead, I feel motivated to use it as away of defining who I represent. I

represent those first generation young adults who come from different backgrounds, struggling with the choice between assimilating into American culture or rejecting it.

I also represent the girls in Pakistan like Malala Yousufzai, who struggle daily to receive an

education, which is denied to them because of their gender. As an American Pakistani living in the United States, I have access to resources that my counterparts in Pakistan have to fight

rigorously for to enjoy. I strive to show those Pakistani girls and all onlookers that a Pakistani girl can and should be educated. I represent the product of the American dream, coming from parents who never dreamed of having the same opportunities I had when they were children. In this country, Pakistani girls can be journalists or lawyears, and I am honored to represent both cultures as I pursue my American dream.

My culture does not define me; I define my culture. No longer am I solely one cultural identity at a time. I am a journalist, a poet, a daughter, and a friend. I am all at once a Pakistani-Burmese-

American, and I am proud.

**Why I Want a College**

**Education Hannah Khan**

**Why do you want to go to college?**

Looking down at the college preparation pamphlet laying on my dresser never seemed so

dramatic, but with every word I read, and every page I turned, I could practically feel my future rushing towards me. As I approach the end of my high school I experience, I look back and

remember two questions I was constantly asked from the beginning of freshman year, to just last night. “Where are you going to college, and what do you want to study?" Even more superfluous

than the questions themselves are the answers, telling people what I want to major in and where I want to study has become redundant, tiresome, and even monotonous.

As passionate as I am about what I want to study and the schools that I am considering, the more I think about it, the more I feel there is one crucial question that seems to be omitted from the

conversation each and everytime. “Why are you going to college?” Am I going because both of my parents went, or because my friends are going? Or am I going simply to follow the American standard of goto high school, then college, then get a job? With increasing college tuition, a

financial recession, and jobs only few and far between, it is no shock that more and more people areturning their heads to alternatives to a four- year university. With that being said, now more than ever, is it more important to answer the question, “Why do I want to go to college?”

I want to go because I am an adventurer, I am a dreamer and I am an innovator. I am the future of this country, and instead of following, I want to lead. I want to go to explore the world with a better understanding of what I am going to explore. I want to know the feeling of waking up

everyday with something to look forward to. I want to have all of the possibilities of the world at my fingertips, and essentially, that is what I believe college is.

Listening to my friends tell me that they are going to go to college to get a job, or because their parents told them to, makes me wonder whether college education is just about getting a job. To me the answer is overwhelmingly obvious; no. Post secondary education is an experience that

promises much more than just a simple paycheck. Not only does a college education teach skills pertinent to obtaining a job in a certain career field, it also teaches discipline, independence, and critical thinking while opening up the world to so several opportunities that were not previously available. Colleges prepare their students for the real world, which is worth so much more than a high school diploma.

I look forward to the challenges that college will bring. Being an AP student, I’m aware of the rigors and rewards of pushing myself to learn more. I’m not going to college to waste my time, nor am I going to waste the time of the university that gives me the chance to be their student. I strive for the opportunity to pursue my dreams on the road less traveled, not only to get an

education or get a job, but to assure myself of my passion and what I want to spend the rest of my life doing. I definitely believe college is a time to explore and open myself to the numerous opportunities the world has to offer.

As one of the 3.2 million students graduating high school in 2013, I have my whole life ahead of me. While numerous students will be going to college due to parental persuasion as well as

pressure from their peers and school, I can confidently entrust in the fact that my decision was my own. I look forward to the challenges and experiences in my future and I am grateful to the university which gives me the opportunity to pursue my dreams, whatever they maybe.

**Against the Odds Anonymous**

**Topic of your choice.**

Unlike most children, I loved the doctor. As I bubbled after hearing the news of a doctor's

appointment, I'd begin preparing a list of questions. At the clinic, the nurses laughed at me, but I was determined to get to the bottom of my quest of how to become a doctor. By accompanying

me through obstacles in life, my quest for scientific education has helped me persevere to achieve my goals.

As a child in Pakistan, I lived in an environment that did not agree with my passion. As a young girl, my job was to help out at home while the boys ran the errands outside. I made the

observation that boys and girls were treated differently. More significantly, girls were not

expected to excel academically. To compound this, I realized that the financial conditions of our fathers determined our futures—even if we were all boys. My hypothesis was seemingly true

when I realized that none of my female cousins attended college. I concluded differently for

myself. I could not adjust to this and decided that I would be a fabulous and intelligent doctor that would one day be famous worldwide. I was neither financially gifted nor a boy, but I could be just as successful if I studied diligently. My passion for science and mathematics became of second nature tome. I read every book I could get my hands on, and my determination grew

stronger.

Moving to the USA made my dream much more realistic. However, when we first moved, we

had no home and no jobs. We did not speak English. We spent our first few months in the

basements of relatives. I stayed silent during my first days of school because I did not know

English. Moreover,my parents did not allow me to try speaking English at home in order to

preserve our native language. Therefore, some days I came into school completely embarrassed

of having done the homework incorrectly. I often cried when the teacher yelled at me, but I never complained that my parents could not help me. I never left anything incomplete, always

attempting everything with my best effort. Determined to excel, I began practicing my English in solitude with books and by watching television. I requested that my cousins to speak tome in

English rather than Urdu in order to improve my understanding. After multiple tries, I eventually mastered assignments. I developed as a scholar and became a perseverant person.

I knew that I had to learn English to study medicine, and my dedication to overcoming

difficulties allowed me to quickly adjust to the American education system. Adversity was not a dead end, but a learning experience that made me stronger. Therefore, my love of science

encouraged me to take initiative for myself. I highly value education because I have a simple logic: increase in education increases the potential to help myself and others. My passion for science and education has always driven me to persevere.

**Becoming a Model Anonymous**

**A Learning experience that changed me.**

It wasn’t my first audition, yet as I looked into the intimidating mirror, I needed to reassure

myself: "You are Beyonce." I gasped for oxygen as I entered the dimly lit room, attempting to calm the fire in my stomach, but listening to other contestants croak one pop song after another didn’thelp my nervousness.

Finally the judge called, "Next.” Composing myself, I began my rendition of Beyonce's “Listen.” As I belted out the complicated riff at the climax, I knew I hit every note just as I’d practiced. As I finished, the corners of the judge’s mouth rose and he handed me a paper. "Good rendition of

the song. Welcome to Dream Entertainment."

I left, screaming with joy, mistakenly thinking I had achieved my dream of becoming a model and singer. But soon I came to realize that I had merely begun a thorny and exhausting climb towards an even higher ambition. In order for the company to invest in me, I would need to

market myself and prove that I could outshine my competitors.

To push my limits, I attended additional training sessions beyond what was required. I took

posture classes to walk in seven-inch heels, vocal lessons to enhance my tone, dance classes to improve my rhythm, and language classes to appeal to an international clientele. Through the

assiduous training, I developed a new level of commitment, perseverance, and passion, learning to present myself as a well-rounded professional.

Recently, I was one often models who competed for a swimwear commercial that was essential for my career. We were photographed jumping off a 10-foot waterfall into a freezing pool of

water. As the other models layered on makeup to enhance their beauty during the underwater

shots, I learned from prior mistakes and concentrated on modeling the product. I wore minimal makeup to enhance the natural beauty around me and the versatility of the product. The director demanded multiple angles and expressed dissatisfaction with many of the pictures. As the other models grew frustrated, I remained optimistic during every retake until the director was pleased. Ultimately, the director chose me for my ability to make the product shine.

Since then, I’ve successfully applied the lessons from that professional modeling experience to

other aspects of my life: professional networking, academic pursuits, and career. During my

business internship, whenever the manager asked me to work extra hours or work outside of my responsibilities, I embraced it as a valuable professional experience. While dealing with unhappy customers, I adapted to deal with dissatisfaction. Ultimately, my manager gave me a permanent sales position and a detailed letter of recommendation.

Starting my modeling career at a young age, I had serious doubts as to whether I would last. But

following my dreams, I’ve gained greater insights into business, learning that hard work and determination leads to satisfactory results. As a student, I intend to put the same positive

dedication into my academic endeavors.

**Words Speak Louder Than**

**Actions Kathryn Gundersen**

**Topic of your choice, but it was specifically about an experience central to my identity.**

Just like many others, I've spent my life hearing the hackneyed phrase “actions speak louder than words.” Based on personal experience, however, I've decided that I disagree. I believe that words

are magic. Not magic in the conventional sense; a much subtler form of magic, but no less

potent. If used properly, words can be endlessly powerful, beautiful, and captivating, and have the ability to initiate so much more than actions ever could. I judge this by the way the power of words has shaped my own life, branding me and fostering a love of self-expression through

writing that will never be extinguished.

My passion for words ignited at a young age, beginning with a desire to read anything and

everything I could get my hands on. I devoured books, but soon came to realize that nothing was as satisfying as using and manipulating words in my own way. I still remember the very first

story I wrote in my first grade journal, with a witch and an anthropomorphic pumpkin playing the protagonists. Today my writing defines an even more integral part of who I am.

Writing has taken me on numerous journeys, each of which has lent me countless pearls of

wisdom and paved the way for endless self-discovery. My participation in National Novel

Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) epitomizes these writing voyages, particularly my first attempt at the mere age of thirteen, with absolutely no idea what would come of such an endeavor. But my determination shone, with the pride of being able to accomplish something so substantial serving as my greatest motivation. To call this experience difficult is an understatement, but I found

myself attached to the world I wove, the characters I created, and the idea of having a full length manuscript to call my own, so I kept on. After thirty lengthy days of writing, I reaped the reward I'd been looking for, putting the finishing touches on my very first real novel. From this

experience I learned the benefits of dedication and perseverance, worked to apply them in other aspects of my life, and haven't looked back since.

Four years and three NaNoWriMo novels later, writing continues to characterize my life. I write to express myself, I write to prove a point. I write to make my mark on the world. But most

importantly, I write to tell a story, whether my own or that of a fictional character who has come to inhabit my mind. Whatever the reason, I firmly believe there is no more rewarding way to

spend my time.

Forme, writing is sublime. My words describe me in away that actions nor anything else ever will, playing a principal role in my own story. Guided by their brilliance I'll continue to strive to work harder and reach farther, because I seek to change the world with words. Without full

knowledge of their magic, this would be impossible.

**My Grandmother's Influence Megan**

**Zhu**

**Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence. (500 Words Maximum)**

Zhu Qin, a peasant girl who had been isolated from civilization her entire life, knew nothing of the world that existed beyond the mountains. Not a single person in her family had had any prior education whatsoever; nobody was able to even write his or her own name. The youngest of nine

children, Zhu Qin was determined to alter this. She started her formal education at age ten, and, with the odds very much against her, worked through high school and college, eventually

becoming a reputable doctor.

I’ve heard my grandmother’s story once a year, every year since I immigrated to the States at age four. But I never get tired of it—her determination, hard work, and astounding accomplishments leave me in awe each time. Her daughter, my mother, became extraordinary as well: she attended Stanford on a full scholarship and succeeded in her subsequent entrepreneurial pursuits.

My grandmother’s whole-hearted persistence, ambition, patience, and, most of all, grace, are traits that I intend to mimic in my own life. She had only a slim chance of succeeding in her endeavors—but was never discouraged. Instead, she pushed herself even harder, focused on disproving the odds.

This brief yet meaningful family history has humbled me, making me realize that I am only where I am today because of the efforts invested by those before me. My grandmother’s

determination, sacrifice, and unrelenting drive to achieve her goals regardless of all obstacles are traits I have come to hold in highest regard. She’s taught me a lesson that will be crucial to my

future: if I yearn for success, I must work for it.

Over the past thirteen years, I’ve increasingly familiarized myself with this concept. From my cartoon drawings to my paintings hung in city hall, from my first debate tournament to my 2nd- place finish at the state championship, I’ve tested this truth for myself.

My grandmother has demonstrated that with effort and dedication, I can accomplish anything and everything I set my mind to. With my life just starting and so much ahead of me, there are guaranteed to be sleepless nights, stressful days, and moments when I’m ready to quit. But

seeing how my grandmother ignored all hurdles and continued, I, too, will press forward. The family history I’ve heard many times has done well forme: it has inspired me, driven me, and most of all, made me eager to take on the challenges of leading an exceptional life.

Not too long ago, I was told by a distant relative that the women in our family tend to run strong.

I smiled.

Why?

I’m about to be living proof.

**"We've Done It." Wong Jia Yi Geraldine**

**Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.**

I wish I could do it all but I’mno superwoman; I’m just an ordinary girl with 24 hours a day. Deciding to write and direct for DramaFest, an intra-school Drama competition, meant

sacrificing other clashing commitments including leading in Orientation and dancing for a

national competition. Having acted in DramaFest, I was fully aware of the huge commitment it demands; I knew that shouldering too many commitments would be unfair to my teammates and equivalent to committing academic suicide. Above all, I wanted to give as much of my time,

mind, body and soul to DramaFest as possible. Although rejecting those opportunities was painful, I do not regret anything I did for DramaFest.

In fact, I wish I could relive DramaFest’11 from conception to reception. My inspiration for our play was born in my bathtub weeks after DramaFest‘10. “Pop”, the sound of a bubble bursting

by myear, the dramatization of an idea entering my head: twins. I find twins absolutely adorable and anticipated exploiting some of the many probable comic complications. As I observed the

bubbles floating gleefully about me then suddenly disappearing, I felt myself sinking. I missed

the feeling of going home late, utterly exhausted after an intense rehearsal. I missed the fun I had

with the people I’d come to love and I couldn’t imagine doing DramaFest’11 without my graduating seniors.

Then, I experienced a burning desire to ensure that the ideologies that my team held on to were

passed on: the joy of creating Drama because of the love for it and the satisfaction of putting up a

moving and thought-provoking play. I stared at the water for sometime before I told my reflection, “I’ll take up the challenge of writing and directing for DramaFest’11.”

I’ve written plays for pleasure and for playwriting competitions but never for performance. With the benefit of feedback from many and using my actors’ improvisations, I repeatedly revised my script to make it more visually compelling and to play to the strengths of my cast. I was, of

course, not a sponge that absorbed all comments. I stood by my vision of having an ensemble

despite my teacher’s advice against it; where he saw problems, I saw possibilities. Receiving the ‘Best Ensemble’ award affirmed my belief that with courage comes hope, and with hope comes beauty.

I also regularly sought feedback on my direction to improve myself and give my team a most

memorable and enriching experience. It was my first time directing a play on my own and I am grateful to them for helping me develop as an artist and a leader.

My favourite part of my DramaFest journey was not standing on stage receiving the ‘Best

Director’ award, but sitting and watching the actual performance. Tearswelled up as I watched our play unfold on stage, relished the laughter that erupted around me and savoured the intense silence from the captivated audience. Wiping away a tear, I thought to myself, “We’ve done it.”

**Dodging Tiger Spray Anonymous**

**Write about an experience where you learned something.**

The Siberian tiger roared and twisted his massive body as he pressed his paws against the chain- link fence. Miniscule dirt particles trickled from his raised paws while saliva strings dripped

from his gaping mouth. I stood on the other side of the fifteen foot fence, entranced; unable to stop staring into the animal’s enormous emerald eyes.

A heavyweight fell onto my left shoulder. I let out a yelp and spun around to meet whatever dangerous creature had been let loose from its pen.

“A little jittery this morning, Caitlyn?” Hearing the playful voice of my new employer, Katja, I lowered my guard and squinted against the blinding desert sunlight. She turned to look at the

prowling tiger.

“Don’t tell me you’re afraid of Khan? He’s a jokester. Khan likes to play with the newcomers.

He just wants his breakfast.” Katjaledme to the nearby “kitchen” and held open the heavy metal door. I walked across the threshold and promptly fell down. I rose up on my hands and knees to find Katja laughing at me and holding a very disgruntled looking turtle.

Working as an assistant animal keeper out in the Red Rock Desert, I routinely found myself

interacting with menacing “beasts”. Every Saturday I would drive 40 miles to donate my time and possibly my limbs. The impelling force was my unique animal charges. Animal Ark isn’t your average petting zoo. It’s a wildlife sanctuary for animals that cannot be released back into the wild; meaning arefuge for untamed and outwardly ferocious creatures.

Under Katja’s watchful eye, I cared for cheetahs, raccoons, and a peregrine falcon. I became

befriended with Yogi the black bear and Sundari the snow leopard. I chased lynx and frolicked with my favorite silver fox, Effie; who liked to leap upon by back and lick myears. The only

tame animal I worked with was Mr. Peabody, the desert tortoise who tripped me on my first day. He has since forgiven me for scuffing his shell.

Saturdays soon became the most enjoyable day of my week. Puttering up the long driveway in my Suzuki, inhaling the rich aroma of desert flowers, pulling into my reserved parking space

adjacent the dumpster; it all gave me the same feeling. I mattered. These animals needed me to survive and were happy to be dependent. This gave me an overwhelming sense of responsibility and motivated me to never miss a Saturday, no matter how early eight o’clock seemed. I know that my time there was not wasted. I will never forget the feeling of euphoria one gets from

observing a living thing grow from your love and care. The animals taught me how to be truly responsible for someone other than myself and how to think on my feet in the face of danger. I learned more at Animal Ark than how to dodge tiger spray.

**The Runaway Hyunsun Park**

**Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that**

**marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.**

Last year, I was a runaway for a grand total of 27 hours.

I stormed out of my house in complete confusion. I couldn't understand why, after all the awards I'd managed to win, after I'd been set as the model of success by our relations, my own mother

preferred my sister. Why wasn't I doted over? Why did my mother seem just a little sad every time I came home with more good news? Why? I simply couldn't understand it.

That day had started out normally enough. It was the ending that had been abnormal.

"Get out!" my mother had screamed. "Get out and never comeback!"

I didn't even argue. It was a testament to my naivety, my rashness, and above all, my immaturity that I took her words at face value and actually left when she'd told me to. I hadn't even turned

back, so convinced was I that I was the victim.

It was dusk when I finally calmed from my righteous indignation and called my friend to come pick me up. I stayed athis equally ratty apartment until I heard sirens in the driveway around midnight the following day.

My mother had called the police on me.

After that, I had literally no choice but to return home. I was greeted with shouts about what an idiot I was as soon as I stepped through the door.

My temper started to rise at the clear provocation, but before I could really get in gear I caught

sight of my mother. My mother, who was usually incredibly well groomed and collected, had

clear bags under her eyes. She was pale. Her clothes were mismatched and she was nursing a cup of coffee at one in the morning. It was clear she'd been worried about me, even after I'd "acted

like a complete selfish ass".

I shut my mouth immediately. Despite the constant attentions she showered over her age, the

stress of raising an arrogant, know-it-all kid was shining through. A kid who constantly needed to be praised by others. A kid who never got awards because she deserved them, but more

because she sought them. A shallow girl who thought she was better than her sister because she had more medals - more like lumps of metal - and never considered to factor in how much more self-confident and fulfilled her sister was.

I suddenly felt very small.

"I'm sorry," I told her. It came out awkward and stilted and demeaning, but I said it, and when I looked up, she was downright smiling. Smiling.

My chest filled with an emotion that was hard to place, but it was filled nevertheless. For the first time in a long while, my mother and I stood in mutual respect and understanding, and I was truly happy.

I had admitted I was wrong, I'd bowed my head, and the world had not fallen to pieces. On the contrary, I felt stronger and more sure than ever. It was a strangely reassuring thing to be, not being empty.

I was able to mature and grow and see past what I wanted to recognize what my mother and I

both needed. More than shaking the Congressman's hand, more than winning the award I'd been hoping for, it was my stuttered, horribly stilted apology that brought out the best in who I was. It had only taken me 16 years to realize that the external - the awards, the titles, the prestige -

doesn't determine a person. It's what's inside that allows for understanding and other important things, like love. It's the inside that makes you truly great.

The rest come second.

**Anthropology as Intended**

**Major Anonymous**

**What is your intended major and why?**

When I stepped into the “Introduction to Anthropology” class as a 16-year old freshman, the youngest college student in the class, I found the perfect fusion of both natural and social

science. Intermingled in the study of humanity were the concepts of human body and the human mind. Both body and soul were vital, equal parts in defining a human. As I learned about the

evolution of the human species and the uniqueness of the human mind I found a new approach to life. My new approach to life has led me to be tolerant, perceptive, and plan my future. Through tolerance I have become more understanding and interested to learn about cultural differences.

By being perceptive I see things differently; I have noticed the aging process, and maturation as an inevitable step of life sprouting from my knowledge in evolution. I plan in the future not only to be a medical doctor, but to pursue ethnographic fieldwork. I would like to explore new

cultures, live among various communities, learn about human social phenomena, and eventually publish my research.

My education is more than the classes I plan to take. It is my passion to focus on the study of

anthropology. This study of humanity is an enlightening field, which stimulates my thoughts. I took many classes such as psychology, sociology, biology, and chemistry. In these classes I

learned challenging new information that explained the human species. I first enrolled in college as a savvy biology major because it seemed most practical in that it fulfilled my goal to attend

medical school and become a doctor. I realized anthropology is the necessary background I need to learn what I can about the human species and become a successful doctor. I am undoubtedly

in interested in biology, but I also have repressed feelings for using thought and reason in my

studies. Incorporated in anthropology was what I couldn’t find in another class: I found the study of science, culture, history, sociology, and humanity. Anthropology allowed me to use both

conceptual and abstract thought.

More importantly, anthropology instilled many qualities essential to my growth and

development. Its values of relativism and truth have shown me to be tolerant and curious. For

example, prior to my study of anthropology, I would not have wondered about my friend Martin, who was born and raised in Hong Kong. Now I find myself interested about my foreign friend

and chatting over coffee about life in Hong Kong. Although I had traveled the city this summer, Martin had taught me more about city life then I had witnessed. Anthropology also values

others’ accounts as vital parts in ethnographic research. Research or a chat with my friend has

nevertheless inspired me to learn more.The most fulfilling reward will be using the knowledge I acquire in order to help other people.

By understanding people, I can treat their problems as a fellow human being through sensitivity, and in the future, through medicine.

**Familiarity Breeds Comfort Soumya**

**Venkateswaran**

**Common App Essay 2013-2014 Prompt #4: Describe a place or**

**environment where you are perfectly content. What do you do or experience there, and why is it meaningful to you?**

Comfort is different to everyone: we may find comfort and serenity in nature, at the beach when seafoam waves gently caress our skin, or we maybe comforted by the smaller, even insignificant things in life, like a smile from a stranger or listening to a favorite song in a time of despair. To me, comfort is an ineffable atmosphere of content and tranquility that exists when I escape from

all other thoughts and emotions and reflect on myself and my happiness. That type of environment, although difficult to find, is accessible tome in my home country, India.

Of all places, I find solace and fulfillment in the world’s second most populous nation. Amongst the immeasurable crowds, the rays of the scorching sun, and the 1.2 billion inhabitants, however, I unearth a connection between my Indian culture and nature. I’ve stood out of the crowd for

eighteen straight years, whether in terms of my physical appearance, my values, or even my vegetarianism. As proud as I am to be different from others, sometimes it is refreshing to be accepted wholeheartedly and have your culture and morals completely appreciated. India is a place where I don’t have to suppress my culture and morals for others; I’m not looked upon differently for the bronze tones of my skin, the languages I speak, or the foods I relish.

A house is abuilding with four sides and a roof; a home is built from warmth, happiness, and the positive vibes that emit from its occupants. My grandparents’ apartment in India is one of the

few places where I have found that “homely comfort.” It’s not that they own a house on the

beach with a majestic ocean view, or are steps away from a day-spa with invigorating facials and massages. Living in the center of the city’s hustle and bustle may seem far from comforting, but it is, however, ironically, a source of comfort tome. The carefree environment my grandparents’ provide, the delicious aromas that permeate the room from my grandmother’s cooking, the

smiles I am greeted with on my every visit, and even the sometimes stale jokes (courtesy of my grandfather) all provide me with a sense of continual comfort. I’m not reminded of the summer work left for me at home, or my daily worries. My grandparents’ home in India is where I can leave my worries in a different country and truly enjoy each day.

Though distant from my suburban, three-story, two garage, Toll Brothers home in Pennsylvania, India is a country where I’ve never felt like an outsider. I find comfort in the acceptance of its

inhabitants; I find comfort in its divine cultures and array of languages; I find comfort in its

exotic landscapes and lush vegetation; I am comforted by my grandparents, who care for me so well that Inever miss my home in America. My trips to India haven’t just given me a sense of ease, they have also taught me that comfort is something unexplainable and intangible that can be found in places other than a tropical island resort with room service.

**NYU Supplemental Essay**

**2013 Katrina Fadrilan**

**In evaluating your candidacy for admission, we are interested in**

**making the best match possible with all that NYU has to offer. As a result, we are curious to learn about your academic and personal**

**interests and how those interests relate to what we offer in the idea capitals of the world in which NYU campuses are located. Please**

**address, in your essay response, the following: 1. Given your NYU campuses of interest - whether they are your primary and alternate home campuses of interest or where you would like to study away while you are a student - where, exactly, would you like to study at NYU - and why? 2. Whether you are undecided or you have a**

**definitive plan of study in mind, what are your academic interests and how do you plan to explore them at NYU?**

I first traveled to several different universes when I turned eight and fearlessly battled the worst creatures ever imagined. That was when I read *A Wrinkle in Time.*

I experienced the adventures of whaling and the sea when I was sixteen, fighting a monstrous leviathan and shaking my fist furiously at the terrorshe unleashed. That was when I

read *Moby-Dick*

As I am reminded each time I step into a new narrative, I have always loved how books create

their own worlds of endless possibility, all compacted together in pages and binding. Books can speak to anyone, and possess the capacity to connect and inspire. I aspire to do the same, through my own writing. I aspire to embolden others and personally connect with people across the

world. I find myself endlessly needing to express ideas and experiences and I meet this need, happily and freely, only through the thoughts and imaginings I transmit to my own pages.

I am assured that this vision of mine, though grand, is possible to achieve at NYU, specifically through the Liberal Studies program in New York City. Everyday, I will be able to fulfill my passions, including those that extend beyond writing: learning, exploring and leading.

The Liberal Studies program would allow me to bring to my writing all benefits of both a small, thoughtful liberal arts school and an urban environment conducive to new adventures, new

insights. Additionally, I will earn a firm background in other subjects: *Moby-Dick*, after all, is part adventure, part erudition. Considering NYU’s renown in creative writing, I am sure that my aspirations for expanding my knowledge and contributing exceptional written works to the world are all achievable. New York is famous as the "City That Never Sleeps": I have always loved the sensation of being alert to the world and transmitting the freshness of experience to paper, and

this is a sensation that my life at NYU will enrich. My studies will help me attain one of the traits of any exceptional writer, a mind that never sleeps.

**To Bully a Mockingbird Seth Loftis**

**Write about a fictional character that influenced your life**

It’s safe to say that I went through an awkward stage primarily during my middle school days.

Foreign endorphins, peer pressure and poor judgment basically describe grades six through eight. This period of self-identity stretched into my high school years as well. My common conformist attitude shined brightly during these stages when I succumbed to the bullies by not speaking out

and joining them in jeering an innocent girl, who I later found out suffers from Asperger’s syndrome. The girl, Leah, is tome as Boo Radley is to Scout Finch from *To Kill a*

*Mockingbird*.

Harper Lee writes, “Atticus was right. One time he said you never really know a man until you

stand in his shoes and walk around in them. Just standing on the Radley porch was enough.” Boo

Radley was an innocent man who always minded his own business. Leah was the exact same way; she never bothered anyone else. In fact, she was usually found reading Hugo’s *Les*

*Misérables* or a nonfiction book about the Titanic. Her unkempt appearance was the main source of ridicule from her peers. Jokes about her frizzy hair and later, in high school, her

unshaved legs bounced from wall to wall. Although I never witnessed any physical harm, I

strongly believe that words can be the worst form of torture, and since I never spoke up, I consider my younger self an accomplice to the bullies.

Soon enough, the bullies’ obviously short-focused attention soon found its target on me. People said harmful things that have stayed with me to this date. Traumatic experiences aren’t as easily forgotten as pleasant ones. Even through my own suffering, I never realized that this was the

exact same thing that was happening to Leah.

Hurtful drama and incessant jeering continued into tenth grade for both me and for Leah. In my Advanced English 10 class, we started to read Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and upon

finishing the novel, I realized that my experiences were almost identical to Scout’s experience

concerning Boo Radley. Her immature gossip put itself into perspective for her when Boo saved her and her brother. She realized that ignorant jeering had pernicious consequences, especially

when the person hurt is an innocent mockingbird. The simple songbird causes no harm; it simply exists and takes the toll from malicious bluejays.

Boo Radley put my immature world into perspective. As Lee employed him as a metaphorical

figure of speech as a mockingbird, I soon assimilated Leah similarly. She was simply innocent

and I violated her by keeping silent and gaining pleasure from immature jeering. There’s noway to go back into time and tell my callow self that laughing at someone is pure bullying, but I will take this experience and use it to shape the person I wish to become—a thoughtful, self-aware

human being.

**All for Freedom Melanie Delgado**

**Please elaborate on a central story to your life**

It was Valentine’s Day six years ago. There were no roses, chocolate, or any romanticism in the air; there was instead, the scent of puke, fear, sea spray, yet atrace of freedom. It is mind-

boggling what a human being is capable of enduring for liberty, even risking life itself. On the

eve of my third attempt at attaining freedom, I contemplated in my eleven year-old mind, what I had been denied in my native land. I was leaving behind rationed monthly food portions, callous oppression, the utter lack of opportunity for growth, an economic system where hard work did

not equal success, and alas, a Godless nation.

Our previous failed attempts had left my mom and me penniless, shunned by our community, but courageously anticipating another stab at our dream. Early in the morning of February 13th , we boarded a bus from my hometown of Marianao, La Habana for a six hour ride to the

westernmost province of Pinal del Rio. A bag filled with two ham spread sandwiches, a can of mosquito repellent, and a change a clothes were all the worldly possessions between us.

Nonetheless, our prayers sustained us throughout the arduous journey. In between my prayers of faith and supplications of hope, I realized that I was in a state of transition. Leaving, a simple

word, meant estrangement from my country of birth, my family, my friends, and my culture. I

was trading it all for a chance to speak my mind freely without fear, to work hard and expect the rewards from the fruits of my labor, and, most importantly, for a chance to make a difference.

I felt my mother’spain vainly hiding in her eyes but likewise sensed the strength of her

determination in her firm grip and was calmed by the sereneness of her countenance. For my

part, I was filled with thoughts of finally seeing my father again, a father who had been missing

for half of my life. What would life be like in that wonderful land, I wondered. Disney World vacations could not hold a candle to the thought of having, once again, a family and finally

seeing my father after such a long absence. This motivation was enough to sustain me through the ordeal that awaited me.

We finally arrived at our destination. With the bag across my mom’s shoulder we set out to walk toward the train station along the cobbled streets. After walking what seemed like the length of the Pacific coast, we finally reached the train station. It only took a few minutes for the train to

arrive, and trying to be as inconspicuous as possible, we sat in the last cart of the train. I did not shut my eyes the entire duration of the journey. The destination was finally in sight. The leader of the group told us we were getting off next, except there would not be a stop for us, we had to jump and hope to land standing up. It was the only way to not draw any suspicions. That was the easy part, the twelve mile trek into the forest— that made me shed half of my body weight at the time— was not. After arriving at the shore, I let out a big sigh and let my body collapse onto the foliage, but the journey was not over, not even close. That’s when the stampede began; everyone ran for their lives, as they saw the freedom at the end of the horizon. Eighteen hours later I was in another country, a whole different world with more than one cereal choice, different brands of shampoo, and freedom to speak my mind. It was not worth it for Disney World, but it was

certainly worth it for the opportunities I have been given.

The chance to grow, to be rewarded for my hard work, to make a difference, and to take

advantage of every single freedom this country grants its citizens has been a blessing. But with the gift of freedom, comes great civic responsibility not only to the government and the country, but also to the communities we are a part of. Not having had the privilege of freedom until the age of eleven, I valued liberty and civic responsibility more than almost everything else in my

life. As such, I became involved in a program called Project Citizen, which is a call to action for teens to become involved and bring about change in their communities. I lobbied extensively,

wrote and presented a bill: “The Shaye Patrick Martin Safety Act” in front of the FL House of Representatives, which levied stronger measurements to decrease the astounding number of

speeding motorists in Florida school zones. To this day, I’m still in contact with lobbyists, state senators and representatives who strongly supported this measure. At the moment I am working with middle school students who are trying to improve the lives of teachers in Florida by giving them a tax break. I amusing my networking skills to now bring attention to the plight of our

underpaid educators. These experiences with policy-making deepened my sense of civic virtue, indoctrinated in me incredible perseverance, taught methe art of compromise, and most of all, galvanized, and fueled my desire to make a change in this world whether it be as a member of the United Nations, or the IMF.

**The Shadow Anonymous**

**Describe a place or environment where you are perfectly content. What do you do or experience there, and why is it meaningful to you?**

Everyone thinks me strange because I love it all as though it were a person.

I love the quiet road named after my great-uncle Pintor Ruano as though it were my great-uncle himself; I love the old church like an old friend; I love the sound of its bells like a familiar

song—not a current favorite, but an old melody with notes carved into the crevices of my early childhood memories. The pristine anthem of my baptism, or the soundtrack of my morning

walks to the bakery. I have kissed the countless cans of lemon-flavored soda and been embraced by the cold waters of the public pool. I have spent more time staring into the intricate shells of the snails on my great-grandmother’s almond trees than I have ever stared into the eyes of

another. I love the shadow, and the whole town it touches, as though it were someone whom I have loved since I was very young.

The shadow was cast over a thousand years ago: first by one settler, then by his followers, then by the towers of a medieval castle following the Moors’ conquest of Iberia. They did not know that their castle would stand over the town of Orba and be spoken of by locals as El Castallet, as I am spoken of as La Americana. They built El Castallet to watch for invaders and outsiders, and had they been alive today, I would have never been let so close as to fall in love with its shadow.

There are other outsiders now, ones whose origins are not even half-Spanish, as mine are. Once I befriended one—an English boy of seven, who taught me backstroke. We played billiards as our parents chatted at the bar, their eyes warmed with alcohol and summer hours past. But the

shadow does not freeze time for others as it does forme, and in a few years, the boy made his

name in television. The bar was sold. Yet the shadow still touched our old stomping ground and I still loved the shadow as a person, so I returned to the bar’s back patio. That afternoon, I was

extra-careful with my glass bottle of soda.

Forgive me if I speak as though the shadow is permanent, for it changes by the year. Two of the four towers have fallen since my birth; a third fell years before. The castle lives on in a single

tower. It has seen the birth and death and rebirth of people, of kingdoms, of empires, even of the ideology of the Europeans. It has seen myriad styles of art: that of my great-uncle and of the 20th century surrealists and of myself, struggling to capture the face of the morning in a weathered

notepad. It saw my great-grandmother embroider elegant tapestries and saw the clothing she washed in the ravine across the road, and it covered her home and the ravine with morning

glories in her honor. Everyday it looks upon the pesetas in my grandmother’s bottom drawer, sitting like scars of Francisco Franco’srevolution.

Yet the tower still stands to cast a shadow in which I am content to be. It watches me with the

same eyes—me, singing to the breeze, gazing out at the skyline over the top of a book, sitting in a silent lemon grove—that may have watched wonders more worthy. So I love the shadow like a person,because the shadow loves me back.

**Drawing Perspective Vincent An**

**Describe a place or environment where you are perfectly content. What do you do or experience there, and why is it meaningful to you?**

The entire external world is a blur. There is nothing but the sound of lead scratching paper that may occasionally break the soothing sound of silence. Everything has lost its relevance -

everything except the mess in front of me. As my eye traces the paper’s surface, my mind

absorbs the array of details. Calmly, I take in the little inconsistencies between what is on the canvas and what I envision in my head. There is a noticeable incongruity; perhaps not to the untrained eye, but tome, the creator, minute discrepancies are everywhere.

I breathe in. Like Alice falling into Wonderland, I spiral away from the real, conscious world,

and into an enchanted realm. It is here, in this state of mind, that I am most at home. In this

trance, I am able to experiment and plan freely, without the constraints of peripheral judgment, human necessities, or time. It is not that I have forgotten about the existence of the outer world’s appraisal, the ever-growing presence of hunger and fatigue, or the subtly ticking clock on the

wall that is shouting forme to do homework and goto sleep. Rather, I have chosen to ignore

their existence and focus on the beautiful challenge at hand. In this moment, I am lost in a state of simple persistence, intellectual clarity and pure artistic creativity.

Pencils sharpen as lines thicken and shadows darken. I weigh the discrepancy between the visual ahead and the goal in my mind. Gradually, the difference becomes smaller and the piece itself

develops into something more and more aesthetically appealing. I am rapidly approaching my threshold.

On paper, the four hands have come to life. They’re each holding a pencil, deftly drawing the next hand as a preceding one reciprocates the favor. It’sa take on M.C. Escher’s *Drawing Hands*.

“Good artists copy; great artists steal,” echoes a familiar voice from within the walls of my mind.

The Picasso quote resonates in my head as I absorb what I have just finished. A baby’shand

clumsily clutches a pencil as it draws an adult’shand holding the same utensil. The adult in turn skillfully illustrates an elder’shand. The aged hand wrinkled with time then sketches a skeletal hand. Finally, the pencil-gripping bones complete the cycle by drawing the original infant's arm. As my eyes trace this continual cycle, I am reminded once more of the fact that nothing is

completely original. The notion that creativity sparks spontaneously from nothing is, in itself,

imaginary. Everything has its genesis in something pre-existing. Though the old and worn seem to expire and disappear, they breathe new life into our world by inspiring us. New creations use the invaluable past as a foundation and take from the pre-existing, seldom with permission.

I take a long, drawn-out breath, holding the paper while taking a step back from the wooden

frame of the easel and emerging from the daze that consumed my mind. In my sketch I see hints of da Vinci’s delicate lines, Caravaggio’s contrast of darkness and light, and Escher’s surreal

tautologies. In everything I encounter, I find similar traces of a lingering past; in lyrics,

architecture, today’s apparel, tomorrow’s technology, and even in the slick design of an ordinary chair. No longer is my work a mere blur; it has become clear. Having lost myself within the

realm of a familiar artistic trance, I have paradoxically found a new, discerning lens through which I can now view the world.

**Location, Location,**

**Location Anonymous**

**NYU is global, urban, inspired, smart, connected, and bold. What can NYU offer you, and what can you offer NYU?**

When I was trying to pitch my first business, I learned the hard way that getting in front of the

right people is not easy. A stacked rolodex can make a world of difference when trying to secure funding or landing that dream job. Because of this, among the most important aspects of business are the connections and bonds formed with other people -- people who are the gatekeepers to

better networking and vital resources. NYU's Stern business school is not only renowned for its student body and alumni; it is also in the heart of one of the most connected cities in the world, providing endless opportunities for entrepreneurial and private equity enterprises.

I've fallen in love with the art of pitching, having presented multiple business endeavors to many different investors. There is a thrill involved in conveying my passion for new, challenging ideas, in hopes that seasoned professionals will feel and share my ambitions. I got my first taste of

pitching with my first company, HashStorm. The plan was to create a Bitcoin "mining" farm funded by people who would purchase partial ownership of hosted ASIC Bitcoin miners, and

theirrespective Bitcoin revenues, allowing people to invest in Bitcoin without having to

purchase through an exchange. I did not have the right connections to make a deal, and was still trying to figure out ways to describe a fairly complex operation like HashStorm succinctly, but

failure always comes with valuable lessons. I learned how to write a business plan, and why

economical and engaging writing is important at this stage; the business plan serves to lay the

foundation for the how, what, and why of a business. This preparation called to mind with one of my favorite business mantras from Simon Sinek: people don't buy what you do, they buy why

you do it. The Berkley Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation holds annual Venture Competitions that would allow me to seamlessly pursue my entrepreneurial goals without shortchanging the coursework for my finance career.

As far as networking goes, there is truly no place better than NYU, especially with networking groups like the NYU Finance Society. I cannot wait to hit the ground running my first year and use alumni and student contacts to my full advantage, pursuing my dreams in the heart of New York City.

**Learning to Flourish Anonymous**

**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.**

"You're ugly, and you have no friends."

We were settling in our seats for the annual career day assembly, and Eleni Pappas turned and

spat the words out at me. I blushed while she laughed, pulling her hair off her lace-trimmed shirt (which, for the record, was nothing you'd find in *Vogue*).

It wasn't that I didn't know what she said was true: my curly hair had yet to meet a flat iron, and the fifty-first US state could be discovered in the gap between my front teeth. My tattered jeans and fresh-from-the-barn odor didn't help. She just said it so bluntly, and I was trapped, sitting

defenseless and on the verge of tears as Jeremy Fine's father spoke about his adventures as a pilot. Yet in reality, I had been trapped for all of middle school.

I had gone to my parents for help with the bullying. While they meant well with their advice, recommendations to "walk away" didn't solve anything. Thanks to a flood of name-calling and

exclusion, I spent many lunch periods nibbling my sandwich in a bathroom stall. But fast-

forward four years and going home in tears is no longer apart of my daily routine. Braces helped take care of my snaggletooth grin and puberty filled the extra room in my clothes, but what my

time in high school has provided me with more than anything is a true sense of inner strength.

A big piece of this comes from literally getting back in the saddle. For my fifteenth birthday,

after repeated begging and a great deal of negotiating, Elmo was mine-the first horse I could call my own. He was *almost* too pretty to get mad at; the beautiful dapple-grey was every girl's

dream until he bit, bolted or reared. Some nights it took hours to make a full lap around the arena without being bucked off, but the greater the struggle, the more cathartic the victory lap.

I went to school each day after an evening with Elmo, with bruised ribs and broken toes but no longer gun shy. Ancient Greek class, a once novel idea after eight years of Spanish worksheets, became my new antagonist. Freshman and sophomore years were bearable, but when we

switched from the Attic to Homeric dialect junior year, the vocabulary and grammar I'd spent hours memorizing meant nothing. Over the course of the year, days passed where I saw Mrs. Wick, my teacher, more than my parents. I went in for help, attended review sessions and

exhausted the few Ancient Greek resources that exist. While the class remained difficult, reading Homer from the original text proved much more interesting thanks to the sense of

accomplishment I gained from translating it myself. I realized that though I am a constant work in progress, I am starting to fine-tune.

My eighth grade self may not have had a good comeback for Eleni, but 16-year old Grace was

now confident enough as a first-time election judge to handle a fiesty 55-year-old voter who was insistent that he could bring his gun into the polling booth. And just last summer, I faced off

against a corporate team-building event gone awry by talking down drunken dodgeball players by diverting attention and adding more games to help them burn off their "energy."

I could lie and say that I never gossip about others- that I am always in the best mood and never fail to treat people as if today were their last. But I am not pretending to be perfect. My

newfound fortitude does nothing but support me in my daily efforts to improve. No longer am I the little twig in a bundle of tears over a few hurtful words. Instead, I am a girl who has found grit and is more ready and excited than ever to tackle the challenges of college.

**Trail of Breadcrumbs Chandranata Rekso Sosrodjojo**

**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.**

My eyes were greeted by the luminous glow of fluorescent lights and sterile whitewalls of

Rumah Sakit Bunda (Bunda Hospital). This was a stark contrast to the escalating chaos and

barbarity in the dilapidated Indonesian streets. In due time, the quagmire of rape and murder that pullulated the streets, spawned the notorious 1998 Indonesian Reformation. These whitewalls

did not shelter me for long. I could not hide behind my own race. I was born a Chinese

Indonesian, the ultimate scapegoat for the devastation to come. In 1998, this heated pocket of conflict finally burst, bludgeoning my homeland. Amidst death, life was thrust upon me in the form of a shrieking wrinkled baby girl, my sister. In an instant, if possible, the one-year-old me felt a moment of pure and raw happiness.

Almost half a decade later, the happiness I reveled in was dashed by so called 'disagreements'.

The unfortunate differences between my parents had slowly ruptured their love. One cannot be a squabbling child in the midst of crossfire. It was not a premeditated decision but a necessity for me to then become my own parent. I was orphaned on that day. I was abandoned. I was thus

obliged to be the father and mother to my sister and myself. I learned to become my own person, I had to. This was the 10-year-old me; tall and lanky, walking through the muddy aisles of the

wet market, treading across the linoleum floors of school, wandering through life on my own.

I refused to succumb to the suppressed anger that infested my home. I refused to spew the same venom my parents have. I refused to take up the gauntlet of revenge upon my parents. I thus

tamed the raging child within me to persevere and shoulder the responsibility of becoming a

father to my little sister. This engendered a quiet strength that has become unique to my

character and persona. I drew upon this strength to shelter my sister from my parent's blunders and fight for a future untainted by my past. In time, I too garnered the patience and capacity to forgive the flaws of my parents. By transforming my childlike mentality and adopting that of a father, I learned that forgiveness is a contribution from the soul and maturity of the mind is an ongoing journey.

Spurning my childhood and accelerating the process to adulthood was painful, but I was roused by the fear that my sister would be consumed by the same grief I faced. It took patience to have the small têtê-à-tête's with my sister, grasp the hair raising issues of a girl's adolescence and

handle the nauseating "boy issues". Upon reflection, I realize perhaps my greatest achievement is my sister, her childhood is a product of my perseverance and struggle. As such my first decade

of living has taught me my first life lesson; the difference between existing, surviving, and

living. I existed in the silence and shadow of my parents' loveless marriage. I survived a broken home. I am now finally living.

Ultimately, I became the Hansel from my own Brothers Grimm's folktale. I was trapped in a

gingerbread house, and was expected to be devoured by the witches and demons of my past. But I refused to stoop so low that my lips would kiss the grounds of my predestined fate, for it would mean my voice would forever be but vibrations through this earth. I thus followed the trail of

breadcrumbs home. Although all there ever was, was a house. Not a home. But that is not where the story ends. The story ends when I build my own home on the tainted grounds where the

hollowed house stood.

**The Apartment Mahin Rahaman**

**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.**

Thank goodness apartments don’t have emotions. If my one bedroom apartment did, I can

guarantee that its paint would be chipping off as rapidly as the layers of my sanity. Every

morning, I'd wake up to the sound of my alarm clock simultaneously ringing with the gruesome screams of my four year old cousin. I’d race to the bathroom, only to find out that I had to wait in line behind my other cousin. Attempting to save time, I’d make my way to the kitchen and fix myself breakfast while I waited for my turn. I'd get out my favorite box of cereal just to find out that my other cousin (yes, a third cousin) had finished all the milk. By then, I’dbe running late for school, so I’d quickly brush my teeth in the kitchen sink and run out the door hoping to catch the train on time.

In the beginning of freshman year, my parents announced that some of my relatives were going to move into our one bedroom apartment. Initially, I felt a jolt of excitement because I hadn't

seen my relatives in six years. Afterwards, it hit me that their family consisted of five people and that my family consisted of three people. Despite my not-so-great math skills, I could already

begin to tell that these numbers weren’t going to work out. The apartment walls soon trembled

with the boisterous sounds of my cousins arguing, my uncle talking on the phone, and my aunt watching drama serials on television. With all these distractions, I found it almost impossible to focus on my school work. Although I’d lived in this apartment for six years, it no longer felt like home.

Unexpectedly, my new home became Bronx Science. As soon as after-school clubs began, I felt myself slowly breaking out of my tightly wrapped cocoon and freely stretching out my wings.

NASHA, a cultural dance club, made me fall in love with how vibrant and free dancing made me feel. With the constant noise that prevented me from being heard in my apartment, dancing

became my new way of communicating. Each movement had its own message and gave offits own emotion. Every finger and toe was carefully choreographed to speak its own words, while the total movement itself gently swayed to form a graceful sentence. I wanted to hold onto the

euphoric sensations that I felt while I was dancing in school -- but I knew that as soon as I

stepped into my overcrowded apartment, my wings would vanish and I would go back into my cocoon.

As the annual NASHA show inched closer, my dance group and I started practicing through

Skype by individually performing on webcam. My little cousins tried to watch me practice

during these sessions, but I would immediately stop dancing out of embarrassment and close my computer. One day, however, I decided to take initiative and asked my cousins if they would like to join me during one of my practices. Their faces lit up with eagerness as they tried following

my dance steps while discovering their own unique expressions, their own vivid movements.

After all that chaos, I brought into my cousins’ lives some of the same enthusiasm that I had for dancing. The way they immersed themselves in carefully perfecting each gesture showed me

how dance also allowed them to express themselves. Initially, I had felt that my apartment had constricted me when, in actuality, it was me. As soon as I decided to open myself up, the walls that once seemed to cave in now appeared to smile at me from every corner. The boisterous

noises that once filled the apartment were now replaced with sounds of laughter and love. The paint on my apartment walls no longer seemed to be chipping off. Instead, those walls were

repainted with the warm colors of enthusiasm as my cousins and I connected, dancing as one.

**Another Page in History Anonymous**

**Describe a place or environment where you are perfectly content. What do you do or experience there, and why is it meaningful to you?**

It's 4:55 on a Thursday morning when you hear a shrill ring pulse through the room. You rub your eyes groggily, praying that the noise will go away soon, when a dim light blinks on.

Roommate #1 climbs out of her bed and finally, blessedly, turns the alarm off. At 5:10, a similar, albeit slightly more lyrical, noise rocks the room as Roommate #2 crawls out of her bunk and

Roommate #3 turns on the glaring overhead lights. You slowly slump out of your beloved

covers, rubbing your eyes and brushing your teeth to the tune of Roommates #4 and #5 arguing

over whose turn it is to shower first. Are you at summer camp? You're going home in a few days, right? Nah. You've been through this routine everyday for three months, and you can look

forward to repeating it for another two. And if you're anything like me, you're absolutely thrilled about it.

On my first day working in the Senate, I was more than a little bit awestruck, and perhaps I was lost in a politically-charged daydream when a cloakroom staff member explained exactly how

exhausting this job would be. *Sure, we can work up to sixty hours a week, but look, Senator Byrd's old desk is only a few feet away!* The rostrum looked exactly as it did in the movie *Lincoln*, despite the fact that *Lincoln* was filmed in the Virginia state capitol,

the fact that the Thirteenth Amendment was passed in the Old Senate Chamber, and the fact that it would eventually be my job to explain this to excited tourists. In the midst of the excitement, I managed to miss the part about late shifts and early classes, the warnings that Pages often drink their weight in coffee. *The next five months,* I thought, *are going to be incredible.*

While the next five months were, in fact, incredible, I must admit that I was in for a surprise.

Within a week, I learned that when the *Wikipedia* article on the US Senate Page School says that students have several hours of homework each night, *it truly means that students*

*have several hours of homework each night.* I learned that the Senate can go into a

quorum call for hours on end, and that sitting silently on the rostrum is a goodtime to ponder

Senator Reid's suggestion that the Twenty-eighth Amendment regulate campaign finance or

Senator Heller's speech against Senator Sanders's VA bill. It is also a goodtime to discreetly pull out a set of flashcards and work on memorizing significant politicians from the Gilded Age. I

learned the best ways to push a cart brimming with Congressional reports from office to office

through a nine-story building (labyrinth?), and I learned the fastest ways to rush back to the

chamber and work a forty-five minute vote that was scheduled to last only fifteen. I drank coffee with every meal and read my textbooks under the covers after lights-out, finally stumbling into slumber with a weary smile.

At the Senate Page Program, I learned to balance life and work...and school, roommates with

truly bizarre sleep cycles, life without a cellphone, and relationships with people who lived 700 miles away. I learned my limits, I learned self-discipline, and I learned how incredible it feels to do what is difficult. I discovered the merit in working a long week for the simple chance to learn, to watch, and to listen. I may never be an "Important Person." As a Page, I certainly wasn't: I

held doors, answered phones, and watched Senate politics unfold in respectful silence. But

despite my lack of influence, I still felt satisfied, as if learning something new about H.R. 103

satisfied some unknown subliminal need. And each day, I trudged back to the dormitory with a little more knowledge, another funny story, and a little more joy.

**I'm Glad I Failed Anonymous**

**The lessons we take from failure can be fundamental to later**

**success. Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?**

Sitting in the auditorium of Cherry Creek High School, I felt a sudden apprehension in the pit of my stomach. After along and tumultuous journey, I was here at last. I, along with two of my

friends and teammates, had spent the better part of the year preparing for the ACSL National Computer Science Competition, and we were about to learn how we fared.

As the contest organizer started announcing the placement of the teams, I squirmed in my seat. For my team and me, this was more than just getting a shiny medal to hang on our walls; this was about proving to our school administration that we were capable of running a computer

science club. Indeed the administration seemed to have a certain petulant attitude towards the topic, and try as we might, they were adamant in their beliefs that we werenaïve and

inexperienced; we hoped to prove them wrong. As the names rolled by, I closed my eyes. There were shouts of vivacious joy, cries of indignant frustration, until. "[redacted], 30 points."

My eyes shot open. *30 POINTS! No, that can't be; there must have been a*

*mistake.* I sank slowly into my seat as the realization that we had come in second to last

washed over me. Never in my entire life had I felt like such a loser; at that moment, the feelings of frustration, anger, guilt, and disbelief all coalesced into an inexplicit soup - a soup of

failure. *Perhaps the school administrators were right. Maybe we are incapable*

*of programming.* I thought back to all of the time I spent studying, all the countless hours I spent coding and debugging my programs. Heck, I even wasted away my Memorial Day

weekend, and for what? We were crushed so badly it was almost embarrassing.

The feeling was further compounded when our chaperone turned towards us and said, "Well, I hope this was worth it." The acerbic tone wasn't lost on me. The contrition I felt knowing I had let both him and my team down was inexplicable. But it was during this nadir of my life, lost in introspection, that my mouth suddenly curved into a smile. I realized that I had lost sight of the bigger picture: it was never supposed to be about proving ourselves to the school; it was about helping to fill the gap that our school curriculum had in computer science. It was about helping to guide those who had an interest in programming but were unable to teach themselves. It was about seeing the smiles on their faces when they executed their first "Hello World" program.

The more I thought about it, the more excited I became. Together, my team and I decided to

offer free, private tutoring at the local library. During the summer, I set aside every Sunday to

host a small introductory programming course. As word spread about its success, individuals of all ages, even parents, started attending.

Eventhough the school administration viewed us as incompetent, I would be damned ifI let that stand in my way.

While I never got a shiny medal to hang on my wall, I did get something much more important: a new perspective. The lessons learned from failure can be infinitely more rewarding than the brief happiness gleaned from success. By failing in the competition, I realized that somewhere along

the way, I had been led astray from my original intentions. Seven months and a successful club boasting more than 30 new members later, I stared at my (former) chaperone dead in the eye and replied, "I'm glad I failed."

**NYU Suplement Essay Anonymous**

**NYU is global, urban, inspired, smart, connected and bold. What can NYU offer you, and what can you offer NYU?**

The banging on the door suddenly stops and, to my surprise, I am awakened not by the noise but by the silence. It was the debtors again, bent on extracting money from an immigrant family

barely able to put food on the table. Soon after my mother passed her nursing test the debtors stopped coming, but the banging on the door remains with me to this day. Microeconomics has always interested me the most, because it – with the study of financial and opportunity costs – givesus an unmatched potential to solve some of today’s most pressing problems. I’d like to

develop a deeper understanding of microeconomics and use that understanding to help others overcome their hardships, allowing them to realize their dreams.

New York University would give me the greatest ability to help people. Because of its deep

community involvement – with its Public Service Corps and Jumpstart program – I can continue my community service while also developing an understanding of economics. The college core

curriculum offered by NYU would bring me even more benefits: the ability to study languages

and culture would allow me to better convey and exchange ideas. As the famous economist Tyler Cowen said, “Economics is everywhere, and understanding economics can help you make better decisions and lead a happier life.” In order to assist others, understanding the theories and

models is not enough. A proficient knowledge of languages and communication is necessary. However, with the breadth of NYU’s Core program and its focus on giving a well-rounded

education, I could become an excellent consultant.

I believe NYU is where I would create the best opportunity to advance in these areas post-

graduation. With the unshakable foundation built during the four years at NYU I would be at

leisure to decide how to buildupon it, whether with a Masters in Economics or an internship at a company. With my future classmates, I hope to share great conversations and build relationships that will persist through my time in college. Attending New York University would bring me all

of these things,which would aid me in becoming the best economist and consultant I can possibly be.

**Playground Andrew Elsakr**

**Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that**

**marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.**

There was one playground not too far from my grandparents' apartment in Cairo (the summer home of my childhood) where I wasn't treated like the quirky, abnormal kid that I was used to being. It wasn't your ideal picture of a playground, though. Rusty railings, monkey bars so high

you'd break a bone if you fell, sharp nails everywhere that would've whispered the word

"tetanus" in my mother's ear had she ever accompanied me and my cousin. It was every child's dream and every parent's nightmare, and I got to enjoy it. The kids there didn't care that I

couldn't speak Arabic or that I was a Christian (and not even a Coptic but a Presbyterian -- a minority of the minority). We'd play hide-and-seek, tag, cops-and-robbers, you name it. When we'd finished, we would sit together and giggle because we were all Egyptians and there was nothing to keep us from being happy.

At the playground in Cairo I could be something I had no chance of being in Memphis: normal.

Cairo was quite a sight in its glory days, once heralded as the most beautiful city in the world. It was filled with villas and clean roads and marketplaces that brought tourists from all over to

behold the city's majesty. However, through horrible governing and overpopulation, the city

descended, apparently low enough to take ninth place in a 2012 CNN ranking of the "World's 10 Most Hated Cities." As forme, I never really had a golden era. Sure, when I was younger I was that kid the PTA parents adored; I was the top student in all my elementary school classes, but I was never perfect. I was never balanced. As I grew older, everyone seemed to be trying to escape Egypt except forme. Egypt was a playground that I could only visit in the summers, and my

desire to keep returning never wavered. I never stopped depending on it and seeing it as not only the apotheosis of my childhood, but as my childhood in its entirety. And even after I found other playgrounds in Memphis, I stillyearned for Egypt with all my heart every morning when I

looked at the calendar and saw the date steadily approaching June.

Years passed. The Egyptian Revolution happened, and my grandmother died during it, so we

went to Cairo in the midst of all the tear gas and riots and violence, and I had to watch from the top floor of a hotel as black smoke rose from my crumbling, dying city. That last glimpse of the moribund city that had once been my fairy godmother stuck with me, telling me that things

would be different from now on, that things would never be the same. That I would never be the same.

Two years later my grandfather died as well and we had to go back again. It was the third time in a row we'd gone to Cairo for a funeral, and that was all Cairo had seemed to be at that point: a

mausoleum, kind of like the Pyramids. After the funeral, having nothing else to do, I went alone to that playground I had frequented so often in my childhood, and to my dismay, I found that it

had changed. The squeaky, splintery play sets had been removed, replaced by new, plastic, child- proofed swing sets and jungle gyms. It looked American. I sat down on the see-saw by myself

and started reminiscing, imagining the sounds of the yelling children who had stopped coming to this place long ago, who were now my age and off in the cadaverous city, doing whatever it is

that makes CNN hate Cairo so much, and I realized the truth. The truth is that when there's no one left to sit on the see-saw with, it's time for you to leave the playground. So that's what I did.

**Eclectic Appetite Anonymous**

**Reflect on a time when you challenged a belief or idea. What**

**prompted you to act? Would you make the same decision again? (650 words or less)**

A few Thanksgivings ago, my mom decided to buy a whole pig and roast it herself.

Unfortunately, the pig had a ghastly aroma which filled the whole house, and everyone

immediately scolded her for the acrid smell ruining their Thanksgiving meal. Initially, no one ate it – it’s a little different from the traditional ham. But, being as hungry as I was, I decided it

couldn’t taste as bad as it smelled. So, I was the only one to try some, and it became my favorite

dish. Now the story is repeated every year by my proud mother, whose fourteen year old

daughter consumed a questionable part of a pig, when not even the adults could overcome the odor.

Growing up with Korean cuisine, I became familiar with ingredients rejected by American

palates – garlic beetles, fermented cabbage, and shrimp heads, just to name a few. While my

peers indicate their disgust by slightly gagging or widening their eyes in disbelief, I shrug my

shoulders and insist that it’s all healthy, yummy, and, most importantly, edible. When I’m sick, I can consume a whole bowl of miyeok guk (seaweed soup). My dad still thinks it’s strange, but

my favorite part of sundubu jjigae is eating the shrimp whole, with all of the flavor concentrated in the head, eyeballs included. In a particularly brave moment, I ate a risky hoagie customized by my bored and slightly devilish friends. When I took the first bite, I was surprisingly pleased. I ate almost the whole thing, until the bread started to get soggy from the pickle juice… and

mayonnaise, barbecue sauce, horseradish, and mustard. I had no idea what else it contained until they gave me the receipt with all the ingredients listed – which I keep tacked to aboard in my

room, where I proudly display this proof of my strong stomach.

My eclectic taste has also allowed me to carry my open-mindedness outside of the kitchen. To some, my meals are disgusting. To me, they are delicious and familiar. It frustrates me that a

world of flavors and satisfaction remainsunimagined to those who refuse to try something

because it’s alien to them. In hopes that I do not convey the same judgment upon others, I try to give people, like food, the benefit of the doubt. I strive to understand foreign concepts, to accept opportunities more freely. A few years ago, I took a hiphop class at a local dance studio, even though my only experience was briefly in ballet 8 years prior. After permanently leaving soccer a few years ago, I joined rugby, a considerably more dangerous and confusing sport than

anything I had ever experienced. My junior year, I took Sociology and C++ programming, even though their low credit weight would put my GPA at a disadvantage. However, I found myself

enjoying C++ so much that I continued on to take AP Computer Science this year, which I would not have considered had I not taken the risk in the first place.

Whether it’s with a meal that I eat, or the courses I tackle in school, I cannot resist trying new

things, even if they serve no direct purpose (my hip-hop dancing skills have hardly improved).

There is a Korean saying: “One who is full with more food on the table will waste.” Ever since

my grandmother starting greeting me with “Are you hungry?” I have tried not to take food, or

anything, for granted. Dubbed the “garbage disposal” of my peers, I thank my fast metabolism

and continue to indulge. My everlasting hunger, for food and knowledge, has me always wanting more and never wanting to waste opportunities. I hope that I will always make the same decision

as I did that Thanksgiving - to reach out of my comfort zone and challenge the hesitation of others.

**CTRL+Z Melissa Liu**

**“DESCRIBE A PLACE OR ENVIRONMENT WHERE YOU ARE**

**PERFECTLY CONTENT. WHAT DO YOU DO OR**

**EXPERIENCE THERE, AND WHY IS IT MEANINGFUL TO YOU?”**

I am at peace on my computer, Photoshop application open, eyes fixated on a 5000 by 7000 pixel window. This window becomes a very special type of canvas. It can be expanded and cropped

without any effect on its contents, which are comprised of a myriad of geometric structures,

vector graphics, typefaces, and so on. When imported onto this canvas, each article becomes one of many separately intangible layers that can be unceasingly repositioned, skewed, and rotated to digital precision and perspectival accuracy, all the while leaving no evidence of their alteration. East of my Workspace, stored in a Swatch Palette, are colors I have created. My personal

favorite – # 1200ff – exists in neither Gouache, Posca, or Tempera. I make art for one reason: to produce anything, knowing that no one else would have done it the same way, to complete it,

and to call it yours, is quite gratifying.

By some meticulous quirk of nature, I’ve always hated making traditional art. Painting, drawing, sketching, all of it. I couldn't endure how, if I botched up one line, stroke, or paint splatter, the

entire image became an aesthetic wreck. Having finished a drawing or painting, I’d return

compulsively to it, staring it down until I managed to pick out something wrong. Neurotically,

I’d obsesses over the error, trying to convince myself of what my roommates told me everytime – no one else would see it! I’d look at it again, this time from 12 inches away, then 12 feet away. Nevertheless, everytime I looked at it, all I could see and think of were two lines drawn too

close together, an unevenness in the paint’s color and texture, or some inerasable marking at the border of the paper. Naturally, I’d get out my materials and start the thing all over again. Palms sweating, having finally finished round two, I’d point out another mistake. I usually got it right after going through an entire pad of cartridge paper. That’s 30 copies of the same image, 29 of them suffering from some error or another. Only then, however, did I feel...content. And so this self-inflicted cycle of stress continued with any form of traditional art I attempted to produce.

For years I snubbed my way of working, afraid I’d never enjoy art as a result of my precisionist expectations – ones I was incapable of meeting.

Eventually, it was my introduction to digital mediums of creation that brought an end to my

extreme apprehension about art. With a cursor and keyboard, I have full control over every

aspect of the artwork, as opposed to being suppressed by the fear of making an irreversible

mistake. No mistake is ever permanent; I am mainly assured by two keys during the process: CTRL+Z takes me back to where I was 3 seconds ago, undoing anyone mistake that – in

traditional art – would have instantly thwarted any motivation I had to carry on. I can do one

thing that can’t be done with any traditional art form in the world: I can undo my errors as I go along, fixing them up into the precise and symmetrical images I want them to be. I can

immediately retract a mistakenly placed element – no markings are left behind. I can nudge

layers to exact positions determined by units as minute as one pixel. Most importantly, I don’t

feel obliged to commit to the repetitive chore of reconstructing entire pieces from scratch just

because something is off-center by 2 coordinates, or because two vectorimages don’t lineup at the same point on the X axis. Thus the very nature of making digital art lends itself nicely to the way I work; my fears obliterated by technology, the process becomes more experimental than

obsessive. My art becomes far more precise, and far more rewarding.

**Common App Short answer Anonymous**

**Name a moment in your life that has changed your outlook on life?**

When I first heard the lyrics of the Rolling Stones’ “Paint it Black,” it was from this little red

contraption that I bought from a garage sale for ten dollars. I was hooked. That small record

player eventually became the two Numark turntables and a Rane mixer with Mackie speakers

that I carry from event to event. Though my DJ services are mostly volunteer-based for friends

and family members, the inspiration and creativity I derive from the tunes I mix and play are

insurmountable. I realized that I can make harmonies out of anything; from solving logarithms in trigonometry to cheering on a character losing it all and regaining it back in *Unwanted*. With my turntables, I can create tunes anywhere I go.

**Unmasked Maxine Huang**

**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.**

"Ugly," my grandfather blatantly declared.

The eight-year-old me looked down in confusion and shame, having just committed the greatest crime of the century: breaking and entering a makeup bag.

"You must get rid of that," he continued.

Following his command, I submissively raised one hand to my lips and smeared away the red lipstick. My other hand tugged on the mascara, smudging blotches onto my childish fingertips. Finally, with the backs of my hands, I swiped away the artificial blush.

I knew girls who rummaged through their mothers' cosmetics bags and transformed into circus clowns. Having seen the initial shock of the mothers and then heard the relieving laughter that quickly followed, I had expected an equal reaction from my grandfather.

My own explanation for his peculiar response was that I am Chinese; this single attribute

distinguished me from my fellow circus clowns. I had only tried to use my face as a canvas for my creativity. I later learned that it is culturally unacceptable to cake my youthful face in

makeup, as youth is highly valued in my culture. Only older women wear makeup to conceal

signs of aging. Nevertheless, I accused my grandfather of a crime far worse than mine: "cultural reinforcement."

This instance pushed me over the edge. Instead of understanding, I began to rebel. I stopped

liking the Chinese lessons that my mother had optimistically enrolled me in. I stopped attempting to speak my broken Chinese and instead began to incorporate more English into daily

conversations. I favored burgers and fries over dumplings and noodles. Cans of Coca-cola

replaced mugs of Oolong tea. I went by Maxine and not Niuniu, my Chinese nickname. With these adjustments, I began to back away from my Chinese background while engaging my

American-ness.

Years later, I visited my relatives in Beijing. My aunt took the opportunity to sign me up for a Chinese class. At first I was reluctant, but I agreed to go, considering the fact that it was a

Chinese art class, not one of those Chinese language classes. When the instructor handed out blank masks and paint pots, I became interested. My task was to make a traditional Chinese opera mask, a lianpu, to be used later by a professional Chinese opera performer.

I brushed pink circles onto the cheeks, subconsciously transforming my long-held anger from the makeup incident into inspiration for my lianpu. I proceeded to outline the eyes, as I had done my own eyes. I saved the best for last: the bright, red lipstick, the infamous weapon with which I had first committed the crime. Time flew by, and soon enough we were seated, awaiting the show.

I was captivated by the face-mask changing act. The performer had worn all of the colorful

masks and managed to remove them stealthily, one by one. His final mask flew off, revealing his face as he took a bow.

Later, I realized that I myself was a mask-changer. My two cultures were two distinct masks, and I removed them, one disguised by heavy makeup, the other natural. What lies below is none

other than my own face, my own identity, my Chinese-Americanness. That instance transformed my perception of the aspects of my background that I had once identified as unyielding chains, which I now see as inherent components of myself. I was focused on finding the perfect balance, and - by a stroke of chance - I believe I've found it. Since that day, I have continued to take

Chinese classes nearly every Sunday. Today, I am able to balance both English and Chinese, something I never would have imagined as that naively rebellious eight-year-old. Today, I

occasionally brush mascara onto my lashes and even less frequently swipe blush onto my cheeks. I do, however, skimp on the red lipstick, because my performance has ended.

**The Next Chapter Anonymous**

**Why NYU?**

New York-the city that never sleeps, the concrete jungle-is home to the Empire State Building, Strawberry Fields, and bustling Wall Street. It is a city that rose in the awe of American

pioneers, and was built on the backs of immigrants. New York is its own place while being a

little bit of everything-wholly defined and redefined by the individual walking through its

streets, by the tourists and natives, looking through the ads on Fifth Avenue and listening to the music of Harlem.

I grew up in Miami, the only other place anywhere near as culturally diverse as New York.

Miami has 100 sides, and then one; there’s big business in Downtown Miami, a street art hub in Wynwood, rich culture in Little Havana, and the oh-so-chic side of Brickell, Miami Beach. The

works. There isn’t a place quite like it. To an outsider, it’s a conglomerate of immigrants bridging a divide between their native countries and the United States. But tome, a young Hispanic stuck between three worlds--Colombia, Cuba, and the United States--it is home.

When I think of my college application process, I struggle with the idea of leaving Hialeah; I have lived here my entire life. But as I enter this new adventure, I am excited to see what

possibilities await me. Neither of my parents attended college, but they always instilled in me the importance of an education. By attending college, I am furthering their legacy of hard work, a

testament to their constant dedication. 2016 has both an air of uncertainty, and of excitement.

I decided to apply to New York University not merely because of the opportunities the university has to offer, but for the prospects the city allows. At NYU, I know I’ll have the opportunity to

apply for internships, while dedicating myself to my school work, taking rigorous classes, and learning all about new subject fields. Now, I am excited at the prospect of attending New York University and expanding my horizons. By doing so, I will fulfill the hopes I always dreamt of: of being more complex, more enriched, and more than the statistics that stand against a young Hispanic woman. I will beat on, succeed, and go forward into the future I have always wanted.

**On Being the Higher Percent Elyse**

**Mackenzie**

**Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that**

**marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.**

When I was fifteen, I considered a theory: it is possible to assign a numerical value to two people in order to measure how much they care about one another. In total, the two numbers would add up to a percentage of one hundred. The more effort, love, and curiosity one person put into the

relationship, the higher their percentage would be. For example, the ratio of care between myself and, say, Justin Timberlake, would be written as ninety-nine to one; I care 99% about him while he cares 1% about me (the 1% being generous considering he doesn’t know I exist).

I truly thought this theory was groundbreaking. It explained so much! My middle school crush and I understandably never worked out; our care ratio was at a heartbreaking 70:30 (me, crush).

Over dinner, I proudly explained the basics of the theory to my family. My family has always encouraged my life contemplations, so I was surprised when they responded to my newest

statement with equivocality. Between both of my parents, my mother was the more skeptical. She listed some names in order to hear meuse the care meter in action, asking me to “rank” myself versus my friends, my coaches, and my family members.

I found a problem: I began to answer many of these relationships with 50:50. My mom sat

silently and listened to my struggle considering percentage choices. Eventually, she told me she

had different numbers in mind. “Are you sure 50:50 is true?” she asked me. “I see you more as an 80:20 kind of person!”

80:20? I was briefly at a loss for words as I considered her statement. Could it be true? Could people care such a significant amount less about me than I do for them?

Sensing my discomfort, she attempted to redeem herself. “I didn’t mean it that way!” she

explained. “50% effort just doesn’t seem large enough to describe the care you have for your friends.” I stayed up late that night ranking my relationships in my mind. I found that even my mom’s proposed 80% was not large enough to describe my love for the people I know and

activities I do.

In fact, I cared a full 100% about my friends, athletics, musical development, and my aspirations for the future. I recognized the theory as flawed as I contemplated it in bed that night. After all, who am I to say that two people cannot love and care about one another 100:100? Can't we all

invest ourselves into someone or something and get the same exact passion in return?

Numbers can define countless things, but life and relationships are worth more than two

(sometimes discouraging) values that add up to one hundred. Hearing that I am the type of

person to have 80:20 relationships has remained poignant in my mind since this event occurred nearly three years ago.

I have learned more about myself since then, and most of all, I have realized that there are worse traits to have than caring more than your share about people or things. I matured that day, as I

learned that life is not about minimizing your care to match the care of others towards you. I will always approach everything I do with passion and purpose; I have been ravenous for knowledge and new life experiences since I uttered my first word “book.” I am confident that wherever I

end up, whatever I am doing, and whatever I am getting back in return, I will be proud of my 100%.

**My favorite place Noelle Simon**

**Describe a place or environment where you are perfectly content. What do you do or experience there, and why is it meaningful to you?**

When I was seven years old, I used to think my floor was made of hot lava or occasionally under siege by a pack of angry anacondas. So, at night when it was time forme to go to bed, I would

have to take one giant leap to make it to the massive fluffy island in the middle of the room,

which served as my safe haven for the night. Once the blanket was over me, I was untouchable.

When I was nine, I decided that I would camouflage myself amongst the hordes of stuffed animals that coexisted with me on my bed. I did this because I believed that when my father came in the next morning to drag me off to the doom that was the fourth grade, he would be unable to find me. (Naturally, he found me.)

The point of these stories is that some of the most vivid memories I have from my childhood

have been focused around the seemingly mundane piece of furniture that is my bed. This essay

was probably designed to be written about some destination location - like how I climbed the

Swiss Alps and had a chocolate tasting at the top in a remote ski lodge, or a time I went to Saint Tropez and went sailing with a group of French and Italian male models. But, come on, let’s be honest. No man can ever hold you like four posters and a soft down comforter in your choice of colors.

A bed is something that is everlasting. While things in your life are changing, you will

(hopefully) always have abed to come home to. Beds foster your craziest fantasies and make

them come to life while you sleep. Beds are supportive, while being predictable and cozy at the sametime. A bed is like a fresh start, because after a goodnight of sleep, the possibilities for the next day are limitless. A bed is something that most people take for granted. So, for once, why not write about its awesome glory?

So yes, while lying in my bed I do feel perfectly content. It is nice to know I have somewhere I can goto press the pause button on life for a moment and just relax. Lying motionless in bed

gives me time to focus on cultivating my weirdest thoughts into usable and meaningful ideas; it gives me time to reflect on the day and focus on what's to come.

**NYU, Here and Abroad Noelle Simon**

**Given the NYU campuses of interest you selected on the Common**

**Application - whether they be your primary and alternate home**

**campuses of interest or where you would like to study away while**

**you are a student - where, exactly, would you like to study at NYU - and why?**

I remember the first time, for better or worse, that I ever visited New York City. My parents

decided it would be a great idea to road trip there (creating the basis of my hatred for long car

rides). After two long, exhausting days of torturous confinement, we finally arrived in the

magical city only to encounter our first (of many) dilemmas: finding the hotel. While driving

through the sleek, organized streets in our 2009 Honda minivan, our little merry band of misfits from Texas discovered that we didn't really fit into the fast-paced, no-nonsense New York vibe. We ended up running over the curb of a huge Victoria's Secret store in Times Square, a mere 40 blocks from where our hotel actually was.

The next day, being the rebellious son of a gun I was, I decided I was going to tell my parents I was working out in the hotel while really going out and exploring the vast city. I mean, what

could go wrong? I was 12, with no money or cellphone; I was practically invincible.

No,this story doesn’t end up with some scary police report saying I was kidnapped, or my

getting lost in the city and having to hop a subway turnstile to get back. (For the record, I did

eventually get caught by my father because, when we went to get breakfast from the small corner bakery the next morning, the man at the cash register called me out on coming there two days in a row). However, this story does end with me realizing how amazing Manhattan really was, and from then on knowing I needed to end up there.

So, when you ask the question, “Where at NYU do you want to study?” I have many answers. While I dream of sitting on the lawn of Washington Square Park reading a communications

textbook in preparation for my next class, I would also have to say that studying “The

Anthropology of Indigenous Australia” in Sydney would be enjoyable. I wouldn’t say no to

learning about abnormal psychology in London. It would be a dream to take Spanish Two in

Spain, or a creative writing course in Ghana. “Algebra, Calculus, and the Rise Of Modern

Science” might be more entertaining if taken in Shanghai. I’d never turn down an internship in communication studies in Prague. What I’m trying to say is that traveling the world has always been my dream, and with all the study abroad programs NYU offers, I feel like it could finally come true.

I plan to major in communications at NYU and eventually get a job in Public Relations. NYU is the perfect place to explore this discipline, because it has one of the top programs in the nation. How could it not, when it has all of New York City as its playground? While at NYU, I hope to get an internship in Public Relations that could help jumpstart the rest of my life as a fast-paced, no-nonsense New Yorker.

**Artistic Influences Anonymous**

**How has a film, play, book, television series, painting, music or**

**other significant work of art inspired or influenced your own work or the way you look at the world?**

The sound of the rhythmic clave at the very beginning of the opening number of *In the*

*Heights* brings me back to my childhood -- yes, even more than my favorite Disney television show theme song does. This rap hip-hop musical, written by and starring Lin Manuel Miranda,

was first introduced tome when I was aten year-old. I had left my primarily white suburban

elementary school for a much more diverse arts magnet school 45 minutes away in part to pursue my dreams of being an actor. In my new classes, I finally met people who were as interested in

the arts as I was (not to mention a few who shared my Jewish background). Despite at last

finding people that I had things in common with, I was still the only Puerto Rican person that I knew. My Puerto Rican grandparents lived halfway across the country, and I wasn’tvery in

touch with that part of my culture, other than dancing to the occasional reggaeton song.

When *In the Heights* came to Broadway, I honestly didn’t know that much about my Puerto Rican heritage. My father, however, bought the cast album and played it whenever we went on long drives somewhere. I loved musical theater and reggaeton, but the mix of the two was

something that I had never heard before. The main character, Usnavi, is of Dominican descent, but many characters in the show are Puerto Rican, as is the author himself. The show follows around Usnavi in his barrio in New York City, interacting with his Spanish speaking neighbors and showing how Hispanic people bring their culture in America. Enchanted by this more

modern *West Side Story*, I was immediately drawn to the narrative and the captivating

Caribbean beats. By the end of that year, I had learned all of the lyrics and was watching (and ardently re-watching) the Tony Award winning performance on YouTube.

Through *In the Heights*, I learned to appreciate my heritage, and to look at the world through a critically intelligent lens. Lin Manuel Miranda tells his story by not just explaining it. He

utilized the forms of rap and musical theater to show how he grew up, and his creation has inspired me to be original in telling my own stories through film.

**My Cake Anonymous**

**Personal Statement**

I guarantee I can make you the perfect cake. Not just a delicious cake, or an overly expensive

looking cake – I'll make one you'll have to love because it will reflect you as an individual. It's a pretty rare talent, the skills for which took me years of playing with various sugary substances to acquire. A single cake can take more than ten hours work, spanned over a few days to finish. I

know it's time well spent once the cake it eaten, completely gone – then it is visual art and edible art, all the more memorable for its ephemeral nature. I've made a wedding cake that combined

whimsical humor with earthy beauty, a match for the bride I'd never met in person. Family, charity, friends, friends of friends – I've made cakes for them all.

The only person I've refused to make a cake for is myself. If the personality determines the

design, then what cake could be easier than my own? It's not a lack self awareness that stops me, but an overwhelming amount of knowledge. A cake for myself would have to be ultimate, all-

encompassing; anything less would leave me unsatisfied. Just to imagine it is a daunting task....

First off, flavors need to be chosen. This means, as always, hitting the recipe book shelf. Sitting on the floor surrounded by open books, it's hard to not get wrapped up in all the possibilities.

Half an hour later I've decided – chocolate “cloud” cake layered with chocolate mousse and ganache for the outside. This flourless cake has one of the most impressive batters I've found; with carefully beaten eggs providing the structure. It's a recipe that's as mesmerizing

scientifically as the taste is. With these choices, the chances of a large sculpted cake toppling over before it's even done are high, but that's alright. My cake will be risky and delicious.

As for design, the most important piece of information is the occasion. A graduation cake seems fitting – something to celebrate my experiences thus far and recognize the drastic change college years will bring. I mull over what could represent me in such away, and the cliché “story of my life” comes to mind. The cake will be a vertical stack of books, each volume represented a

different stage in my life. The subtle humor in this seems fitting, so very me.I start stacking the cakes, reaching a foot high block, and then begin to roll out the fondant to cover the cake. It

takes a few hours just to carve the ridges down the side of the stack that look like book bindings and then get a piece of fondant to stay over the whole thing. Even after years of practice, fondant can still require a few tries until it is just right.

Now the the cake is a blank series, waiting for meto fill in the book titles along the binding. I

start at the bottom, where the books are large and very thin: “1995 – Ruining Brother's Chances of Being an Only Child”, “1998 – The Quiet Child Who Won't Stop Eating Onions”, “1999 –

Learning French and Figure Drawing at a Really Weird Montessori School”. As I moveup the stack, the books become smaller, but thicker: “20\_\_ – First Family Death”, “2003 – Santa's Not Real!?”, “2004 – Ruling the School in Fifth Grade”, “2005 – The Awkward Stage Begins”,

“2009 – The First Cake”, “2010 – How to be a Good Camp Counselor”, “2011 – AP Classes Eat Time”, “2012 – Applying for College”. The top book will be a kindle, the newest addition to my personal library. Innovation is admirable, but tradition has it's place in every cake. A graduation cap will be the topper.

The main cake is done, but there is still the hardest work ahead. I fashion some open books out

of rice crispy treats and fondant, ready to reveal some of the more important aspects of my life. They're scattered haphazardly around the stack. With modeling chocolate, I begin sculpting

figures to place on the open pages, to bring the books to life. There are two dogs, the loves of my life, pulling themselves out of one book towards a treat. There's a book with rudimentary figures of my family on top. One book is about home – a replica of my school on one page and my

house on the other. And there's a book with a filled bookshelf on top, just in case my love of literature wasn't clear enough. With this, my cake is complete.

When there is a cake that transcends into the field of art, I see beyond it's physical form to the

person the cake is made for. This may seem like a stretch – who wouldn't be doubtful that a

pastry could reveal so much? – but it's the infallible premise on which my cakes are made. Even this hypothetical cake portrays so much of who I am. The ironic part is that it maybe as short- lived as any real cake. I expect the experiences of the next few years will leave me a wiser,

changed person. So, I'll leave finally making my own cake to a daywhen it can be an even grander representation of who I am and will become.

**Full Color Sophia Smith**

**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.**

I am not a religious person. I cringe at the sound of Christian rock, think Broadway's The Book of Mormon is shamelessly hilarious, and am often scolded by my elders for flippantly

exclaiming "Oh my God!" I find the following of dogmatic religious rules to be a waste of time - why does God care that I eat bacon?

I am not a religious person, but I serve on an Episcopalian vestry, singin a church choir, and attend a monthly theology class.

My relationship with religion has not always been so complicated. I was once a model

Episcopalian, attending Christian summer camps and keeping a prayer journal. My epiphany did not come until high school, when I devoured My Name is Asher Lev, The Kite Runner, and even Itzhak Bentov’s A Brief Tour of Higher Consciousness. With the help of Chaim Potok and John Steinbeck and Ian McEwan, I discovered that being good is not mutually exclusive with being

religious. I was suddenly free to explore my own beliefs without fear of divine retribution, and I realized that I had never truly believed any part of the Christian tradition.

Instead of turning away from the church, I chose to preserve my relationship with the parish. In fact, the year I stopped identifying as Christian was the same year I became a Vestry Member at Large. My work in the church is not a ploy to seem devout; I stayed because there are so many things I love about it. Being a student from a conservative rural high school, the church is my

intellectual oasis: there are political debates over coffee, Chaucer-related jokes cracked during parish breakfasts, and discussions about last night’s symphony performance in the choir room.

I love the sense of community I feel when I walk into the chapel. I have grownup with the

people there, from the acolytes with whom I cannot make eye contact during services, else risk bursting into laughter, to the Sunday Schoolteacher who eyes me pointedly and squeezes my

hand after I skip a few too many services. I appreciate the work my fellow parishioners do with the surrounding low-income neighborhood and I love the respect they have for everyone,

regardless of race, socioeconomics, sexuality, or religious beliefs.

Sure, there are dangers to organized religion: wars, persecution, radicalization, the Westboro

Baptist Church. Yet for every ugly facet of faith, there are a hundred beautiful ones: fingers

surreptitiously dipped into a baptismal font; a ray of sunlight shining through a shard of stained glass; the soft mumbles of concentrated prayers at vestry meetings; tears shed during a moving offertory hymn.

For a while, I was decidedly atheist. However, try as I might, I cannot accept that humanity only exists because of a series of cosmic and evolutionary coincidences. There has to

be something out there, but as humans, it must not be our business to know what. If a divine

being does exist, I doubt humans are advanced enough to comprehend what He or She or It is. I suspect that my beliefs will remain turbulent for the rest of my life; for all I know, in ten years I could be drawn back into Christian dogma. At the moment, I am exploring the practice of

Buddhist dharma, which focuses on maintaining a positive attitude, working hard, and treating others with respect.

Religion often builds barriers between people. It can be easy to see the world as black and white: the people who agree with me, and the people who are wrong. My time in church has taught me

to see the world in full color: to try to never judge another person based on his or her background, to respect others' beliefs, and to connect with everyone I meet.

**How Nonsense Syllables Taught Me Leadership Anonymous**

**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.**

It is Sunday afternoon and my friends and I are all making nonsense syllables. “Dim dims” and “Ooh bop bops” fill the room and flow out of the windows we have opened in the heat. We’re not crazy – we’re just having a cappella rehearsal.

Contemporary a cappella is a style of music in which voices are used in lieu of instruments to cover popular songs. The voices are usually accompanied by “beat-boxing,” a style of making percussion with the mouth. I joined Sophistikeys, the all-female a cappella group at my high school, at the beginning of my freshman year.

Maybe you recall the movie Pitch Perfect, which came out a few years ago? The story of the

Sophistikeys is not unlike the a cappella group in Pitch Perfect, although maybe without the

perfect Hollywood ending. In the film, the female Barden Bellas are considered inferior to the

all-male a cappella group at their school. Through hard work, seen through some classic training montage scenes, the Bellas come out on top, proving everyone who doubted them wrong.

When I joined Sophistikeys in my freshman year, our school had a coed group that everyone considered the best. During my first two years, even after a third, all-male group formed, there

was animosity between the groups. It frustrated me, as it still does today, that our groups should be compared so directly because it is very different to work with all-female voices than to work with the full range of male and female voices, or even just with male voices. Still, many people just accepted this “aca-hierarchy” as the way things were.

When I joined the leadership of Sophistikeys in my sophomore year, it would have been easy to accept that the student body would never consider us as good as the coed group. However, I

really wanted the hard work that the members of Sophistikeys and I put into every practice

recognized. Or maybe I felt a little bit competitive, too. I learned how to arrange music for a

cappella. I tried to figure out the best ways to arrange given the particular voices and musical

backgrounds of our members. I often had to be the bad guy, scolding members who didn’t come to rehearsals or were unfocused. Sometimes I felt like none of this was doing any good but then, at the start of my junior year, things began to change.

It’shard to explain how it happened, but suddenly Sophistikeys started sounding better than we ever had – and people started to notice. It was probably a combination of my becoming a more experienced arranger and an increased level of dedication from the members of the group, but, boy, did it feel good.

Countless people have told me after performances that Sophistikeys always looks like we’re

having fun on stage. I’ve begun to respond, “We are!” I am very proud of this. I strongly believe that performing should be fun and that sometimes joy is more important than pure talent. I am

committed to making Sophistikeys an enjoyable experience for its members and to making it a community. I have made some of my best friends through Sophistikeys and I hope that the same thing will be true for younger members.

Where my story differs from Pitch Perfect, however, is that things still aren’t, well, perfect.

Many people still consider the coed group better and they are frequently the group that talented new students join. I’ve decided, however, that I would rather Sophistikeys be a group that takes in singers who are not as accomplished and helps them grow as musicians than one that only

accepts raw talent. And while we haven’t completely toppled the “aca-hierarchy”, all three

groups have become more friendly and much less competitive, which leads to a more enjoyable environment at performances.

**Failure Anonymous**

**The lessons we take from failure can be fundamental to later**

**success. Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?**

Fifteen minutes before the deadline, I hit “submit.” Only forty-eight hours earlier, my game

wasn’t even a concept. The entire process was rushed, with compromises at every step to meet

the impending deadline. I wasn’t satisfied with the end result. The graphics were rushed, with

many textures made in the last hour. While the map had roadways and buildings, there were vast empty spaces, and it lacked charm and polish. For two days, I watched my feature list shrink and my bug list grow, as time constraints forced me to cut planned mechanics to fix broken ones.

Had I been working under any other circumstances I would be content hiding my game from view. Instead, submitting that game was one of my proudest moments this summer.I didn’t

procrastinate, despite only starting two days prior. Ludum Dare describes itself as an

“accelerated online game development event,” also known as a “game jam.” Three times each year, over two thousand developers, novice and professional alike, create their own games from scratch in 48 hours, incorporating a theme chosen by the community. Designing a quality video

game typically takes a team of professional developers far longer. For a student like me,

developing a game that’s even playable in a weekend demands late nights, long hours, and sharp focus. While I managed to maintain nearly eight hours of sleep, three meals, and one shower

everyday, all remaining time was spent focusing on the game, from the moment the theme was announced to the final submission.Competition rules state, “Your prize is your product.” As I look at my “trophy,” I know that I’ve broken this rule. Tome, the game isn’t the prize, it’s a

byproduct. My real prize is the development. When I work on a long-term project, I know I can

create a functional program at the end. Occasionally, however, I box myself into using

techniques I know. One might expect that when under pressure, I would tend to stick tightly to

familiar solutions. On the contrary, the urgency makes me search for the most robust, yet simple solution. With limited time, I need to know that I won’t spend all day adding something small— or all night trying to fix it! If a solution works, it’s another tool available tome. If it fails, I can observe why and apply that knowledge to other problems. A closer look at that pattern reveals

the true prize of Ludum Dare. Instead of testing an individual feature, each competition provides an opportunity to test themes, styles, and gameplay mechanics. My first attempt had an absurd

combination of visual styles. Over the next two competitions, I refined my style into a cleaner, unified one, partially triggered by the theme of “minimalism” given for my second competition. After two failed games in which the player controlled a human character, I shifted paradigms,

finally tasting success with a puzzle-based game. Using simple animations, I eliminated the jarring transitions between frames that I observed in my first two entries. These progressive improvements made my third entry one of the strongest games I’ve made, in 48 hours or

otherwise.Failure is only truly failure if the story ends. My secret to Ludum Dare is that it’s

never just a 48-hour competition. Each game is different, but undeniably influenced by the

experiences from past entries. This game didn’t meet my expectations. After the success of my last game, and armed with a new engine, I had higher hopes. But even as the thought of touching a keyboard again could make me shudder after a weekend of furious typing, my mind couldn’t

stop thinking about the next competition. Submitting something with full knowledge of how to make it better feels awful, but creation is a process. Realizing flaws and their solutions isn’t

something to be ashamed of. Instead, it is imperative to improvement.

**The Carrot Anonymous**

**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.**

I am sitting inside a carrot.

Burnt orange walls surround me. Rough brush strokes of this rusty shade streak the back of the door. Paint is hastily dripped invisible spots on the concrete floor. The room is about three feet by three feet and empty, except forme. As I sit on my throne, I feel slightly claustrophobic. Oh, my throne is made of porcelain. I’m sitting on a toilet.

The carrot is abathroom stall. And I grew up in it.

In sixth grade, I began performing at my community theater. It was the third day of theatre camp, and I had to tinkle. I sauntered into the bathroom and immediately connected the color to the

disgusting vegetable. An eleven-year-old comedian, I burst out of the dressing room, ran to my friends, and hit them with the one-liner; “It’s like peeing inside of a carrot!” They roared with laughter, and I accepted my professed position as “Resident Funny Man”. For the next five

years, I would repeat these words over and over. For comedy.

The years went by, my joke prevailed, and the carrot hosted new affairs. In seventh grade it was where I changed costumes before I was confident in my body; where, in eighth grade, I took my nervous pees before going onstage, still warming up to the idea of performing for hundreds of

people. Freshman year it was where I kissed a boy in a desperate and embarrassing attempt to find privacy. A horrible illness struck me during sophomore year, and in my carrot, I spent my time vomiting violently before every song. Junior year, my friend had a panic attack minutes before we had to perform the opening number, and I gave comfort to her there. Through it all, the walls were orange.

It might sound bizarre to say I grew up in a restroom. If theatre is what defines me, shouldn’t I

say the stage fostered my childhood years? Maybe, but when one has been in a place for so long, sometimes the insignificant things truly show how much has changed there. That stall harbors so many of the lessons I learned by performing theatre. I learned not to be ashamed of the way I

look, and to be confident in doing what I am passionate about. I learned that I really did not like kissing boys in bathrooms. I learned to persevere, even when it seemed impossible. I learned to be a friend when someone needed one. These moments shaped me, not only because of theatre, but also trapped between the four walls of a carrot.

At the end of junior year, I used that stall for the first time since it’s renovation. The walls were no longer graced with a sloppy burnt orange paint job, but enameled with a glossy white coat. I wasn’t sitting in my carrot; I was sitting in a bathroom stall.

I know there is no divine reason for the change in interior design, but I can’thelp feeling there’s an extended metaphor hidden somewhere within the paint. The restroom that stayed so consistent in my upbringing is moving on to newer times–and I am too. This community theater has been

my second home, but it’s time for a new adventure: for both me, and the bathroom stall. Maybe it will be a palace for a new young actress to grow up in; maybe she’ll even call it a cauliflower (although I think a carrot is much funnier). Sometimes I look for remnants of the old paint and only see the new white sheen, but if I look down, the drips of burnt orange remain on the

concrete, reminding me that theatre shaped me into who I am. Not even a thousand coats of paint can make this bathroom stall anything less than the carrot that I grew up in.

**How a Family Can Heal Anonymous**

**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.**

Every night, my mother transformed. Her alter-ego was no superhero, however. This lady was louder than my mom, a bit slower-moving, and she laughed much more often. She looked the

same as my mom, except that her eyes were vacant like one of my dolls. She was clumsy, too, though it didn’t seem to bother her much. I’d run to her side when she tipped off her chair, only to find her giggling in a crumpled heap on the floor. “I’m gonna lay here for a little bit, baby,” she’d assure me as her eyelids fluttered shut. Watching her sleep, I felt deep in my stomach a

fear that she wouldn’t wake up, or that if she did she would be stuck as the stupid smiling lady forever. I hated that lady for stealing my mom from me.

When I’d wake up wherever we had ended up the night before, I’dbe alone. I’d getup to find

my mom, without fail, in the kitchen making breakfast. Leaning over the stove, she sang along to the radio, and she’d hand me a plate of pancakes with purple flowers painted on using food

coloring. When she smiled at me the light was back in her eyes. I knew that we would not talk about the bathroom floor, the dinner which had gone unmade, or the fear I’d felt. So I found

refuge at school. In class, I felt in charge of not only my actions but of their results. I found a

place where I could have what I craved: attention. This came in the form of praise from my

teachers. With this constant reassurance, I felt that I truly belonged. I was able to make sense of things in Math, English, or Science no matter how confusing they first seemed, and I believed that if I had enough practice at this problem solving I’d eventually be able to sort out what was happening at home.

Eventually, however, my family broached the topic. My mom was staying in a rehabilitation

center, and the time spent between relatives was my first exposure to the concept of alcoholism. Suddenly, phrases like “disease” and “getting help” and, always, “she loves you very much”

filled the space that my vivid imaginings always had. I was terrified, asking, “Is that deadly? Can’t they cut out the other lady?” The world I believed in was shattered by a series of neatly- packaged words. Nobody knew exactly what to say, and when my mother returned home the topic was taboo once again.

My family, though they tried, couldn’thelp mein the way that I needed. My mother was given

continuous support; even beyond rehab there were groups and psychiatrists. Nobody reached out tome to help me understand what my mom was dealing with, and there was no place where I felt comfortable sharing how I felt. Once again, I found solace in learning. To combat the isolation I felt I began to independently research the nature of addiction. I was haunted by the question of

alcoholism’s heredity. Was this my fate, as well? If I had not found the answers to alcoholism myself, my mom and I may never have been able to repair our relationship. My interest in

psychology stemmed from my own experiences and my desire to explain the behaviors which affected me so greatly, but my passion for psychology stemmed from my desire to better these situations for children affected by issues in mental health.

I hope to make these resources more available to children. First, I believe here should be

education in schools about social issues such as substance abuse, and opportunities given for

children to seek support. Furthermore, in addition to programs which help adults, I believe that it should become the standard that an addict’s family takes part in rehabilitation as well. Children being apart of the recovery process will keep them from fearing or resenting it. My upbringing has shown me what is important in my future. I plan to pursue psychology because I believe that whole families, in addition to individuals, should be able to heal from the toll that addiction

takes.

**Female Struggle Anonymous**

**Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that**

**marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.**

Zipping through the tiled halls, I glance back and grin. I grab her hand, and we soar through an arch of fluorescent-lit stores, gliding past stands selling cheap accessories in our clunky

rollerblades. We stop, resting our feet, and scope out our audience. A sea of cloaked figures

shuffles around us, giving us the occasional glare or smirk. A few of them jeer at us, but we’re used to it, and they’re easy enough to ignore. All of the women including us wear black from

head to toe, some of them even covering their faces. The only visible skin belongs to men—and the occasional child—who shuffle in white traditional robes while their hooded wives trail

behind. “Zaira,” I call, “let’s go again!” She nods, and we speedup, skating our way through the black and white maze.

After watching children skate through the Dhahran Mall in Saudi Arabia the previous week, we decided to do the same, so we boarded the bus to themall that afternoon after prayer ended,

carrying rollerblades. We slow down at a toy store, staring at the bright display. I hear a grunt

and spin around, finding a curious Saudi ten feet away. He appears to be in his twenties, and his most distinguishable feature is a large single eyebrow. “You have Instagram?” he asks in a thick accent, grinning and ogling my covered body. “Uh… yes?” I stutter, puzzled. Then he charges towards us, arms extended, as if to grope me. His eyes are crazed.

My heart jumps, and my legs are Jell-O. I know I’ve made a big mistake and that I have to get

away quickly. Zaira’s definitely also afraid, because we both start dashing away. We swerve

around the shrouded figures, almost tripping, until the beast of a man stops sprinting after us. We make eye contact and burst out laughing but secretly hide panic in our pounding hearts.

Recalling this incident doesn’t cause fear; in fact, I’ve had many like it. Living in a community like this—a place so lenient about things like rollerblading in a mall yet so strict about female dress—has become second nature tome. I first moved to Saudi Arabia in seventh grade, when I was starting the transition from girl to woman. I didn’t yet understand the sexualization of

women, but I quickly had to accept it. After being ogled by local workers even while being

almost completely covered up, I learned to think of my female body as a desired object. I

realized the extent of restrictions on females when I found I couldn’t goto my Muslim male

friends’ houses because of gender segregation. I matured and watched my female Muslim peers

start wearing the hijab to cover their “tempting” hair, one at a time, until everyone of their heads and bodies was covered. Although respected as an exceptionally Islamic nation, Saudi Arabia

has harsh rules that only intensify rebellion in men and women.

Not long after I returned to America for school, I was introduced to feminist ideals. I slowly

changed the mindset that I was an object and began to realize that the root of the problem came from the men that desperately tried to reign over women. I had the amazing opportunity to listen to Malala Yousafzai, and listening to her struggles against female oppression inspires me to do my best with my education and apply to incredible colleges. I’ve been a witness to obedient

women whose only purpose in life is to take care of their families without pursuing their own dreams. Many female friends that still live in Saudi believe they don’t need education because they’ll be dependent on husbands later in life, and seeing these mindsets makes my concern

much stronger. I wouldn’t change my background, even after experiencing so many

uncomfortable events, because it only helped me shape my view of the world.

**Mad About Medicine Anonymous**

**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.**

His skin detached from its threadlike bindings to unveil a unique color palette. Excess blood

flooded the area, only to be extracted by a contraption of assorted tubes. Muscle tissue, each

fiber visible, danced around bones and ligaments to the heart’s metronome. The patient is

sprawled across an adjustable bed draped in azure sheets, indistinguishable in color from the

metal-wielding committee proceeding around him. An assortment of screens monitor his vital and sedative levels, constantly fluctuating throughout the operation. Millimeters of metal

penetrate, slice, and contort the torn ligament, as titanium screws fuse with bone to function as pillars to the delicate structure. Nylon and polypropylene web fasten the intentional laceration.

The tear in the dorsal region of his left scapholunate ligament is repaired. Fascinated and curious, I marvel at the genius orchestrating before me.

Days traversing rickety playgrounds inevitably led to my fair share of injuries, both witnessed

and experienced. Cowering at the pain of a splinter’s incision and wincing at molten pavement

scraping the skin off my kneecaps gave me the opportunity to observe the magical healing

properties of the human body. I then assumed the role of doctor and patient, as tweezers bounced within my quivering grip and cascades of hydrogen peroxide met cotton balls. My fascination

with the medical field developed early; however, my first experience came far later.

My first opportunity to experience hands-on medicine occurred in the spring of my junior year,

when I was accepted to volunteer at Lahey Hospital and Medical Center. My job involved

moving supplies, filing, and cleaning, but I did not care. I was enthralled by the opportunity and my fit in the hospital was hand-in-glove. Each day I showed up early. The monotony of “flipping beds”- trading in one set of azure sheets and pillowcase for another- permeated my days. The

tedious cleaning of equipment frustrated me, as painfully undersized latex gloves expanded then burst, which lead tome handling chemically laden wipes with my unprotected, callused hands. My eyes grew weary as my swift hands slowed. Colored manila folders I ordered sequentially: evaluation, diagnosis, treatment plan, charts, medical records, insurance forms, and release

forms. The work remained ceaseless; yet, my initial fervor for the hospital setting never

dissipated. My service to Lahey ultimately rewarded me with the opportunity to shadow surgery.

Shadowing Doctor Tong at Lahey Hospital and Medical Center in Peabody, Massachusetts

affirmed my interest in medicine. The deliberate, delicate workings of the human body are each so nuanced and vulnerable. Understanding its cumulative complexity is my goal. I see the

transformative powers of medicine and I envision myself at the forefront of the movement. My

affinity for the discipline prompts my desire to devote my life to contributing to the medical field and community. The key to my happiness is a life of good health; my goal is to provide that to

the masses.

**184,000 Miles Haley Braner**

**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.**

184,000 miles. This is the number glowing green on the dashboard of my 2008 gold Prius.

Although most people might interpret this number as a sign my car has been on the road for far too long, I see it as a badge of honor. Despite the strange noise that accompanies speeds over 30 miles per hour, and the persistent smell of old Thai food, my car is one of the most cherished

spaces in my life. It is quite literally a vehicle for discovery, both a means of transportation and a physical space where I have the time to think, debate, and dream.

Well before 184,000 miles, probably closer to 80,000 miles, I was sitting in the passenger seat of the car at 11 years old. With no choice in car entertainment, I was compelled to listen to my

father’s hours-long biographies of famed political figures. I would put my scrawny legs up on the dashboard, lay my head back to watch the pink-blue sky filter through the sunroof of our Prius, and listen to the smooth voice of Richard McGonagle narrate the highs and lows of

Andrew Jackson’s political career as we rolled through the farms of Central Valley. I did not

always understand the specifics, but the biographies continually led to intense discussions about purpose, morality, and determination. At 180,000 miles, I was driving through eastern California with my two best friends, the car full of laughter and music. While exploring the caverns of

Salvation Mountain, I did not find myself thinking about the next spot to snap that insta-worthy shot. Instead, my friends and I considered the implications of this tourist attraction in a rather

destitute area. While driving through Imperial Valley, we discussed the plight of migrant farm

workers who depend on the growing seasons for work, and we dreamt up solutions involving

sustainable farming practices. And when we came upon the Salton Sea, we stared out among the

dead fish that littered the shores and contemplated how human carelessness erodes the environment, and in turn how it affects the economies of the surrounding communities.

I’m at 184,000 miles now, driving to and from school everyday. The car has become an

extension of the classroom. On these daily rides, my brother and I trade hypotheticals: he asks me what historical event I would change if possible, and I ask him if he thinks the world would have ended up any different if I had changed something. From there the conversation shifts, as we ponder ancient philosophies, modern poets, the very best snack foods. From the social

theories of Diogenes to Fermi’s paradox and the zoo hypothesis, we are unembarrassed to

entertain every idea.I know my relationship with my car is unique. In California, where most

people equate the car with rush hour traffic and pollution, the vehicle gets a bad rep. As someone who is passionate about the environment and social justice issues, I understand the grievances

that the car elicits. The car is the poster child of mass production, a principle figure behind the conformist culture of post-war America. Yet, I find beauty in the other aspects of the car, the things that I have been able to do as a result of this machine.

Time in the car is time unallocated to any other activity. I cannot be frantically cramming for a test, answering emails or checking social media. I simply must exist in the moment. 184,000

miles is soon to be 185,000 miles. I don’t know where I’m going next, but I’ll let you know when I get there.

**Room Anonymous**

**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.**

On the 23rd floor, in the midst of darkness and a sea of repetitive buildings, I breathed freely

through the footage I was editing. I was inhaling fear and exhaling joy as I trimmed through the videos in symphony with the emotions of the scene. As I edited, I was acting in a room in my

mind; I was performing on a stage designed by my aesthetic memory and emotions.

I remembered everything about this room.

I was seeing the world through my mom’s camera in a tourist site filled with temples and crowds that made this place seem insignificant to a seven years old. I turned my lens towards things that spoke tome: the cracks on the redwalls; the ants marching on the grass. The joy of collecting

these items with my camera felt like getting new toys. Pleased with my mementos, I imagined a room where I would store my growing collection. Later, my parents found the photos interesting enough to give me my own camera.

As if allowing my eyes to be guided by the spirit of the room, I developed a habit of

photographing mundane objects to make sense of an abstract world. Occasionally, I felt

embarrassed when I aimed my lens at plastic bags floating in the breeze instead of the grandeur

tourist sites. This situation made me question whether we are supposed to appreciate the

commonly valued things or whether the purpose of art is to express our emotions and challenge commonly held beliefs. As a result, I began expressing myself by pushing the walls of my room

towards drawing. As I built onto my metaphorical room, it developed an ambiance that

paralleled my physical location and absorbed my emotions from the fast-paced city I lived in. My anxiety developed in line with my academic studies. I scheduled to keep ahead of the

anxiety. However, the more I planned, the greater the panic that my anxiety would pounce on me. Soon, the pressure from all the deadlines and activities combined with the panic. I felt

pushed to the edge until my psychology teacher wisely told me “Embrace it if you can’t

overcome it.” This inspired me to invite my anxiety into my room and use it as an inspiration for art. My feelings gave life to my growing collection, and I developed a hunger for more human

emotions. Every daily interaction became a study in the emotions of others. Soon, still images were no longer enough to capture the vibrant emotions that surrounded me. Consequently, I

found myself writing stories and bringing them to life through video.

Driven by this new passion for filmmaking, I established a film club at my school. However,

anxiety returned as I was asked to record an introduction for my club. I began to doubt myself in every shot that I framed. This struggle, however, led to a breakthrough as my perception of

photography and drawing merged with filmmaking. The walls that separated the different areas of my room collapsed and the boundaries between different art forms disappeared. All of my

passions merged in an unrestricted symphony of aesthetics, perceptions, and sensitivities, not unlike when my anxieties merged with my creativity.

I also found a better way to access the room — to do creative work late at night after I finish my homework. Since I was entering a dream state, I stopped critiquing my instincts and allowed

serotonin to carry my ideas onto the paper. I was driven by imagination and emotion, and I was fearless as they merged all art forms into one. Because of this breakthrough, I felt a

responsibility to my art. I was duty bound to depict and scrutinize human existence for the

viewers of my works; I finally knew that my mission would be to create stories that capture human emotions and make people reflect on the world around them.

**Why I chose Sports**

**Management Anonymous**

**We are particularly interested in knowing what motivated you to**

**apply to NYU and more specifically, why you have applied or**

**expressed interest in a particular campus, school, college, program, and/or area of study? If you have applied to more than one, please tell us why you are interested in each of the campuses, schools,**

**colleges, or programs to which you have applied. You may be**

**focused or undecided, or simply open to the options within NYU's global network; regardless, we want to understand - Why NYU? (400 word maximum)**

Sweat dripped off my face, and my body trembled in excitement. Playing along with some of the top high school players in the nation, I yearned to belong. However, as I sat on the flight back to Taiwan after camp, I realized that my mind and heart were in the right place but life is cruel. I

did not win the genetic lottery. I had flown over the Pacific to fulfill a dream, but instead I was left wondering if this might be the end of my passion for basketball.

As a 5’7 Asian with a little bounce in my feet, I have always had a profound love for sports. But last summer at a basketball camp in the U.S. was the rude awakening experience that forced me to realize that I would probably never become the professional athlete I had hoped to be. I had no choice but to embark on another path in life. Fortunately, when I learned of the Sports

Management program at NYU, I was ecstatic because I discovered another path into the world I love.

By garnering knowledge about the sports and entertainment industry, I can continue to pursue

the passion that I have long possessed and immerse myself in one of the most exciting industries.

Through the Sports Management program at Tisch Institute, I foresee unbelievable experiences as I learn and develop in one of the greatest sports meccas, NYC. Through internships at

multiple organizations, such as Madison Square Garden and lecture series with professionals in the field, I can explore every opportunity and lay down the foundation I need to thrive in the

world of professional sports.

This past summer, working next to my dad, who runs a large shoe manufacturer for Adidas and Under Armor, strengthened my interest in the Sports Management program at NYU. If I could develop in interest in a business that is so remotely related to my passion, I could only imagine the zest and fervor that I will have for actually being in the world of sports.

For a year, I believed that my dream was eviscerated. Luckily, when one door closed, NYU

opened another door forme. Becoming a professional athlete is no longer viable, but the exciting world of sports awaits me, and NYU is my gateway to the world of my dreams.

**Just Keep Folding Mark Kellerman**

**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.**

Having explored the myths from ancient Greece, Rome, and Egypt, my curiosity was piqued in

eighth grade by a simple legend from Japanese lore. If you fold one thousand paper cranes, the

gods will grant you one wish. I took it as a challenge. My previous forays into origami had ended poorly, but I was so excited to begin my quest that this detail seemed inconsequential. My art

teacher loaned me a piece of origami paper and, armed with an online tutorial, my quest began. Like an early prototype of the airplane, I ascended towards my dreams for a glorious moment

before nose-diving into the ground. The first crane was a disastrous failure of wrinkly lines and torn paper. Too embarrassed to ask for another, I turned to my stack of Post-it notes. By the third attempt, I ended up with a sticky pink paper crane. Holding that delicate bird, I was flooded with triumph and elation.

The first two hundred cranes were all crafted from Post-it notes. Armed with a pack of

highlighters, I decorated each piece of paper individually. I folded cranes at home, between

classes, and in the car. My fingers were permanently sticky from the glue I scraped off every

square. Slowly, my collection grew: first ten, then fifty, then one hundred. Before the task could become monotonous, I started experimenting. How small was it possible for a crane to be?

Smaller than a golf ball? Smaller than a dime? Small enough to sit on the end of a pencil? Any

size was attainable. I could make a crane smaller than almost any arbitrary form of measurement.

Soon I could finish a crane in fifty seconds or with my eyes closed. Anything square and

foldable became my medium. Paper towels, candy wrappers, and aluminum foil joined my

vibrant menagerie of carefully folded paper. I was unstoppable; that wish was as good as mine.

By six hundred cranes, the increasing demands of high school academics caused my pace to slow. I despaired. I wouldn’t let this be another ambitious project that I couldn’t finish.

My cranes mattered tome. As an outlet for expression, they served as away to defuse frustration and sadness, and a source of pride and joy. Their creation allows me to bring beauty to the world and to find a sense of order in the bustle and chaos of life. There is a lot of beauty to be found in tiny things. I’m reminded that little gestures have a lot of meaning. I have given away cranes to my friends as a pick-me-up on bad days, and I have made cranes to commemorate people, such as the dark green crane I made the day my grandmother died. They are a symbol of hope to

remind me what I have accomplished.

So, I pushed myself to keep working and to keep folding one crane at a time. My determination paid off, and in the summer after sophomore year, my passion was reinvigorated. One month

before the end of junior year, I folded my thousandth paper crane. As I leaned over the open drawer brimming with origami pieces in a multitude of sizes and colors, I felt a rush of

satisfaction and triumph. Not only was 1,000 cranes an achievement in its own right, but I proved to myself that I can finish what I start.

The world is filled with big numbers. College tuition, monthly rent, and car prices deal in the

many thousands. Those figures are incomprehensible to someone who has never interacted with anything so large, and I wanted to understand them. A thousand will never simply be a number tome: it is hundreds upon hundreds of hand-folded cranes combined with years of effort.

So what did I wish for? It turns out, I didn’t need the wish. I learned I have the power to make things happen for myself.

**The Artist Dylan Alexandra Folsom**

**Personal Statement on the common app**

I walked up to the half-open garage and peered uncertainly into the cluttered space. At this point, I was alone in London, navigating purely by gut and intuition. My voice shook as I rasped out an indication of my presence. As I waited for an answer, I noticed some paint splattered carelessly to my left and tangled up barbed wire to my right. I swallowed nervously and ducked my head

beneath the doors. Gasoline and turpentine overwhelmed the room as I fought a growing

discomfort settling at the pit of my stomach. Before now, this idea had seemed adventurous, creative even. But as I stood alone in a stranger’s garage my only weapon a camera, I

reconsidered my expedition.

My eyes circled the room cautiously. I jerked back defensively as another voice aside from my own doubts interrupted the silence. A man stood before me. Tiny shreds of paper and paint

residue clung to his beard as he spoke. He extended his arm and I flinched, then quickly

recovered to hide my embarrassment as I shook his hand. His grip was confident, but his smile

sincere. He examined me uneasily before I remembered I was really the stranger here. I chuckled nervously and cleared my throat before explaining that I needed help with a photography project. I wanted to capture people doing things that they are passionate about. Assuming the paint,

wires, and tools were used for art, I asked him if he would continue his work as I observed.

Here I was, in a room with a bizarre, older artist that I have never met, in a city with which I was unfamiliar, thousands of miles away from home, and I was thrilled. Not because I loved the

sense of danger, and not because he had an unspoken, particularly impressive brilliance, but because I had the privilege of capturing his story through images.

The artist slowly grew more comfortable as I asked him questions about his art and background.

I found that it was easier for people to relax if they forget that the camera even existed. He shared his mixtape with me and showed me the first cut of a film he was working on. It

turned out we had a lot to talk about and valued the same ideals of creativity and expression. Here we were, different people, with different backgrounds, sharing stories.

My experience in London revealed a few things about the art of storytelling that I love. In order to capture an intimate image, I had to experience an intimate moment and build a relationship. It wasn’t simply about my camera, but the connection between two people. The more I shot, the

more I learned about him and who he was. This connection translated through the

image. It transforms from a photo to a story. Now, this photo, video, or journal all of the sudden hasthe potential to impact someone else’s life. That’s why I love storytelling. Nothing is as

powerful as a story that leaves an impression. The purpose of the photos weren’t to simply look good, but to convey his passion, and expose his character as an artist.

This brings me a sense of fulfillment. I move silenced voices to be heard, and stories to

be exposed. Contentment tome means finding a story in an average circumstance, drawing

beauty from mundane things. It includes the feeling of awe that accompanies a powerful message that reshapes your opinions, keeps you up an extra few minutes before bed considering.I want to spark thoughts and ideas, instill inspiration and hope through my writing, and change someone’s perspective through stories. I’ve always loved sharing stories, but London ignited a passion for

people, learning, and creating.

Even halfway across the World, in an older artist’s garage, there is always a story to be told.

# The Beauty of Simplicity Anonymous

## The lessons we take from failure can be fundamental to later success. Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?

Two hours later, even with my cart stockpiled with an assortment of possible parts, I strode aisle-to-aisle scrutinizing each item, and mentally assembling the bits I had selected to generate the ideal model. It was hard to avoid the weird looks from parents as they pulled their children closer to pass me and my “madman mutter”. Having assumed the responsibility of purchasing the material to compete in the annual Massachusetts Science Olympiad for the event Wright Stuff, I was determined that our model plane would hover for the longest time possible, as per the prerequisite.

After the extended shopping spree, my partner and I pondered upon the design and mechanics of the model using the gamut of parts at our disposal. We built and tested various models, over and over again, before arriving at our “perfect” version. However, in order to add more “zing”, we complemented our creation with a rubber motor and a stabilizer, reasoning that these embellishments would ensure a superior lift and lengthier float, thereby providing us a better shot at winning.

“Your plane is disqualified”, pronounced the event coordinator at the initial check-in. “Rubber motors are prohibited.”

My partner and I exchanged flabbergasted looks; we had read through the rules comprehensively. How could we have overlooked this important regulation? My mind raced. My vision blurred. Not only was this ineligibility a personal embarrassment for us both, but our lame efforts would now affect the reputation of our high school, since a disqualification would reflect that our school did not follow the rules properly. And to think, this predicament was the result of us trying to make our plane more complex, rather than present it in its original simplicity.

As we exited the checking station with our heads downcast, our minds were racing to arrive at a solution to this impossible quandary. Not having brought any spare parts or a backup model, we needed a miracle. In a sheer act of desperation, I lunged for a piece of dirty, footprint-marked oak tag paper that lay superfluously on the floor. “Perhaps we could create a plane out of this,” I exclaimed to my partner. My partner grabbed the paper and then knelt on the floor, immediately fashioning several folds. The material shifted hand-to-hand, from my partner to me; oblivious of the people walking around us ridiculing our efforts, we developed an original plane. Quickly, after testing the modest prototype a couple of times, I added some more folds on the wings, and then rushed to check it in, wanting desperately to save our school's reputation.

A couple of hours later, during the competition, as we observed models with sophisticated designs created from wood as well as plastic, we recognized that our plane was essentially an ordinary fish in an ocean full of super sharks. One-by-one planes glided through the air; then it was our turn. My partner held the plane in his right hand, spun it around once, and released the plane with an elegant throw. The plane flew in circles, managing to stay afloat for almost twenty seconds. I was shocked; I had expected the plane to come crashing down after only two-to-three seconds. We high-fived and walking to our team’s room, joked about winning the event.

When an announcement declared our plane the winner, we were indubitably confounded; how could a model fabricated from discarded paper triumph over more expensive and comprehensive models? Significantly, this instance proved that complexity does not necessarily guarantee success; sometimes simplicity is key. Indeed, after this event, I have come to realize that many other well-known entrepreneurs, inventors, and thinkers share this reckoning – from Virgin Founder Richard Branson to famous Jazz musician Charles Mingus who is quoted to have stated: “Making the simple complicated is commonplace; making the complicated simple, awesomely simple, that’s creativity.”

Having learned this essential life-lesson, next objective: to invent, design, and impact the world through powerful simplicity.

# "Right to Education?" Harpreet Singh Virk

## Describe a problem you’ve solved or a problem you’d like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma-anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.

Stuffy rooms, stinking washrooms, cracked desks and torn books. There was a strange feeling, walking down the corridor as I entered the premises. It was totally unexpected, especially from a place like this - right after a long break for summer.

It was the summer after my tenth grade. I had decided to spend a month teaching the underprivileged kids in the local municipality elementary school. It was an independently run government school, unlinked with any existing Non Government Organisation. I was appointed as a teacher for fifth and sixth grades, teaching them elementary Mathematics and foundations of English.

I had some past experience teaching mathematics to underprivileged kids for an NGO as an assistant teacher. Indeed, it was fairly easy for me to take up that class, given my love for the subject of mathematics and the properly structured course materials that were provided by the NGO itself. However, I wanted to get a real experience of how the local government schools actually functioned - something I felt that the NGO classes were lacking - which is why I volunteered here.

I was prepared; having spent the past three days studying the class materials and organising. I was confident; having assumed that it would be an easy job to teach at a government school, given my past experience of teaching. I was enthusiastic; having received an opportunity that I was really looking forward to. I was wrong. All that followed was totally unexpected.

As I entered the school premises, all I could see were empty corridors, classrooms with broken furniture and cracked walls. I met the principal, who showed me around and took me to the classroom where I was supposed to teach. There were only six students in the classroom, whereas I had been expecting an attendance of more than thirty - according to the name list that I had been given by the principal. Clearly, something was amiss.

I enquired with the school authorities, who told me that this is usually the case in government schools. Students register themselves in schools, and then seldom show up in classes - just to get the incentives that the government offers them to attend schools. Instead, they start working to earn and supplement their family income. Furthermore, the students who do show up and are actually interested in studies aren’t even given the required attention as some teachers rarely take up the classes seriously. They take little to no interest in making the class interesting. I was taken aback. This was the state of our country for those who can not afford to attend a private school to get a quality education - which is something that every citizen of our country deserves as a birthright under the Right To Education Act of 2009.

In any case, I tried to let go of the larger picture at the moment and focus on the best that I could do to teach those students. It wasn’t easy. Even more challenging was the fact that the syllabus said fractions whereas the students weren’t even comfortable with basic dual digit addition-subtraction. They struggled even in comprehending basic English sentences, whereas their books comprised of larger paragraphs and stories.

They had a huge backlog. They had never been taught the basics. Their education had to be redone from scratch. At this rate, it was pretty evident that they would later dropout as soon as they passed elementary school - till where students cannot be failed by law.

Something had to be done. I went home and spent the entire night charting out my plan for the month. I would be starting from the basics and then move up at an appropriate level to help the students catch up. I even tried contacting the parents’ of the students who rarely attended the school.

I did my best to make the classes as interactive as possible - using games and activities to teach even the most basic concepts. The students started to enjoy the classes, and so did I. By the end of the month, I was successful in completing all the basics and had finished the required course syllabus for the class. I felt happy, for I had done my best to make a difference in the lives of other children who are the future of our country.

However, at the same time I was reminded of the sobering reality of primary education in India for those who cannot afford private schools. I wrote a letter to the Bombay Municipal Corporation, suggesting them reforms that they should undertake in order to help improve the conditions of the local schools in the city. I received no reply to my correspondence. If this lack of response to a concerned and consciences citizen who donated his labor for underprivileged children is the state of the richest municipality in India, one can only imagine what the state of schools in more deprived urban centres is.

The state has neglected the education of its young minds for decades. I won't.

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# Seeing the World Through A Poet's Eyes Anonymous

## 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.

“Passionate people put pens to paper to produce poetry.”

While a third grade teacher may gush over this sentence, most others would find it appalling. Nevertheless, the truth behind it is undeniable; poetry rises from the fires in people’s eyes and the passion in their hearts. It has the ability to shape minds, heal broken souls, and make sense of the abstract. From my first attempt at creating this type of elusive artwork, I knew that poetry would be a way of giving the world access to my mind and insight.

I always had an inclination towards poetry. Reading and dancing consumed much of my imagination as a child, and so realizing that I had the power to make words twirl and leap in the minds of others delighted me. The skill and thought that went into creating poems grew as I aged, and soon I discovered a power hidden between the lines of language; ambiguity and the limitless nature of symbolism allowed me to disclose my worst struggles, adolescent loves, and deepest hatred through vague statements and images. I became addicted to the thrill of hiding secrets in plain sight.

Viewing the world through poetry has molded my mind in ways that I had not realized until recently. Rather than seeing things through my point of view, I often find myself admiring my surroundings as if I were above rather than within them. Emotions are far more than limbic system reactions to me- they are living beings with distinctive physical traits. I look at people and rather than seeing their actions or hearing their words, I see the dense clouds of jealousy behind their eyes or the soft, hazy glow of love that races from their hearts to their fingertips, toes, and lips in vein-like streaks of light.

My encounters with mirrors have also morphed as a result of my work. In growing with my language, I have gained the ability to see past my sun bleached hair and dark blue eyes. I see myself as if I were within and beyond my body all at once. I watch my thoughts fight for dominance and I know that when I close my eyes, entire worlds will flesh out in front of me, forming in the darkness and obliterating in the light.

Poetry has allowed me to discover the depth and diversity of my thoughts. By tuning into the deeper recesses of my mind in order to write, I have uncovered previously masked emotions and opinions. Stringing words into poems has helped me to understand myself, my train of thought, and my perspective of all that surrounds me. The fear of judgment from others, which previously held me back, can now be erased by the power of my own writing. Rather than uncertainty, confidence now laces my words and dances with them.

I once wrote a poem about growing up; it was an assignment in my freshmen year English class, and I have pondered its lines more than anything else I have ever written. Works like this prove to me that even in what seems to be my hardest challenges, when I think that the entire world has bared its teeth at me, I have the strength to say what I mean and influence the direction of my life.

# Childhood Progression Desiree Loyola

## Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.

Although I was just playing with Barbie Dolls, I managed to apply rudimentary math skills at the age of four. “How many pairs of Barbie shoes did you just put away?” I attentively counted by twos and shouted out, “Six pairs, mom!” The utilization of my at-home knowledge was eminent. At this age, I was Matilda. Everything I aspired to be - smart and intellectual, I hoped to follow in her footsteps. As Matilda surprised her class by knowing her two times tables, I surprised myself by being able to combine playtime and school time. Almost three days a week, I sat with my teacher practicing my times tables with toys. When I played with my peers, we played “restaurant,” and I was always elected to be the waitress, so I could calculate everyone’s meal totals. Because of my apparent hunger for knowledge, I was offered the chance to skip second grade, but my elementary education was too crucial not to cherish. I enjoyed being surrounded by my classmates who shared the same interests as I did.

I then grew a little older. Around the age of eleven, I was already being pressured into having a boyfriend and being told it was the right of passage into being a young female. I often found myself in a sticky predicament, “Kiss the boy! It’ll be fine!” Sorry friends, I did not anticipate playing “spin the bottle.” I think my judgment of societal norms was conspicuous. I found myself being sexualized by peers; already feeling the stress of physical perfection. At this age, I was Jo March. Her witty remarks and rebellious approach to society characterized the way I acted out on my friends and family. I didn’t care what others thought of me. In fact, I embraced the fact that those surrounding me would not think I was perfect. Jo March ultimately set the example of a strong independent woman defying what our culture wanted me to be.

Four years later, at the age of fifteen, I was myself as Elizabeth Bennet. I had a boyfriend, a decision I made by myself. At this age, I thought I knew it all. Everyone I met or had contact with was meticulously observed, and I thought my judgment was impeccable. I could hear Elizabeth’s words in my head, ‘I, who have prided myself on my discernment! I, who have valued myself on my abilities! who have often disdained the generous candour of my sister, and gratified my vanity in useless or blameable mistrust!’ Elizabeth realized that judgment was not always flawless. I also had to grasp the concept that I would not be consistently right about everyone I met, especially my boyfriend at the time.

But then as I grew to be seventeen years old, I had an epiphany. Most of the life lessons I have learned have been because of reading. Some of my earliest memories incorporate what my mother read to me as a child. Since then, my brain expanded with knowledge from witty characters and compelling plots. While these characters are trapped in a book, I continue to progress. My character advances as well as my wisdom. My life to this point has been characterized by self-improvement. Growing older and reading novels like Matilda, Pride and Prejudice, and Little Women has shaped my character greatly. However, I anticipate becoming more than just three female leads in novels. I want to continue developing intellectually throughout and become the protagonist of my own life.

# Letting Go of My "Eggo" Elizabeth Tess Thompson

## Topic of your choice.

“Test does not exist! We only think she exists!”

The pale pink room was filled with too-bright morning light. High up on the Himalayan mountainside, the monastery had a sweeping view of the fog-covered village below.

The portly monk continued, in strained English, why I wasn’t real, and everyone laughed good-naturedly. This specific topic had taken up the better part of our meditation class today. My eyes wandered past him. In the center of our meditation room stood a six-foot decorative altar, inside of which a particularly pious monk’s mummified body was preserved. There was even a small window, displaying the shrunken, linen-wrapped head. Long ago, he led a gruesome journey across the mountains, escaping occupied Tibet. The young man used his holy monks' robes to rappel down jagged cliffs, and tore them into pieces to wrap around his bleeding feet. The petrified body was considered quite holy, and inspired reverence in the Buddhist visitors. Despite the shimmering array of lotus flowers and bright paint, the blatant display of death unsettled me. I resisted the urge to stare, focusing once more on our teacher; he was still lecturing about my state of existence.

“Test is an illusion! Nothing, nothing is real. To realize this, you must let go of your eggo! Let go of your eggo!” His quiet, accented voice resounded through the small room, and he looked directly into my eyes with a somber gaze, as if he knew that his wisdom would be discarded. The class giggled at his mispronunciation, both of my name and the word ‘ego’, thinking of the Kellog’s Eggo Waffles we had eaten as children. I didn’t laugh. In that sunny monastery, with the dead leader’s mummy above us, waffles seemed very far away. The monk moved to a new topic, but his words stayed with me. I considered what the monk was trying to make us understand through the language barrier. To let go of my ego means to break down the perceptions I hold about the world and myself. Let go of my self. Let my self go. This is what the monk was imploring me to do, urging me on with his dark, unreadable eyes. I had never considered my self as something that could be removed, or that my place in the world wasn’t actually that significant. As the year following this encounter passed, I found myself thinking of the lesson and trying to truly unravel it, and in turn, to live it. Whenever I think of that moment, I think of the intense morning sun illuminating the mummy’s face, the wooded smell of incense, and the golden altar shining unnaturally as the air hummed with an unspoken energy. Most of all, though, I think of the monk's wide, implacable face, saying my name, "Test! Test! Test!”, mispronouncing it and putting a fervid emphasis on it that I still struggle to understand.

Do I exist? Do the choices I make have an impact? The heart of the monk’s lesson says that I am insignificant. Yet, I’m not truly an illusion. I do exist, just like the mummified monk did, and my meditation teacher, and my fellow students. The only thing without lasting significance is my “eggo”, or ego.

How do I know that I exist? Simply, by the impact my life has on the lives of others. Whether it’s big or small, positive or negative, our impact is the most relevant part of who we are; it’s perhaps the only significant thing we leave behind. In some ways, I agree with the monk’s philosophies; letting go of my ego and perceptions allows me to be open to new possibilities, people, and ideas. I continue to wrestle with his lesson, and realize that the more I learn, the more my personal manifesto will probably evolve. But the monk inadvertently gave me a precious gift: he has fueled my understanding of my place in the world, and how I am truly relevant.

# Why NYU? Grayson Ewing

## Why NYU?

As I pulled the handle, the drawer gave way, allowing year’s worth of junk to spill out onto the floor. I rushed to put everything back into the neatly arranged disorder that I found it before my parents walk in to see the snooping I’d been doing. My eyes fixated on a shiny gray camera. This very camera would become my outlet when I was struggling academically, allowing me to make short films that described to others what I was learning and the things that interested me. Slowly, my love for filmmaking turned into a need to absorb as much information as possible. I discovered CNN, Ted Talks, and podcasts that taught me about different cultures and parts of the world. Since then I have used my camera as my voice to show my thoughts and ask the questions I want to be answered. This began early on by watching documentaries instead of fighting to understand what I was reading, progressing into making small movies about what I was learning, and has now become a lifelong passion that I hope to turn into a career.

I am constantly listening to podcasts and watching documentaries, hoping to learn more about the subject at hand as well as the production side of radio and film. I have a desire to listen to other people’s experiences, trying to understand their mindset. One day I would like to help people share their stories, along with my own. During my time at NYU, I hope to create my own podcast, discussing with other students the social issues that are ongoing throughout the campus and New York City. New York University’s diverse student body would give me this opportunity to interact with different types of people, and share new perspectives.

My academic curiosities and passion for film have led me to discover Gallatin, a college that will allow me to create my own major focusing on international relations, cinema, and journalism. Through Gallatin I can take in-depth classes in all of the different academic areas that interest me, allowing myself to gain a deeper understanding of each topic. I want to use film and journalism to shed light on national and international problems, and I know that attending Gallatin will give me a well-rounded education that will help me achieve these goals.

# A Musician's Purpose Amy Chiang

## 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.

As an outspoken Asian girl with an unusually large number of freckles and the tone of a strong alto, I am generally very noticeable. I had always felt very comfortable with the people around me considering that I had been with the same group of friends since elementary school. Naturally, when I broke away from that group and joined an out-of-school orchestra for the first time in my life, I never expected to be faced with the exact opposite. Here, unexpectedly, I would be invisible.

Lost in such a huge group and completely out of my element, I was hidden in the back of a sea of strangers. I was overwhelmed with the music and the orchestra in general, keeping mostly to myself and only really talking to my stand partner when necessary. The more I saw how experienced and talented everyone else seemed to be, the more self conscious I felt about my playing especially since this music was more difficult than anything I had played before. I practiced for hours on end to learn the new pieces, improving slowly yet still feeling as if I was working harder than the others just to keep up.

Preoccupied with what I considered my less than satisfactory performance, I found it difficult to truly lose myself in the music. It was so frustrating that I was failing to reach perfection, and it hindered my confidence to the point where I was painfully self-aware of every off-pitch note, every rushed beat. I had previously treasured the privilege of sharing music with the world, and yet orchestra now seemed like an obstacle, a source of stress and anxiety.

However, the summer after that year was a special one—the orchestra was going to Spain. We left in late June to explore the wonders of Barcelona, Zaragoza, and Madrid, performing at different venues in each city. At our last concert of the tour, we performed a Spanish classic called Bésame Mucho and by the end of the piece, the entire audience was singing along. Across the stage, I caught the gaze of my closest friends, beaming as we stood and bowed together while the audience cheered their bravos. A man approached us after the concert to express that our performance had brought him to tears with the emotional reminder of his childhood, and we knew for certain that we had shared something deeply special with him.

Not a single person cared to think of our mistakes.

That day, I realized that I had forgotten why I joined orchestra—I had forgotten the reason why violin was my passion and my safe place. Caught up in an anxious need for perfection, I had lost what music meant to me. It wasn't about mechanically going through notes, grazing just the surface level of music; it reached further than that. Music has depth and meaning, a simple purpose: to share a feeling with others. When I practice, I focus less on technicalities and more on creating a better experience together between orchestra and audience. I was finally confident and comfortable with myself as a member of the orchestra, celebrating the music rather than stressing over my failure to reach perfection.

Over the last couple of years, I have grown closer with the orchestra and have been able to open up to my peers through the music. We are able to work together to create something beautiful, something that leaves every present individual breathless with the impact of raw, pure emotion. As a violinist, I have improved technically, but more importantly I have improved my mindset. Orchestra is not just about me or the notes on the paper, it is about bringing music to life as part of a team—and I could not be prouder of what we have achieved.

# Nightmare Julia Dupuis

## The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?

This is how my nightmare begins.

I’m standing in the heart of a pristine university campus, surrounded by hundreds of teenage girls fidgeting with their luggage. Damp hair sticks to the backs of our necks; we can taste the heat and the salt and the excitement on our tongues. After a rigorous selection process, interviews, and hours of anxious waiting, just standing at Girls State feels like the end of a long journey.

One of the counselors stops me on my way through the check-in and says, "We’re going to have to ask you to take the hat off.” I take off my baseball cap, a pro-LGBT slogan standing proud on the front. "Girls State citizens aren’t allowed to make political statements,” she explains, and ushers me off to my dorm.

When I reach my room, shoving the hat under my duffle bag, it feels like I’m folding myself back into the closet, piece by piece. The hat isn’t just a slogan. It’s about laughing in the face of my oppressors, standing hand in hand with my community, and clutching at pieces of a love I have never felt free to embrace. That hat is how I take my power back.

Sitting in my dorm: alone, hatless, powerless—I give myself a voice in the only way I know how. I decide to write an article for the Girls State Gazette. As I type it up on my phone between board meetings, a trance settles over me. The accumulated clutter of thoughts— self-doubt, a nagging sense of perfectionism, lapses of focus—all of it vanishes, crowded from my mind by an overpowering clarity, a greater purpose.

I finish my writing at 2 a.m. For a few minutes, I sit in my dorm, head nodding forward, cradling the phone, feeling the heat of it in my palms. Hope starts like this, in the dark. A quiet pocket of space on the verge of sunrise, where nothing is expected of me. I don’t exist beyond the rise and fall of my breath, the article in my hands. I hang on to the stubborn hope that if I only try my best to do right, the dawn will come. I work, I wait, I watch. I don’t give up. But I don’t always win.

The Girls State president calls me to her office the next morning. “Why don’t you tone it down?” she suggests. “Take a less aggressive stance. Talk about how Girls State has empowered you to fight for gay rights.” “That’s not what this is about,” I tell her. “I just don’t think it’s fair to politicize someone’s identity.”

“Okay,” she says, smiling. “How about a compromise?” She wants me to soften my prose, melt the words down, take the message and splinter it until it doesn’t hold the same intention, the same power. I want to ask her if she knows how it feels to be censored, to have her words twisted, her passions rewritten into something easier to swallow.

“I can compromise,” I say instead, but I know I can’t edit it the way she wants me to. There’s something fiercely powerful about reaching so high when I know I’m going to fall. Like I’m taking the universe by the throat and saying I know I can never be as big as you, but you can’t stop me trying. Taking the hurt, wringing it out in my fists and saying I know you won’t leave me alone, but you can’t stop me from speaking out.

This is how my nightmare ends. My article removed, a blank page in the newspaper. I step off the campus feeling empty and angry. And yet something burns inside of me, an empowerment born out of my own disempowerment. This might be how my nightmare ends, but I choose to wake up and live. I choose to keep writing.

# Seaweed Rebels Anonymous

## 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.

I am a citizen of another world. This land is not one everyone ventures into, and even fewer make a home within it. It is a world with mystery and magic, unimaginable creatures and portals that lead to the stuff of dreams. Some call us divers, others just call us crazy, but I prefer the term coined by the journalist and fellow adventurer David Helvarg; Seaweed Rebels.

"Seaweed Rebels" refers to the breed that decides to shed the limitations of land and venture into the cool, blue depths of the Earth. Inhibitions are yielded to the tides as soon as I begin to sink beneath the waves lapping at the top of my head. For a Seaweed Rebel, it is rarely the conditions that make it a perfect dive. Even the days when the rain is unyielding, the storm clouds unwavering, and the waves relentless, the moment you sink beneath the tumbling water the real world is gone. The angst, the babel, the normality. All the flaws of the surface are lost once you begin your descent. When I am diving I reach a point of perfect, uninterrupted happiness. Freed from the anxieties of the surface, I am no longer the nail-biting, klutzy kid I normally am. The stress of the real world has no presence here. The trivial nonsense of the day to day means nothing. It’s only me, the sounds of my breathing, and the dance of bubbles up my mask as I descend into the world in which I know I am only a guest.

When I surface, everything rushes back. The devastatingly harsh reality that this world that is filled with pure, unadulterated beauty is dying. I am terrified that the rest of the world will never lose sight of the shore, never dare to creep beyond the confines of land and see the world that they can help save. My love for the world below has stirred up an unyielding desire in me to protect it. In 2016 I decided to help found a nonprofit called Generation Ocean along with the dedicated work of three other students in Denver, Colorado. I don’t like to do anything slowly, and patience is a virtue I only possess thirty feet below the surface. This is why after getting certified, I could no longer sit idly by and watch the mass genocide of the world I love as little more than a tourist. That is simply not the Seaweed Rebel way.

Our mission as Generation Ocean is to advocate for a world that not everyone sees, understands, or can relate to. The organization stemmed from the decision to go on a research trip to Cuba, with a group of strangers, at 16, with six dives under my belt. On the shores of the Isle of Youth, I realized how little even the people who spent every day on the water knew, understood, and cared about their impact on the ocean. The weeks spent diving, learning, and developing my passion for the ocean changed me.

Upon my return, I threw myself into learning, understanding, and absorbing everything I could about the underwater world. I watched Ted Talks on climate change, read books about exploration and the world around us, Skyped Marine Biologists, met the original Seaweed Rebel herself; Sylvia Earle, took an online course on Marine biology (in addition to my regular class work), gave presentations, fundraised for Generation Ocean, and returned to Cuba the very next year to delve even deeper. My experience in creating Generation Ocean has shown me the importance of remaining open-minded, my capacity for change, and how my passion has revealed my own fervor for rising above fears and limitations.

# Violence Against Women Ela Piskiner

## Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.

“At 6.00 in the morning she begins her morning cleaning. After preparing breakfast and clearing the table, she cleans up all the rooms.” This is a brief translation of a short passage secondary school students are given in Turkey. The passage supposedly depicts the role of a married Turkish woman in a household. Nowhere in the passage is a man mentioned doing any housework. The passage is completely based on the fact that women are the one’s who should clean, cook and nurture the children.

I remember the first time I read it. I didn’t even question what I had learned that day in school. It was just another mundane school day. Little did I know by not speaking up that day in class, by not questioning the passage and by not asking whether being a woman was more than just cooking and cleaning, I was contributing to a problem that was much bigger than I ever realized.

I was brought up in a culture where once a girl gets married the family “gives” her away, as if girls are a prized possession, where it is completely normal to see more than 5 reports a day in the newspapers about girls who were raped, murdered or beaten, and where in some places it is completely normal to get married at ages as young as 13. How can one accept us to stand up for ourselves when we are taught only in secondary school that our only role is to serve men?

One day I came home to meet my mother talking on the phone with tears running down her face. I later on found out that my mother’s friend’s cleaning lady, had been beaten to death by her husband. I didn’t shed a tear. Not because I have no emotions, or not because I am a cruel person, but because it was not the first I had heard this story. I had been growing up constantly listening to similar versions of this tale. Strangely enough, my emotionless reaction to this event had greater effect on me, than any other event that I had bowled my eyes out for. I realized it was not natural for me to view these situations as “ordinary” events. The main problem wasn’t the uneducated men who didn’t know any better, the problem was the educated and strong girls like me who weren’t using their voices to stand up.

In school, I heard about a project the previous year’s seniors had left incomplete. A teacher was looking for students to complete the project. As soon as I heard the name of the project I jumped at the opportunity; the project was called ‘Violence Against Women’ (VAW).

The project began with only three students and a two hundred slides of PowerPoint. We started by only translating the English slide show into Turkish, while editing and deleting additional information. A basic PowerPoint slowly started converting into a successful presentation packed with interviews, reel stories, effective content and videos. We practiced for months until we decided we were ready to take the stage.

A problem that once seemed so far away was now right in front of me, and I had the power to tell everyone what I had learned, to create awareness and make everyone understand that violence is never “normal”. We began as a small group, but in one short year we managed to turn our small project into an official school club. We went to over twenty schools in one year, ranging from public schools to private. We managed to get our project verified by the government, which gives us permission to go to schools all over Turkey.

Even though it is solely a few words on a presentation, I can feel the effect we create in each classroom that we enter. When we tell the stories of the victims suddenly all heads turn to us. All the quiet whispers amongst the students suddenly stop and everyone listens in silence. At the end of our show, we ask the audience if they would like to contribute to our project. We give the school a CD of our presentation and ask them to create a group in their own school. We ask this group to continue our presentation in other schools. Are goal is to spread our project across the country and create as much awareness as possible.

Still each time I take the stage to tell the stories of the victims of abuse I begin to shake. No matter how many times I state the same story, it still hurts when I talk about the victims. Violence or the undermining of women is not “normal” and it will never feel “normal” to me again. Creating and leading this project has affected me in many ways. Not only has it taught me discipline and work ethics, but has also taught me should never stop. When we first started the project our goal was only to turn the project into an official school club. After we achieved that goal we started struggling for government verification. We also achieved that goal. We never stop creating more targets for ourselves.

This project has become a part of me. I don’t want to stop giving it my all, until I actually feel that I am making a difference in my country.

**Source:** ‘’Sabah saat 06.00’da sabah temizliği ile başlıyor. Kahvaltının hazırlanması ve sofranın toplanmasından sonra oda temizleniyor. İşe giden kadın, akşam yine sofra hazırlıyor, bulaşıkları yıkıyor, ertesi günün akşam yemeğini yapıyor, odaları topluyor ve 21.30’da dinlenme saati başlıyor.’’ (Fatma Çiçekçi, ilköğretim 6, 7 ve 8. sınıflar için)

# The Gallon Challenge Anonymous

## Free prompt - "CommonApp" Essay

On Thursday, July 10th, I learned an essential lesson about ambition.

I walked optimistically through the grand Springer Opera House entranceway, ready for a day of captivating classes and wild theatre kids. I saw my friends and migrated downstage left with my water jug in hand. It was really just a gallon of Chick-fil-A sweet tea refilled with water. Similar jugs were dispersed across the stage because of The Gallon Challenge trend, where one attempts to drink an entire gallon of water before the end of the day. When done correctly (with proper restroom breaks and distributed drinking times), the challenge encourages hydration. I was fully prepared to mask my competitive nature behind this healthy bandwagon. The night before, I had washed out the remaining sweet tea, filled my jug with water, and made the final decision: I will complete The Gallon Challenge.

With high self esteem, I chugged at any given opportunity. Before class, I chugged; during transitions, I chugged; but especially during lunch… I chugged. I reasoned with myself that if I finished by the end of the day, then I would be a successful participant. But if I finished by the end of lunch… I would be a champion. I became greedy with the idea of victory and drank until only small water droplets remained in the bottom of the jug.

I remember the high fives, the fist bumps, the shoulder pats, and the hugs. I remember the uneasy feeling in my stomach, and I remember thinking “Well, this is just what it feels like to be a champion!” I remember realizing that there was a real problem. I remember rushing to the closest teacher and asking to go to the bathroom. If only I could have made it out the door. I remember the moment that things went horribly wrong: I yakked up a gallon of water in front of all of my closest friends and mentors.

After July 10th, The Gallon Challenge was officially banned from the Springer Theatre Academy. I briefly considered never showing my face within two miles of the Springer Opera House ever again. Nonetheless, I write this essay as a current Academy student who was originally known to many of her best friends as “Abbey Crowley: The girl Who Got The Gallon Challenge Banned Because She Drank Too Much and Threw Up.”

While sitting in the office and waiting for my mom to pick me up, I was given time to think about exactly where things went wrong. I realize that there is a fine, fine line between proper water intake and embarrassingly inappropriate water intake, which I learned not only at the expense of my health and my reputation, but everyone else’s ability to complete the challenge in the future. Even though I still try to drink a gallon of water every day, I will never try to drink it all before lunch. But I had an even greater revelation: I easily could have completed the challenge in its intended form, but I was overly ambitious and too competitive. I realize now that there are healthier outlets to challenge my competitive nature.

# The Deal Anonymous

## 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.

I made sure no one saw me as I rounded the dark corner.

“You got the stuff?” a hurried voice whispered.

“I got the stuff. You?”

I replied to a shaded figure, which in turn hastily nodded.

A quick exchange occurred, and two figures dispersed from the alley. We rushed back to the tables, avoiding the watchful eyes of noon-aids scanning for kids leaving the lunch area. I looked triumphantly at my hand to see the shiny quarter I obtained. I had just sold Tommy my carton of chocolate milk. Being lactose intolerant, I was forced to wash down lunches of dry chicken sandwiches or oily pizza slices with drinking fountain water for the first few years of elementary school. What made the metallic fountain water taste worse was the vending machine filled with refreshments next to it. With my pockets full of lint and no cash, I thought I was out of luck -- until I met Tommy.

I met Tommy during snack recess in the beginning of fourth-grade when I spotted him drinking a bottle of Nesquik chocolate milk. I warned him that he would be gassy after finishing his drink, and he laughed at how he had never met anyone who was lack-toast-and-tolerant. After some friendly elementary school banter, we quickly became friends. It was Tommy’s love for chocolate milk and my aversion of it that initiated my first business endeavor.

Exchanges involving money were banned at Vejar Elementary, so Tommy and I would sneak away from our assigned table seats and make our daily deal in a shaded alley--- my chocolate milk for his quarter. And every other day I would be able to cash in two quarters to purchase a Gatorade from the vending machine to help me wash down my lunch. From my fourth-grade business relationship with Tommy, I learned early on about some of the basics of demand: if it’s there, take the opportunity and make money off of it. The next year in the fifth-grade, I didn’t stop my business pursuits. I found out my classmates were raving about the lollipops handed out by our Spanish teacher Ms. Gonzales, so I set out to acquire my own. After foregoing lunch for a week, I saved up enough lunch money to purchase packs of mango-chili and watermelon flavored candies at the local hispanic supermarket. Charging a quarter a pop during snack recess, I made my gains selling candy by the swings.

My early involvement in business stirred the opportunity-seeker and the risk-taker inside of me. It shaped me to always look to make the most out of a situation, and to have the confidence to take chances. I realized that if I were to go bigger in business, waiting for opportunities to pass by wasn’t enough, so I started to seek out new ventures and involved myself in larger investments.

This past summer, I embarked on an undertaking following the explosion of popularity Pokemon Go. I dropped over $500 of my savings on t-shirts brandishing the three teams of Pokemon Go: Mystic, Instinct, and Valor. Purchasing my merchandise wholesale through a t-shirt printing vendor, I flipped them online and ultimately cashed in from my investment. I learned the value of commitment with my investments and to be fearless in the prospect of failure. As I found out, having success from opportunities coming to me is as far as luck goes. I had to go out to and pursue them myself.

Business, whether defined as my hobby, side-job, or specialty, will always be a part of my life. Since the fourth-grade, I’ve only scratched the surface of what I could do in terms of entrepreneurship. This is why I would like to pursue business in higher education as not only an outlet for my interest, but also to legitimize and better the practices that I crafted on my own.

# Growing Up and Growing Into Badminton Anonymous

## 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.

As I raised my arm to smash the birdie, I let out a whoop of excitement at finally being able to play my favorite sport with friends again. When I found out about my school’s badminton club, I signed up right away, but realized that I wouldn’t be able to go because of my mother. However, it wasn’t because she’s overprotective. It was because she’s a tiger mom, and restricted me from doing so many things I loved.

When clubs started, I watched as all my friends headed off. My closest friend, Jason Qu, had also joined the badminton club. I avoided him because I didn’t want to explain why I couldn’t go. I felt that if I told him the reason, he would think badly of me. After school, I trudged home, watching my friends playing Frisbee and badminton in the courtyard, desperately wishing I could join them. The next day, Jason asked me why I hadn't gone to club. I hesitated, then nonchalantly said, “Oh, I forgot I had to pick up my sister.”

“Well, you better come next time, you goof. You left me all alone,” he replied.

“All lonely without me, eh?” I winked. But I couldn’t help thinking about what excuse I would have to come up with next time, and the time after that.

Although my life had been like this ever since I can remember, I foolishly believed that entering high school would finally give me some freedom. All it did, though, was make me realize how everyone else was becoming more independent, and I was stuck where I was.

The thought that the world was against me made me extremely pessimistic. I’d always been humorous, optimistic, and so talkative I wouldn’t have been surprised if everyone found me annoying. But my attitude did a complete 180 one day. How could I have known all my high school dreams would be crushed? I became quiet and sullen, carrying a blank expression on my face at all times, a shell of my former self.

One day, after missing out on badminton club yet again, Jason confronted me. “Let’s have a serious talk,” he told me.

“What do you want to talk about?” I asked, without a flicker of emotion.

“Why you’re acting like this. What happened? You’ve become so distant lately.”

I went silent for a moment, contemplating if I should tell him. I looked up, about to say, “Nothing happened, I’ve just been tired lately”, when I saw the concern on his face. I faltered and stayed silent. “Tell me. I promise I won’t judge you,” he reassured me. I hesitated, then told him about how depressed I had been recently, and how it was all because my mom was so strict and wouldn't let me do anything. “It’s hard to stay positive when there’s nothing to look forward to each day,” I told him. “I see everyone else doing what they want, and I just feel confined.” As I told him my story, I felt myself tearing up. When I finished, I looked up and saw him wiping his tears.

“Don’t focus on the negativity in your life. Just be the way you’ve always been, and don’t compare your life to others. Just focus on the little things that make your life meaningful, and if it helps, try to convince your mom to let you join the badminton club,” he said as he gave me a hug. “Also, you better not keep stuff like this to yourself next time. If you have something bothering you, just tell me.”

In the end, I was able to convince my mother to let me join the club. But more than joining the club, I was able to realize just how valuable my life already was, and how essential happiness is in the hardest of times. Through overcoming this challenge, I'm now able to smile earnestly.

# Changes Bruce David Winfrey

## 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.

According to a British newspaper, The Mirror, “Four babies a day are born addicted to heroin, crack cocaine and other drugs, shocking figures revealed [that’s about 7,800 crack babies since 2009].” I was one of these children; born in Miami: no tears, mute from the beginning. At birth, I was addicted to cocaine from the dangerous habits of my birth mom. I had two siblings whom I loved greatly; both were taken from me at the age of three. Although they were gone, I constantly reminded myself what I loved about them. For years I was alone, forever feeling like a mistake.

At the age of four my life was full of the sound of police cars, generating blood red walls caked with green splotches. This happened every other day and brought with it the lurking chills I experienced knowing danger was right outside my 4x4 glass window. Every day at 5:00 am, I would quickly get dressed in torn school clothes marked with paint and dirt, but with brand new Nikes to top it all off; then make my way to preschool. At home however, I was mistreated, abused, and beaten daily, but I had to stay strong. Until I was five I feared for my life, not being able to sleep some nights. With every mistake I made, it seemed as if my birth parents would find a different weapon to use against me: a belt, a hanger or a stick. I would try to disappear out of their existence, so that they would forget about me, and after, I would disappear to my cousin’s house by bike to escape torture. I had plans to escape, to live a richer and fuller life.

Lucky for me, that moment came sooner rather than later. When I went into foster care at the age of five, I first met a magnificent lady who welcomed me into her beautiful home. At the time I knew her only as Ms. Yvonne, but today I know her as mom. She pushed me to be a gentleman and to cultivate the qualities of one. She showed me how to love and care for others and how to treat other individuals with respect, kindness, and to always help if needed. There was a glimpse of light that she saw in me that no one else had. She let me know that I could be whatever I wanted to be in this world; no matter what happened in my past she saw a bright future for me. To get there however, I would need to be responsible, caring and hardworking.

At eleven years old she decided she wanted to adopt me; she told me over a special dinner — it was the best day of my entire life. I had learned how to rise up to meet difficulties thrown at me from all directions. I learned how to get along with other children and talk about my problems instead of getting upset right away. I spent long Saturdays, sitting on the couch talking to my mom, which helped me to understand what I wanted to do. The way she was there for me, I wanted to do the same for her. I have dedicated my life to become a pilot in the Air force and promised myself I would adopt a child, just like she had adopted me. I focused on helping more in class and tried to make up for the ways I treated my teachers in the earlier years.

Since then, I have pursued my goal of being in the military and changing my life for the better. I am now steps away from my goals and I know they will be my reality. The hard long years of surviving in the hood, living in foster care and being adopted have taught me how to be a hardworking, caring, and determined individual.

# Being Content: Overcoming Myself Paul Levine

## Write an essay about a barrier or obstacle that you've encountered and how you've faced it.

“I think being enough is just being who you are in any given moment.

So I don’t think there is such a thing as enough.

Um.”

So began The Closer We Get, a new piece of theater that I proudly directed. Each year, our troupe competes in a one act festival, and this year, I was given the privilege of directing. I searched through two hundred plays, to no avail. One day, my teacher suggested a new, experimental play form: the ethnodrama. The ethnodrama form consists of a mixture of interviews and verbatim theater. The goal of ethnodrama is to accurately recount an interviewee’s truth, including everything from movements recounted by the interviewer to the ‘’um’s” said by the interviewee.

A group of us took a week to brainstorm a central thesis, message, and interview questions. Our thesis explored the idea of what being “enough” means in modern society. Overall, twenty interviews were conducted within the span of a month. To get all sides of the issue, the subjects ranged from young girls to grown men. My love for creation allowed me to easily weave interviews into a cohesive script, ready to direct.

I was overjoyed, having accomplished everything I had set to do. The blood, sweat, and tears seemed to be worth it. My reality appeared to be a dream, but would soon turn to a nightmare. After the performance, the cast and crew is moved into the judge's’ room, where they are given instant feedback on the show. I anticipated wide grins and endless praise. I went into this room with great zeal, but I knew something was wrong when the judges entered the room and the air went still.

The judges did not like it, not one bit. They had problems with the awkward direction, confusing message, dull costumes, and bare set. Had all my work been for nothing? The crushing irony was that my play, that explored how to be enough, simply wasn’t enough. Was my mentor just being nice when she expressed pride for my work? I felt I had let down my cast, who had taken a huge risk in trusting me. The respect I fought so hard to earn as a student director among high schoolers seemed to vanish within minutes. However, I soon learned that success spans much farther than a rating on a critique sheet.

We walked out of the judges room and all was silent. Surprisingly, the cast bombarded me with positivity. They were proud of what we created. I thought they were condoling me, trying to lift my spirits. My attitude changed throughout the day. I had strangers, students and teachers alike, approach me about my show. Many described the way it touched them and how they could relate to every word. I soon realized, for this project, I had succeeded. My goal wasn’t to earn a superior rating, it was to convey an essential message. I have learned to be content with my creativity because, regardless of other’s opinions, I am guided by my art. The creation drives me.

When I look back on this experience, I know it has shaped how I see myself as a director because it has forced me to look upon my art as a medium to reach people. I now love producing and directing theater of all forms. I learned that patience and confidence in a vision is key to directing. I use this mindset to mentor younger kids in the arts, hoping to instill an endless love for what drives me to go out of my comfort zone. Theater must be provocative and new. It must constantly push the boundaries of tradition and reshape to the audience it ascribes to. I will continue to take risks because I believe the essence of theater lies in its unknown.

# English Education at Steinhardt Anonymous

## Why NYU Steinhardt?

"Who is your hero?"

I remember seven names on seven different sheets of crumpled paper: Chimamanda Adichie, Ocean Vuong, Martha Johnson, Alan Turing, Emily Dickinson, Toni Morrison, and James Baldwin. Each name belonged to an incredible human being who has impacted and changed me, yet it was the eighth sheet of paper with the name Jeff Symonds that I turned in to my teacher the next day. Jeff Symonds was my sophomore English teacher and the first person to teach me that English class was not simply the study of words, but instead the study of humanity. I have always found my home within the spines of novels, but, because of Jeff, I am able to transcend beyond the tangible world of letters. Now, English class is metaphysical world in which everything and anything exists, where limits have no meaning and my imagination is all that matters.

English has always been a passion of mine, but until Jeff taught me, I hadn’t fully realized my other passion: teaching. After an assignment where we had to design and teach a lesson, Jeff asked me to stay behind after class. “You were in your element,” he said, “Have you ever thought about teaching?” By sophomore year, I had already tutored at a local program for three years, but until Jeff pointed it out to me, I hadn’t thought about teaching as a career. Now, two years later, I know that I want to pursue a career in education.

Majoring in English Education at Steinhardt would afford me the ability to help students fall in love with English the way I did. Steinhardt offers an incredibly unique experience centered around intersectionality, social change, and self-scrutiny. I believe all forms of education must emphasize intersectionality in order to fully educate a student. Moreover, working at programs such as Aim High and Breakthrough (organizations that aid under-resourced and low-income children on their path to college) has taught me that the most integral piece of social change is education. Finally, my own experiences have illuminated the gravity of self-scrutiny in every aspect of life, but more specifically, when teaching. Without self-scrutiny and self-reflection, it is impossible to be a successful teacher. No other program emphasizes these values like Steinhardt does and I know that NYU would be the first step on my journey to bringing a love of learning to every student I can.

# Common App Anonymous

## The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?

5. you’re taught to be an object

Imagine, you’re a fourth-grade body on a rare 100 degree day in San Franciscoin a classroom filled with pre-pubescent laughter, occasional voice cracks, and the crinkling of notes being passed. A smile spreads across your face, no matter how much you try to hide it. (You had completed the Spanish worksheet perfectly and can’t contain your excitement for your teacher to see). At your raised hand, her harsh voice cuts across the classroom so that the laughter stops. She says your name and then:

“I am looking down your shirt and I see a valley.”

“Go To The Office Now.”

4. boys are mean when they like you

You’re in a sixth-grade discussion now, and the class has been split into two sections: girls and boys. The girls don’t talk as loudly as they used to. Your teacher begins to speak,

“Girls, we know a few of you have complained about boys saying mean things.”

You nod your head fast and hard. The boy who sits next to you in math had called you a word that morning that you weren’t allowed to say.

“But remember, when they call you names or tease you, it means they have a crush on you.”

3. locker room talk

It’s your first week of high school now. The boys smell a little less and their voices have stopped cracking. You’re sitting at a table in the cafeteria, listening to the boys talk about an upcoming volleyball game. You’re on the JV team.

“Yo dude they’re gonna rape that team on Friday, we gotta go.”

2. you’re raped at age 14

Your body is no longer your body.

This is my story. It is the story of far too many girls. It should not be.The first male classmate I told about what happened to me responded by calling me tainted and dirty. The next inquired as to what I was wearing. The third told me I should have taken preventative measures. Their responses did not mean they were reprehensible people, but instead simply indicated a lack of education about consent. They had grown up hearing the messages, both explicitly and implicitly, that “boys will be boys” and girls only existed for their pleasure.

I spent my first two years of high school attempting to ignore the potent noises of misogyny, objectification, and rape jokes, but ultimately, I failed. In truth, I spent my life walking past the words and actions of people who could not acknowledge me as a human being in the way that they were. I was exhausted with not existing. And so, at the end of my sophomore year, I worked with my peers to create informal discussions surrounding the topic of rape culture. By my junior year there was an official consent discussion group that was lead by a teacher, met once a week, and had a far-reaching impact on our community. Although at times I still felt like a broken record on the soundtrack of patriarchy, something felt different. For the first time in my life, I was able to have conversations with people who were truly attempting to understand my experiences. Still, the number of peers I knew who had been sexually assaulted was too large for me to count on my fingers. We needed more action.

At the end of my junior year, I worked with a fellow student, the head of school, and the dean of student life to revise and rewrite our sexual misconduct policy. Finally, I was actively refusing to be complicit in the narrative that had been written for me. I am not so naive to believe that rape culture can be solved overnight. However, every small piece of work is significant and every little change has the power to impact at least one person. The changes I made at my high school were not monumental, but nevertheless, there was a tangible shift in the attitudes of our community. As someone who wants to be a teacher one day, I know that I can help communities acknowledge, and perhaps revise, their thoughts and ideas on rape culture. Of course, I know I can’t do it alone, but through education and communication, positive change will transpire. I will do everything in my power to ensure that our next generation of students will not have experiences that mirror mine.

1. my body is my body

# The Challenge of Friendship Timmy Zhou

## Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. Does this apply to you? (Common app question 3)

The score was 14-14, and 15 was the target. I knew the exact action I was going to make, no problem there. I was loose and having fun, only half aware of the pressure in the later rounds of a national tournament. I was ready to go. “...Fence!” the ref calls out, and immediately I press hard on my attack. My opponent starts forward too but he hesitates on his action, stopping flat footed, giving me the perfect opportunity to land my fifteenth touch. With excitement bubbling up, I spin around and grin stupidly as my teammates stream towards me. We excitedly exchange high fives and I’m enveloped in a fair share of bear hugs. It felt absolutely surreal knowing I performed the way I wanted to, and that my friends had my back at each step of the way.

Now let’s rewind 10 years...

Swinging my boxy red lunchbox, I shuffled towards my class’ table hoping to befriend the kids that were already sitting. I unpacked my mom’s cooking: broccoli and shrimp stir-fry. It was all yellow and soggy. I just hoped that I’d could choke this down without too much problem. Before I could take a bite, however, a kid across from me wrinkles his nose, and exclaims “ewww what’s that smell??” I freeze with eyes wide open and a big “uhh oh” goes through my head. Everyone nearby turns towards me and a second later they’re leaning away making exaggerated fanning motions in front of their faces. Some kids even get up to look at what I’m having, only to pull away and comment that it looked gross. The temperature of my face was rising quickly and the feeling of self consciousness was engulfing. I couldn’t handle the attention anymore and exiled myself to the very end of the bench. I ate alone and never got to say hello to anyone.

The stark difference highlighted by these two stories is a result of the contributions fencing has made to my life. My experiences with social situations while growing up was incredibly awkward. My “friends” were really just groups I stood around with to not look stupid by myself, and I struggled to connect with others due to the prominence of cliques.

Thankfully though I found my family at fencing where the culture’s incredibly welcoming. I remember practicing with older, more accomplished, fencers and receiving advice from them afterwards. Their sincerity in helping me improve dissolved notions I held previously which labeled those fencers as unfriendly or scary. This truly opened my eyes to the fact that people can be successful at what they do, and not let their ego get the best of them. This became, and still is, the kind of person I strive to be on a daily basis.

My coaches, similarly, had a tremendous impact on my personal development. Their great sense of humor taught me that I didn’t need to be someone else in order to fit into the club’s culture. I offered something through my personality that could draw a laugh out of everyone, myself included. (In this case, my quiet nature made for some great imitations when the other kids were tired and couldn’t answer verbally).The joking relationship I had with my coaches made me much more comfortable with just being who I was since that was something they appreciated. My experiences in those classes have had the impact of teaching me to always seek the best in people. What someone displays on the outside is never truly representative of who they are inside. It’s my mission to make people feel welcome if they’re not confident in their own personality. After all, someone will never know how valuable they can be to others until the day someone recognizes them for what they offer.

# The Dazzling Violet Anonymous

## We would like to know more about your interest in NYU. We are particularly interested in knowing what motivated you to apply to NYU and more specifically, why you have applied or expressed interest in a particular campus, school, college, program, and/or area of study? If you have applied to more than one, please tell us why you are interested in each of the campuses, schools, colleges, or programs to which you have applied. You may be focused or undecided, or simply open to the options within NYU’s global network; regardless, we want to understand - Why NYU? (400 word maximum)

A few years ago, on the Charles Bridge across Vltava River, I gained my first impression of NYU. I saw a group of students carrying cameras, lighting and microphones, with the logo NYU printed on the front of their violet t-shirts. I approached them for a conversation, and they told me that they were studying digital media here in Prague and producing a doc-film project. They even invited me for an interview. Their enthusiasm and energy sparked my initial interest in their school.

Now, I’ve become a student bound for media and communication. Producing a doc-film to expose local Shanghainese’s stereotypes of migrants, I tried to raise awareness and mobilize a collective effort to address this issue. My friend’s account of her experience of campus violence in Yunnan prompted me to start an investigative journalism project on the incident. I published my series articles on the National Youth Observation Contest press. At the TEDx I organized, I recounted my campaign for student government, trying to inspire my fellow female students to be braver and actively assume responsibilities, not to be intimidated by the gender imbalance in leadership. Along the way, I’ve become more aware of media and communication’s power to bring about social change.

I think NYU is an ideal place for my aspiration. I’d like to major in MCC (Media, Culture and Communication) in Steinhardt. Taking advantage of the NYU global network, I can immerse myself into foreign cultures while studying how media exerts cultural, social and global influence. I’m especially interested in the MCC Prague program, through which I can work with the finest journalists in the Czech Republic to present the local culture through feature articles or podcasts such as PragueCast. The various local internship opportunities associated with this program is equally appealing. I’m looking forward to investigating human rights issues in the Post-Communist era and writing a series about them by collaborating with Roma, a non-profit based in Czech Republic.

In MCC’s curriculum, I’d be thrilled to learn about courses like “Conflict Management Communication,” “Persuasion” and “Public Speaking.” I believe I’d be better equipped to continue my involvement with student union and other public affairs, and more importantly, be a better communicator. Besides, through the Center for Media, Culture and History (CMCH), I’ll get to participate in a faculty-led project to analyze the role that media plays in shaping our perceptions of social issues.

# Feminism Is About You and Me Anonymous

## Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma-anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.

The story began in last summer while I was looking at the name list of my new class, because every student chose humanities or science as the major after finishing the first year, the school had rearranged our classes. Though having been told there would be few boys in my class, I was still at a loss after counting the names,for there were only about ten masculine names of them. By the time the semester officially started, the girly atmosphere nearly pressed me into death, since they were just like me: long hair and gossiping in small clusters. But that was not the worst. Considering one fifth of our class was male, all teachers regarded them as ‘an apple of their eyes’. At that time, I was partially jealous of them: Equal as we were, how came boys were treated with favor simply because we were different genders? I was not so naive and it was not the first time I had been treated with inequality. Naturally, a question flashed in my mind: Why do not many boys choose humanities as their future direction, or at least, major in high school?

Not surprisingly, the war between humanities and science had started since freshmen year. Based on the conventional understanding of these subjects, old-fashioned parents tend to push their kids to learn something they are not interested in, but just to live up to their expectations. Dating back to 1980s in China, students majoring in science in senior high and university could easily obtain a decent job, and vice versa for arts students. In terms of gender difference, it is no wonder that discrepant structure of brain leads to varied social divisions, which has been proved by scientific research. ‘Overall, the results suggest that male brains are structured to facilitate connectivity between perception and coordinated action, whereas female brains are designed to facilitate communication between analytical and intuitive processing modes’ (Lay summary –ScienceDaily) As a consequence, it is reasonable boys and girls choose different subjects and supposedly this diversity improves work efficiency and beautifies the world.

However, is it true that females are born to master humanities while males are more capable of studying science and engineering, like most people believe? Afterwards a ‘ridiculous’ phenomenon attracted my attention. Some boys in my school confessed they would rather choose general science even though they could not handle it well. The reason why there did so was that science was commonly considered as a symbol of high intellect and general arts was those stupid and rigid kids would learn. Therefore, this was how prejudice was produced by stereotyped values and why physics and chemistry are always superior to history and politics. Now that people have held such thought for decades, teenagers are afraid to break the tradition which may bring about the loss of personal dignity.

The imbalance has a profound impact on the future. According to statistics, gender ratio varies in department. For every ten girls in Faculty of Social Science there are only five boys, while twenty-four in Computing & Engineering. Once looking at the adult world, circumstances in employment, income or even marriage are no better. Taking Nobel Prize as an example, there have been just two female scientists who won it in physical field. And the situation about Chemistry, Economics, even Literature was lackluster as well. Hereafter, it seems that gender discrimination is an unbridgeable barrier during growing up, but I clearly understand that changing implicit stereotypes is not just a matter of influencing intention, it also requires consideration of the social realities that shape minds without intention. The boys mentioned above may not masters of their own destiny. I would like to fight for my own interest as a partial feminism gladiator. No matter how the world has kissed my soul with its pain, I am always trying to return it with songs.

# Growing in the World Anonymous

## Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design

Bridgeport, Connecticut: A fleet of fifty-two Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority-owned buses spurt to a start while the sun begins to rise. Each bus slowly creeps along one of the nineteen lines spanning across Fairfield County; one of them, Bus No. 2, continues to the Dock Shopping Center underneath Interstate 95 toward a Stop and Shop in neighboring Stratford. Along the side of the building is a small, wooden bench that emits splinters to any poor soul who decides to sit down wearing shorts. The bus, blue and white with a marquee above the windshield reading “Coastal Link” appeared from underneath the interstate, slowly inching toward the bench. Men and women in their 40's and 50's filled the bench, expressions of despair and regret on their faces, quietly keeping to themselves while being compressed together like on a train car in a New York City Subway.

But there were two people that did not fit that particular description, two people who stood out of the crowd like a sore thumb: a 28 year old Hispanic woman with dark brown eyes, black frizzy hair, short and petite at just five feet tall, and a belly three times the size of a cantaloupe. Beside her sat a young boy, with the same hair in a bowl cut, same eyes, and even the same facial structure, wielding a copy of The Cat in the Hat while reciting the text. That young boy is me, intimately exploring and experiencing the English language, and that woman is my mother, learning the English language for herself.

I learned Spanish as my first language, understanding that my Mom was Mami, and my Dad was Papi. By 2004, My curiosity in school increased rapidly, as my older brother Mario got accepted to preschool. The Town of Stratford, our former home, only admitted students via lottery, and I did not enjoy the same luck as my brother. Mami was also pregnant, and needed to travel to Stamford (25 miles away) often to check on her pregnancy. We trekked long distances, took cabs, rode trains and hopped on buses to Stamford, since Papi took the only car we owned to work. Since it was cheap, Mami and I usually marched two miles from our shared, rented home in Stratford to the lonely, old bus stop bench alongside Stop and Shop.

Despite the depressing environment around us, we had fun on the bus, in cabs, and on the train because Mami made it fun. We sang, danced and conversed together, allowing me to experience firsthand that anything done with a positive attitude can be made fun. At the bus stop, alongside a plethora of depressed adults waiting for the bus, I enthusiastically read to Mami from The Foot Book, loud and proud for everyone to hear. Occasionally, someone sat on the opposite end of the dilapidated bench yelled to Mami “Can you get your son to be quiet?” in a demanding tone, not so much a request than a demand. She brushed off the lady’s order and encouraged me to read even louder. To Mami, I was the only one sitting on the bench.

Although I grew up with little money and resources, I could not have wished for a greater experience. My experiences, however challenging, are special; they shape me, they enabled me to have a unending necessity to learn and understand the world around me. My quest for knowledge is never ending; my learning experience does not begin and end in the classroom. It begins with others, with my family, and with myself. I would not be where I am today if I did not decide to reveal myself to the opportunities that were provided to me. To many, the only guarantee in life is that they will eventually die; people seem to forget another guarantee - constant learning and growth.

# A Revolutionary Upbringing Arina Stadnyk

## Please describe how you have prepared for your intended major, including your readiness to succeed in your upper-division courses once you enroll at the university. Things to consider: How did your interest in your major develop? Do you have any experience related to your major outside the classroom — such as volunteer work, internships and employment, or participation in student organizations and activities? If you haven’t had experience in the field, consider including experience in the classroom. This may include working with faculty or doing research projects.

Reverberating voices. Flying spit. Clinking shot glasses. A gaggle of grandpas in furry trapper hats, perched on potato crates, pontificating about Soviet politics in a farm shed. They agreed, yet still managed to yell. As a routine observer of this ruckus, I knew everything there was for a seven-year-old to know about Gorbachev’s perestroika and the pitfalls of postcommunist democratization. Their passion was contagious. I wanted to understand their jargon, to be included in their discourse. Where I grew up, politics was unavoidable. My borough was called Kommunist and my daily Metro ride began at Proletarska station. I witnessed political uprisings sweep Kharkiv during the Orange Revolution. The optimism and solidarity were palpable. Thousands of orange rags dangled from tree branches throughout the city. I wanted to understand this, to be part of it.

My college political science classes were a feast for my interests. For my honors project in International Politics, I collaborated with my professor to research the benefits of refugee resettlement in San Diego communities and presented this work at the annual City College research symposium. I indulged my penchant for Soviet politics in my honors cultural anthropology class, researching how communist pioneering organizations shaped children’s political identities, which was selected for publication in the City College Anthropology Journal. I found genuine fulfillment in this work, and am eager to develop it at university. My honors coursework and rigorous curriculum prepared me to excel at university as a Political Science or International Relations major with a minor in Anthropology. Studying refugee resettlement led me to intern at the International Rescue Committee, where I help refugees learn English and navigate the American immigration system.

Taken together, this work holds personal significance because I witnessed my father’s struggle to fit into society as an Afghan refugee and want to help people in similar situations. I love the IRC community and am empowered by applying my knowledge to make a tangible impact on people. My experience at IRC and on my college’s MUN team inspired my plans to serve international non-profit organizations that promote human rights and assist victims of political violence.

# Message from a Wakandan Prince Marcus Fraser

## Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.

I was at a loss for words.

Before we traveled back to New York, my dad insisted that we visit a nearby plantation. As I walked across the Carolina cotton field, I pictured myself in my ancestors' shoes. Imagining the verbal, physical and mental humiliation that field slaves suffered was unbearable. How were people able to justify these degrading actions? I wondered. Since my race has been exploited and oppressed for hundreds of years, I knew it was important for me to reflect black excellence.

My parents value African American culture and taught me to as well. Because they emphasized the awareness of my identity, they ensured that I was involved with Jack and Jill of America, Inc. Jack and Jill is an organization that focuses on strengthening African American youth through leadership development, volunteer service, and civic duty. For the past 12 years, activities at Jack and Jill have impacted me tremendously. It raised my confidence and gave me a desire to seek leadership roles. So often, successful African Americans are portrayed as famous athletes or rappers. But that’s not all of us. This leadership program introduced me to an abundance of black role models: doctors, teachers, lawyers, entrepreneurs, and more! I joined the executive teen board of our chapter and was assigned the role of Lead Chaplain. As Chaplain, I began meetings with a speech and prayer which has shaped me into an effective public speaker. My involvement in Jack and Jill has continued to bolster my awareness of black consciousness, and my experiences inspired me to celebrate my heritage by performing a Black Panther skit at my senior pep rally.

You Are The Black Panther, I reassured myself as I donned my costume. I sauntered across the gymnasium with pride and shined in my dance solo. Galvanized by my vibrant performance, my group followed my lead, and we danced in unison. I truly embraced the role of King T’Challa. I chose to imitate Black Panther for our skit because the message of the movie resonates with me: the power of black potential. Watching a predominantly African American cast epitomize the image of black excellence was euphoric, but witnessing my mother, who is blind, advocate for the rights of blind parents has moved me more than any superhero movie. My mother’s advocacy work set the real example that I was determined to follow. She sparked a desire in me to join the Huntington Youth Court. In this program, I acted as a defense attorney for a juvenile offender, and I used public speaking skills to acquit my client of any charges. After winning this trial, I knew I was capable of being a leader.

So as I stood on that endless cotton plantation and thought about my mistreated ancestors, I came to the realization that my black potential is very important. Embracing my culture and setting a good example is essential to me. I participated in the Black Panther skit, read prayers as a Chaplain and debated in Youth Court because I wanted to strengthen my confidence and tap into every bit of my potential. As trifling as a high school skit may sound in the grand scheme of my life experiences, it is my most memorable moment because I truly felt confident and comfortable with who I am. I want to exemplify black excellence. I now jokingly refer to myself as Wakandan royalty and go by Prince Fraser.

# Packet of Tissue Anonymous

## Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.

“You are going to a boarding school in Singapore,” said my parents one day.

The decision to send me off to boarding school came as a surprise for my family’s acquaintances. It came as a shock to me --- especially since I did not even know what the boarding school would be like. Even with people questioning the situation, my parents stood firmly on their ground. I, on the other hand, was ecstatic about the new environment I was going to be a part of. Being an only child, my friends were like my siblings. What they learned from their older siblings, I learned from them. They have always been the roots of my personal growth. To have more of them was a marvelling experience.

Moving to Singapore was a huge whirlwind of “new.”There was no one telling me when to shower, when to go out, what to eat, and what to do. For the first time in my life, I felt in control of my time and space. But that did not last too long. “Don’t spend too much money on Starbucks”, “Don’t eat too much McDonalds.” Don’t. Don’t Don’t. The speed of the internet connection would have found it hard to catch up with the speed of my parents’ instructions. Their instructions have always been rooted at one thing: financial planning. I did not understand why they were worried. Even so, I did what they asked: kept track of my spendings. Gradually, I became more sympathetic of their concerns. Sympathy, I learned, is a foundational experience for personal growth. My parents wanted me to understand the value of money --- and the hard work required to obtain it.

“How much for a packet of tissue?,” I asked an old lady. In Singapore, it is common for the elderly to work past their years to support themselves. “A dollar. Where you from?” I explained to her that I was from Myanmar, and that I was here for boarding school. Eager to strike a conversation, she told me about her life from the time she worked at a restaurant to being a single mother. “You so lucky. Thank your parents. I did not have any education. So look at me: I am selling tissues at 63.” And so I bought all the tissues she had to sell. All I wanted was a packet of tissues. But I got a valuable life lesson to appreciate what I have and to try harder. Personal growth came to me in many forms, including a packet of tissue.

# Bubble or onion? Anonymous

## 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.

Light, clear and ephemeral. A bubble is easy to pop. An onion on the other hand, has layers of tough, pungent membranes - breaking them brings tears to your eyes.

When asked where I was from, I would unthinkingly say ‘Karachi’. As I grew older, I began to feel a sense of shame in this answer. In truth, my friends, family, and I all lived somewhere different; somewhere sheltered, built in reaction to the city being ranked one of the world’s most dangerous. Many called this 'Somewhere' a bubble: an idyllic microcosm, separated from the outside by an iridescent cover, floating apart from larger society. Over the years, this construct began to feel less like a bubble, instead taking the form of something fouler - an onion. Our fear had created layers - layers that manifested in the walls of the limited areas of the city we inhabited, in the tight circumference of our social circles, and in our insular thinking. We were trapped deep within the onion.

“It’s not safe there.”

“There” was always a vague abstraction - a place that existed outside our carefully constructed and regulated confines. While it made many apprehensive, it provoked me to push through the layers, to what was beyond. I joined a cycling group and ventured into areas of the city I had never been to before, exploring remote backstreets and discovering treasures nestled within them. Not being in a car - its tinted windows and all encompassing metal structure an extension of the onion - felt liberating. I learned of the city’s rich history and cultural diversity. I saw how despite the facade of radical Islamism, a Parsi Fire temple, Hindu mandir, and masjid all coexisted within streets of each other. A layer of the translucent film that had shrouded my eyes disintegrated as they opened to the truth of my city.

“We live our lives and they live theirs.”

This notion of ‘us and them’ alienated and disassociated us from those who resided outside the onion. Even as I played with disabled children from Ujala or broke my fast on the roadside with people for whom we had set up iftaar during Ramadan, there remained a distinct divide between us. But observing the unusual neighbourly relationship between squatters and the single woman in the house next to their makeshift home, for a short movie, inspired me to reassess my choices. My decision to train alongside athletes from Karachi’s poorest neighbourhoods diverged from the norm of hiring private coaches set by competitive runners at my school. As we ran together on the cracked, beat-up track, it wasn’t just stamina and fitness that developed, but strong friendships. The social divide that otherwise existed between us was kicked up in the dust.

“What difference will it make?”

The staunch conviction that the reality outside the onion was absolute and unchangeable, that involvement would be of no consequence, reinforced our sense of disassociation. Listening to my parents and their friends discuss the 2013 elections, I noted how the excitement that swept over the rest of the country at the prospect of one democratically elected government succeeding another for the first time, was unable to permeate the onion. But the overwhelming response to my amateur four-minute Facebook video urging people to go vote convinced me that these layers were not impermeable. Working with documentary filmmaker Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy reinforced this realisation: I witnessed real change as legislation was gradually amended and conversation shifted away from trivialising issues under meaningless rhetoric towards working for plausible solutions. A difference could be made.

As I continue to break through layers, the opaque barrier I once faced grows more and more translucent. A distinct bright light filters luminously through. It reveals not the dystopian world I had been conditioned to believe lay beyond the onion, but rather one of beauty, hope, and authenticity. I push forward, reaching for it.

# Learning to Adapt Isabella Escalona

## Prompt: 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.

I had spent the whole morning preparing to execute an Olympic worthy backflip into my aunt’s community pool. It was the summer before 6th grade; I stood at the edge, took one deep breath, and launched myself into the air. I imagined the intense satisfaction I’d feel as the cool water touched my sun kissed skin, but suddenly everything went dark. I tasted an unpleasant mix of iron and chlorine, climbed out of the water, and tried wiping my face clean. I remained still as blood poured from my forehead.

My head had collided with the concrete edge of the pool, tearing open the skin on my forehead and revealing part of my skull. I should have been paralyzed by my own fear. I was ten years old, completely alone, losing more blood than I had ever seen before. I should have screamed and cried, but I did not. With my skull exposed and blood cascading down my face, I stood up, walked over to the pay phone, and dialed my aunt’s number. With an untroubled voice I explained to her that I broke my face. In that moment I had a striking realization: I was primed for situations like this.

Growing up, my household was like the Ringling Brothers Circus. My single mom juggled a number of odd jobs to support four hyperactive children, one of which has Autism. While she worked an unpredictable schedule, my siblings and I had to manage the house on our own, which usually resulted in a lot of messes and arguments. This became normal, expected (ironically). If my sisters were yelling, my baby brother was crying, mac and cheese was burning on the stove, and the dogs were running around with muddy paws, everything was operating as usual. My childhood was a series of last minute changes, unpredictable schedules, and moments of crisis. I spent one morning when I was six standing on the kitchen counter with a broomstick trying to scrape an omelette off the ceiling. Meanwhile, my sisters argued loudly over which nail color to use on our dog, and our mom, late for a job interview, ran around with curlers in her hair and one shoe.

In an unpredictable world, being able to react and adjust to sudden change is key. My upbringing equipped me with that ability. Living in my family’s unconventional environment and managing to find order in disorganization taught me the importance of adaptability. As a result, I am able to remain calm and collected in the face of upheaval. I am capable of thriving in a world of chaos, and because of my family’s versatile nature, I can face situations like cracking my skull with confidence.

# Kitchen Wars Anonymous

## 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. (Common App Essay)

Hands shaking, I lifted the cover of my makeshift steamer.

All families have their own “thing.” Some have game nights; others have movie nights. My family has a time-honored tradition of cook-offs. These competitions are not like the casual and friendly ones that you would see in movie montages. Far from it, our annual battle is one marked by harsh competition and unrelenting judges—my parents.

Armed with passable culinary skills and unassailable determination, I set out to win. The theme this year was “Asian Persuasion,” the last attempt of my parents’ continued effort to keep their kids connected with their Asian roots before my sister went to college. Rejecting the ideas of fried rice and chow mein because of their simplicity, I ransacked the internet for a dish that could display my innovation and culinary prowess. Then, an idea finally donned on me: elevate the ordinary. My dad has always said that a successful business isn’t one that can offer the lowest price, but rather one that can create added value. I wanted to apply this idea to my dish. Choosing the classical Chinese dish of soup dumplings, I aimed to incorporate the traditional Taiwanese dish of beef noodle soup. Coming up with an idea was the easy part.

Allocating approximately 10 minutes to planning, I foraged the kitchen seeking out the resources I had on hand. Immediately, I was confronted with a major problem: we didn’t own a steamer. Racking my brain for alternatives, I decided on using a noodle strainer as the base and coffee filter as steamer paper. Success balanced elegantly on my burst of creativity—stage one was complete.

I was now entering the second phase: grocery shopping. With a limited budget of 200 HKD, I needed to prioritize. The rich aroma of rotisserie chicken and satisfying crunch of freshly baked bread assaulted my senses. I was fighting against my biggest enemy — temptation. Forcibly dragging myself away from the drool-worthy display cases, I focused on substituting certain ingredients for their much more economical counterparts. Lugging my bags out the automatic door, I left smiling with satisfaction from my small victory.

A stack of dumpling wrappers, minced beef, bowls piled high with freshly diced vegetables, and one box of gelatin sat expectantly on the countertop. I set out to accomplish the impossible: produce soup dumplings the world has never seen. Mechanically rolling out sheets of dumpling wrappers and making 18 folds, echoing the aesthetic of the family favorite restaurant Din Tai Fung, I aimed for perfection. 20 minutes later, with shoulders tense from concentration, hands sticky white with flour, I am proud to say it was a goal I achieved.

Though this seems like a humorous story, “elevate the ordinary” has been a principle that resonates throughout my life. Lacking the resources to create my own NGO and the flexibility of schedule to volunteer in Africa, I dedicate my time to teaching children in a church-funded program through innovative games and assisting the local library in choosing books suitable for young readers. Like the commonly found soup dumplings, my extracurricular activities may seem ordinary. Yet, like my soup dumplings, they are ordinary in name only. Beneath that generic title of “Model United Nations” and “Debate” for example, lays an abundance of more than ordinary experiences and accomplishments.

This outlook has also had a significant impact on my future. Choosing to study humanities-related subjects, I have been questioned countless times on selecting the highly in-demand STEM fields to gain a competitive edge. My response is always the same, “I care more about studying what I am truly passionate about than pursuing something that others think is more advantageous.” Though I lost, the competition, I still stood proudly over my neatly plated creation because I truly believe I added my unique take. Similarly, I’m confident in my abilities to create my own added value in future endeavors.

# Lean on Me Rachel Lynch

## Common App choose your own prompt/submit an essay on any topic

Summer begins with skin made of ants. The months between school years were designed for sitting on the border of the sandpit at the Jewish Community Center with ants crawling over my hands.

“Sugar ants don’t bite people,” my friend assures me every June. And, in the years I have let my body be overrun, I have never been bitten. I’ve spent every summer in camp at the JCC, braving triple digit temperatures and the bee-swarmed pool. Nowhere feels more familiar. Consumption by ants started as a thrill, a five-year-old’s novelty trick. Every year, the ant trick became less wondrous and more comforting, a sign that summer had begun and I had arrived at the JCC. The JCC grew with me, but I never realized how deeply it had changed me until I became a camp counselor.

Summer 2017, I held the most coveted position of all: camp counselor. I was assigned to Chaverim, given a single co-counselor and responsibility of twenty five year olds for eight weeks. Chaverim could have been a nightmare; the amount of energy contained in the body of a five-year-old is slightly nuclear. Instead, the summer was one of the greatest experiences in my life. I returned summer 2018 and received the same position. What made working with Chaverim so wonderful was the way they were constantly learning to exist as humans. As a counselor, I stepped into a leadership role and found that I could make a difference in my campers lives just as my counselors had made a difference in mine.

As a child, I was jaw-wired-shut shy. I worried about making new friends or speak in front of a group. I cried during drop off. Counselors were always willing to take a moment with me in the hallway, to talk as though I wasn’t just some kid, to help me calm down and join the group. My counselors made a difference in my life. Instead of leaving me hysterical, the JCC gave me five extra minutes a day to breathe and grow into my own skin. By making small adjustments, like ensuring I had my best friend nearby during activities, my counselors helped me feel secure and enjoy camp. Eventually, I stepped into a new comfort zone and made friends, participated in games requiring communication.

In 2018, I sat in the hallway with a crying five-year-old.

“Are you excited for your trip this weekend?” He nodded, sniffled. “What are you going to do on your trip?” He took a deep breath and started talking. After around five minutes, he confided that he was nervous about swim. We made a compromise: he would sit on the edge of the pool, but he didn’t have to get in further.

At camp, Friday ends with an all-camp Shabbat service featuring Bill Withers’ “Lean On Me.” Shabbat is the pinnacle of the feel-good summer bonding experience; it is unapologetically, wonderfully campy. Around four hundred kids gather in the auditorium. The lights dim. The first chords filter through the room. We circle within our groups, arms around each other, and sing. “Lean On Me” embodies the spirit of the JCC: coming together with a community to become the best version of yourself.

On the last Friday, I was prepared for nostalgia, but not to see how miraculously each camper had changed. As I leaned into the song, my campers’ differences from their week one selves became joyfully obvious. I considered the boy who had feared swimming showing off his freestyle earlier in the week, how the girl who had no friends wrapped her arms easily around the kids on either side of her. Seeing how I had helped my campers learn and develop allowed me to view myself in a new light, both as a leader and as someone who has been profoundly impacted by her community.

# Sisters Sofia Hines

## 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.

Standing knee-deep in clear water, I peer at the minnows swimming lazily around my toes.

“Help, Daddy, there’s a Mexican!” wails a curly-haired girl from the security of a bright pink inflatable ring. Her pointed finger indicates to all the target of her outburst: a young, caramel-skinned girl a few feet in front of me who is frozen in mid splash.

We turn for each other and I envelop her in a hug and pick her up. The minnows scatter. My chest burns with a familiar rage and I try to focus on something. The girl has shiny, dark hair. It’s slick with lake water and warm with summer sun, and it drapes over my shoulder as I turn to carry her out of the soft waves.

Time slows to a haze. Suddenly the burning in my chest fills my throat and I can’t swallow. Instead, I whirl around and meet the aqua eyes of the pointing girl.

“Dark skin doesn’t mean she’s Mexican.” I inhale. “She’s Guatemalan, and she’s my sister.”

I exhale, and the girl’s eyes dart to the child in my arms and then back to me. They ripple with confusion like lake water, washing away my daydreamed outburst.

Quietly, I wrap my sister in a towel and we walk home. The burning in my throat cools and my voice escapes as a whisper. “It’s okay, Nila. How about we have a popsicle? Would you like that?” My sister’s nod brings comfort, but the girl’s words churn in my head even though I have heard hundreds like them. Ignorant words imbued with insinuations and hurled at us. Words that confuse adopted for alien and biological for beautiful. Words that spew racism, that say my three sisters aren't related to me because they are from Bulgaria and Guatemala instead of from our mother’s body. Divisive words that fill my head at age ten. This incident is the first time I had a burning urge to do something more than daydream about speaking up.

The implication that my siblings and I aren’t “real” sisters has been a constant in my life. An ongoing intimation that bonds in my family are somehow negated based on a difference in complexion and background. I wasn’t really sure why my family was judged as so aberrant, but I found myself defending the validity of my connection to my sisters with exhausting frequency.

In recent years, however, my frustration and anger surrounding others’ perceptions of my family have slowly coalesced into understanding. I realized that most people around me root their definition of family in homogeneity. For them, family is sameness. It is being able to see the texture of your hair in your dad’s, credit your hazel eyes to your mom, and notice the curve of your nose on your sister’s. It is to embrace familiarity, to see yourselves in each other in a literal sense.

But DNA is not what makes Zoai, Nila, and Ana my sisters. I don’t see my appearance in them, and they don't search for theirs in me. I see Zoai’s relentless compassion, Nila’s creative spirit, and Ana’s bubbly optimism, not hair, skin, and noses. We share a human experience and a resilient, unconditional love for each other. There’s no prerequisite based on skin color or country of origin to be my sister.

The young girl in Uganda suffering from malaria is my sister. The silenced refugee fleeing Sarin gas attacks in her homeland and denied shelter in mine is my sister. The transgender woman in my own city who faces daily discrimination is my sister.

My visceral connection to people from all corners of the globe is what shapes my paradigm and drives my passions. Growing up in a multiracial family exposed me to injustice; it taught me that the bond of sisterhood transcends color and circumstance and planted in me a fierce hunger for justice.

# Healing to Action Yume Murphy

## Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma-anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.

"You know Yume, you're the only black girl that I like, the rest are so ratchet," he let out.

What... did he just say?

I let the words sink... because, well, I genuinely liked him. He'd helped me study for almost every computer science test and made the class somewhat bearable... but did he really just say that? I let my feelings race and the moment grow tense as I faked a laugh. The bell rang, and I was for once saved by the bell.

Was it a compliment? Was it because I was only half black? Was I better than other black girls? No, I wasn't, but his perception of me was. Instances like these occurred every so often my freshmen year, and eventually I realized that they weren't okay. For many girls, speaking out against a patriarchal society's views and social norms isn't an option. In some communities a young girl would be ridiculed for making such a large deal of something so perceivably normal and trivial.

However, normal is relative... and objectification is not. Young girls, especially African Americans girls, face a disproportionate amount of marginalization, fetishization and exoticism. I know, this sounds harsh, but think about it. Do you ever see any African American girls in Teen Vogue that aren't light skinned and white washed for consumer audiences? And how often have you seen an African American women been belittled due to the size of her behind in the media or seen memes dramatizing the features of African Americans to an almost animalistic portrayal. You know what I'm talking about. Black girls who shout their words and smack their big lips all the while twerking with their fat asses as their kinky, untamable hair bounces; this is to a large degree, is America's perception of African American women.

It's this simple. Female? Young? Black? Three strikes and you're out. But... wait, those perceptions are far from who I or thousands of other Black girls identify themselves as. But if I stand up and make some noise, I am once again assigned the "angry black woman" trope. If I step away and try to assimilate myself to the numerous criticisms made of Black females, I am not only an "Oreo", but not good enough and possibly trying too hard. Thus, the second class treatment of African American women and girls has become undoubtedly an issue that affects me. Since I came to this realization, I've become committed to bringing awareness to the objectification of black girls and women through my own outlets of creative expression.

Thus I co-founded Racial Education Advocacy Leaders (R.E.A.L.) on my school's campus. In the wake of Michael Brown and the turmoil in Ferguson, I couldn't ignore the blatant racism and injustices. But, I soon realized a lot of people could. Many African American students seemed reluctant to join R.E.A.L, instead retorting that the "system ain't ever gonna change," and other apathetic, defeated sentiments. As frustrated as I was, I brainstormed and attempted to look for a way for students to truly resonate with my message and find empathy within themselves. I knew I needed to create something that would inflict the pain and a passion that has spurred me to care. I resolved to create a documentary highlighting apathy towards racially motivated issues. I knew by combining my passion for social change, and my love of creating films something beautiful was in the making. Now as I work to create something that raises empathy, I think I've found my talent, my passion because the relationship I have with a camera is the most illuminating and honest way I can imprint my perception of the world.

# Working in a Mental Hospital Anonymous

## Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

Most people hope to never step foot into a mental hospital, much less spend their summers in one. But for me, the opportunity to volunteer in a Chinese mental hospital was one I seized upon with interest (and only slight trepidation). I’m glad I did so. My two weeks at the Xi’an Mental Hospital’s children’s unit summer of my sophomore year has become much more than a simple internship; it has become a pivotal experience that has shaped my perspective and future aims.

As expected, work at the hospital was sobering, and at times, disconcerting. The children had serious mental illnesses; some stared at nothing and mumbled, some had to be forcefully restrained when they erupted into violent fits. The staff didn’t shield me from the reality of the situation, but I didn’t want them to. Seeing these kids didn’t make me afraid; they made me want to help. I volunteered to assist in running “activity time” in the mornings and afternoons, where I’d supervise the children in structured recreation– coloring, yoga, social games like charades and musical chairs, and the occasional outside excursion. Most kids, despite their diagnoses, were bright and vivacious. Once they overcame their initial wariness of another white-coated doctor, they dragged me into badminton games, proudly showed me their drawings, and nagged me for details about my life in America (“Is everybody blonde?”). Ironically, I interacted more with the patients than many of the doctors and psychologists. Therefore, during morning checkups, whenever the kids were in a snappish mood, I could coax them to talk to us.

Working at the hospital opened my eyes to the state of mental healthcare in China. As a nurse I worked with observed: “Psychology in China’s come a long way, but there’s still much work needed to be done”. Mental healthcare institutions remain underfunded, and more professionals are always needed. Many times, mental illnesses are treated as a neurological defect, instead of a holistic, psychological phenomenon, as American therapies emphasize. Lack of personnel means lack of follow-ups after treatment is finished, leading to chronicity and recidivist hospitalization.

Most of all, mental illness remains an extremely stigmatized subject in China. Disorders such as depression, anxiety, and PTSD are often deemed dramatics by family and friends, causing people to be reluctant to seek help in the first place. While this stigma exists in America, Chinese society, with its emphasis on conformity, faces it even more. Things are improving, but not as fast as they could be.

Solving the mental healthcare problem is ambitious. However, I believe specific steps can be taken to alleviate it, ones I hope to one day implement. The first: employing psychologists in high-schools, as there is in America. The second: increasing education and awareness on mental health to de-stigmatize mental illness. The third: training more Chinese psychologists to perform therapies such as CBT and DBT. The fourth: campaigning for allocating more funds to mental institutions. These steps would ultimately go a long way in improving treatment and making it more readily available.

Even though I was born in America, I’m lucky to have always had a strong link to my parents’ home country. I return every other summer to visit family: my father currently working in Shanghai, my cousins and grandparents living in Xian and Wuhan. China is as much my home as America is. What’s more, I see these harmful attitudes towards mental health mirrored in my own Chinese-American community. By becoming a clinical psychologist, I believe I can aid both my cultures– both Chinese, and Chinese-American people.

This summer, I again interned in Xian Mental Hospital. I was shocked at its growth. There were more personnel and renovated facilities. But the number of patients had also swelled; every bed was occupied. There were now over forty kids participating in “activity time”. The nurse’s statement rang true: the hospital had come a long way, but there was still more needed to be done. So I pulled on my coat, and got to work.

# Why NYU Anonymous

## Why NYU?

As kids living in Colorado suburbs, most of my friends and I rarely disagree with each other on politics. Fortunately, in my high school, my teachers come from a variety of different locations. And I love their different perspectives. In my AP Government/Politics class, I constantly sought my teacher’s opinions. He is politically moderate, while I am more on the left side of the political spectrum, so his views helped me consider and respect perspectives that I had never thought about before. This interaction also helped me connect with my teacher. That is why it is my philosophy that listening to different views builds a bridge between me and other cultures or people.

Not only do I enjoy politics and interacting with people, but I also enjoy math and science, which is why I am applying to the Stern School of Business and the Tandon School of Engineering. As a freshman at the Tandon School of Engineering, I’ll be introduced to the entrepreneurship and innovation aspect of electrical engineering through the course “Engineering and Technology Forum.” The course will not only give me access to a variety of research conducted by leading engineers, but more importantly the school’s research-intensive institution and global network will allow me to interact with these leading engineers, just as I loved interacting with my teacher. While pursuing a business degree at the Stern School of Business, I’ll also be able to take the course “Cultures and Context” at the College of Arts and Science.

Through that course and the school’s diverse student population, I’ll be able to learn about many cultures and their significance while being surrounded by peers from multiple cultures and backgrounds! Moreover, I will be able to travel and study abroad in :ondon through your “semester away” programs. Therefore, the Stern School of Business will allow me to learn in an environment that promotes diversity while giving me the opportunity to apply what I learn and explore different cultures abroad. New York University, located around the bustling and diverse Greenwich Village with people from around the world, will be the opposite of the Colorado suburbs that I am familiar with. Instead of having difficulty in finding people to disagree with, at NYU there will be a difficulty in finding people to agree with! I love and embrace that.

# More Than the 'MathSter' Shankar Mutneja

## 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.

I once believed my extraordinary skill with numbers would take me to great heights and greater happiness. I was wrong.

Numbers- quantitative indicators, widely believed to factor the quality of one’s life - galvanized significant achievements, but until recently impeded the emergence of my humane side. At 7, invited to display my abilities at a private school, I stood onstage, the cynosure of all eyes. The anchor rattled off a lengthy problem set to which I correctly responded ”9873293” well before the calculator could. I cultivated this talent crouched in cramped rooms, experimenting with the abacus, convinced that proficiency with operating abacus’s primary-hued beads would imbue exceptional numeracy. I started processing number sequences with surety and speed, and then at accelerated paces, sans the device, merely by moving my hands in the air as though working the beads. This earned me the moniker, “MathSter.”

Sweeping through state and national competitions, I entered the international arena. I come from a small town, Jalalabad, near the India-Pakistan border. Seeing my extraordinary skills, my father encouraged me, and I cleared the exam to study at India’s finest boarding school. Suddenly, I was cast amongst peers stellar in academia and athletics; yet, my competitive spirit, honed in countless abacus competitions, prevailed and I strove to improve in both, finally winning several awards. While my exceptional talent won me accolades, it impeded my Emotional Quotient, retarding the ‘fifth dimension’, including intuition and emotions. Admittedly, winning awards was thrilling. But where was the sense of inner fulfilment and contentment? It took one assignment to bridge this lacuna.

One day, my seniors seconded me for a community-service learning project. We arrived at a shanty home in a vermin-infested slum colony without power or light. We intended installing solar lighting that I had designed in physics lab, drawing from the original Litre of Light concept, to weather the Indian monsoon. I commenced operations- the first was up and running. I went on to install lights in 50 homes by sunset.. Finally, grimy and tired, walking towards the bus returning us to school, I was halted by an elderly woman in ragged dress, hands joined in gratitude. She touched my head in benediction, smiled toothlessly, and said: Shukriya (thank you). Her smile seemed to light the hillside. I felt a deep sense of accomplishment that eluded me even when I won my first international Math award. I was jubilant! I knew then that I would continue serving community. Unfortunately, there were problems with the lights- they performed sporadically; either the recipients handled them wrong or the electrical circuit was faulty. My usual remedial protocols - collecting data on the circuit’s power, humidity and other potential factors affecting performance - led nowhere. I faced a conundrum: though committed, I could not deploy my ‘mathematical gift’ for resolve. Something was missing. It struck me whilst conversing with a user: the bulbs were bug infested. The epiphany - my de facto number-based approach in conjunction with a people-based - human approach brought resolve. I’d found the fifth dimension - ‘collaboration’.

Discussing with slum dwellers their problems built empathy and developed my understanding of their actual needs: I could now work with them to derive real, sustainable solutions. Gradually, numbers started losing their overarching importance, and my competitive streak softened. Now, though pursuing academic excellence, I strike a balance between success and community impact. In my final year at school, as the Community Outreach Secretary, I coordinate 20 community outreach projects including drug rehabilitation and solar lighting. The Uttarakhand Sustainable Development Festival nominated me for their Change Maker’s Award, and Society magazine for 'Young Achiever's Award'. Importantly, I’ve connected with my softer, empathetic self and found contentment while helping uplift the underserved. Today, though focused on academia, I’ll ever be a committed change agent, working on the combination of these two seemingly polar activities and hopefully, make this world a better place, with my numerical and humanitarian inputs!

# The Meaning of Music Katherine Vlamis

## 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.

Like any toddler, I despised my car seat; I’d arch my back and defiantly kick my feet as Mom strapped me in. Finally accepting my fate, I’d sulk throughout the drive to ensure Mom understood my frustration. One day, however, this scene played out differently; Mom popped in a CD of Irish folk music (every toddler’s favorite, right?). Before I could start another tantrum, the fiddle’s contagious energy and the bodhran’s deep thumping engulfed me. My body couldn’t contain its excitement as the sprightly tune resounded through the minivan. Glancing in her rearview mirror Mom saw my feet vigorously kicking, not in frustration, but in time to the jubilant music that is Gaelic Storm’s Plouescat Races.

Within a few years, my taste had evolved to appreciate the brilliance of The Beatles. Their tight harmonies, driving rhythms, and catchy lyrics delighted me as I twirled around the room on my father’s feet. I was so obsessed that for show-and-tell, I toted in their CD and played Yellow Submarine for my class; I just had to share my enthusiasm with my friends. This newfound fervor led me to ponder: can I write songs, too?

The answer to this question has changed my life. At the tender age of five, I wrote my first “hit” single, C’mon, a party song in the style of Hannah Montana. Soon, lyrics about butterflies, best friends, and other childhood concerns flooded the pages of my Hello Kitty journal. At eight I performed my first concert, with my grandparents’ den as the venue, my cousin as the backup singer, and relatives for the audience. My family’s pride in me and the rush of adrenaline inevitably confirmed that I was more than a consumer of music; I was a creator, a composer.

As I matured, school work left me with less and less time to write music. Instead of lyrics and melodies, my mind was consumed by equations, grammar rules, and who signed the Magna Carta. Still, I slipped music into my school work whenever I could. The number of raps, songs, and parodies I wrote on topics from cell organelles to ancient Mesopotamian civilizations both astounds and embarrasses me. These compositions were amusing, but hardly transformative.

It was through comforting a friend that I discovered the true power of music. I’d noticed Jane wrestling with depression and dysphoria, and our mutual love of music inspired me to write her a song. I wanted Jane to understand just how courageous she was. When I shared the song with her, Jane was so appreciative; she hadn’t realized that others noticed and cared as deeply as I did. Today Jane, now known as Joey, is miles ahead of where he once was. Although I can’t say for sure, I hope I played even the tiniest part in his journey.

When asked to describe my passion for music, I could write about the confidence I’ve gained as a youth member in a predominantly adult worship band, the leadership and communication skills I’ve acquired as a choir section leader, or the lessons I’ve learned from challenging auditions. However, these are not the defining experiences of my musical career to date. To me, music is much more than something you play on the radio or post about on social media. To me, music is a gift, both to the consumer and the creator. Music is a universal language with the power to unite people from every walk of life. Music is a weapon that can peacefully break down all barriers, no matter how insurmountable. Just as music soothed the savage beast in a rowdy toddler, it can soothe the pains that come with growing up and living in a broken world. My mission isn’t simply to create music – it’s to help others, to share with them the joy I’ve found in music all my life.

# Buttons Jen Curran

## Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

For most high schoolers, a best friend is someone who lends you the physics notes when you miss class. Someone who says you look like a marshmallow in your parka but silences anyone who does the same. Someone who sponsors midnight Stop & Shop runs to satisfy your popcorn cravings. My best friend was different. She chose crossword puzzles over vector diagrams and compression slippers over winter fashion. Her dentures made popcorn a pipe dream, so we filled our Friday afternoons with cranberry juice and maple walnut sundaes. Kay Quinn was, in many ways, a stereotypical old lady. But the hundreds of hours I spent with her taught me just how much lay beneath the surface.

I met Kay my first evening at Traditions of Wayland, a cushy assisted living facility in my hometown. Fresh out of middle school, I was heading up a student-senior outreach program in search of a surrogate grandmother. I navigated the sea of walkers with a tight smile and no inkling of what to expect. Would the residents be grouchy? Would they mistake me for their granddaughter? What if I called the same bingo number twice and they thought I was stupid?

I shouldn’t have worried. That night was a flurry of warm introductions, miscounted dimes, and compliments on my eyebrows. The seniors chattered about “that dear Irish girl” as if I couldn’t hear them from my table four feet away. After powering through eleven rounds of bingo, they shuffled sleepily towards the elevators, leaving behind only Kay Quinn and her cherry red cane. “We just love you, honey!” she exclaimed. “Do come again.”

And I did. Traditions became a tradition itself as I doubled my volunteer hours and moonlighted as a waitress and receptionist. Kay quizzed me on French verbs from the pantry doorway and recited her favorite limericks to ease my Excel-induced suffering. Between bingo rounds, she shared nine decades’ worth of heartwarming anecdotes, layering nostalgia over her salmon lipstick. She never left me without a kiss on the cheek and a reminder to “drive with your lock buttons down.” Kay Quinn was, in every sense of the word, alive. I spent the next two years convincing myself that this would never change.

By my seventeenth Thanksgiving, I was struggling to give thanks. America’s political wounds bled from every television screen and left me begging for a cozy Kay story. I decided, however, that the election would have to wait when I found Kay slumped in a wheelchair at bingo. Her skin matched the clouds, her blue eyes muddied. “It’s just a little cold, honey,” she insisted as I wrapped my arms tentatively around her. Her aid pulled me aside to whisper that Kay had spent Thanksgiving in the hospital after a stroke. I excused myself to cry in the bathroom.

The next few months were rocky, to say the least. Kay’s smile lit up a room with less voltage each day, often morphing into a wince when she thought nobody was watching. She insisted on calling me Marilyn. She grew so lost during bingo that I had to sit by her wheelchair and cover the tiles myself. For her ninety-fourth birthday, I snuck up to Kay’s room with a pair of pearl earrings and a small chocolate cake. She ate two bites and wished me a blessed Thanksgiving before falling asleep.

On February 24th, 2017, Kay Quinn did not wake up. I think she took part of me with her. Traditions, too, seems a little grayer without that salmon lipstick. While the pain of feeling Kay slip between my fingers may never leave me, I am honored to have stood beside her every step of the way. I still think of my best friend whenever I read a silly poem. I think of her with every sip of cranberry juice. And I always make sure to drive with my lock buttons down.

# Future Nurse Anonymous

## 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.

I have fallen in love with Thursdays. Why? Because I volunteer in the ER at Cleveland Clinic in Weston, Florida, constantly madcap organization, a symphony of coughing and wheezing, as well as electric energy. Whether it is consoling patients or discharging them, I am comforted knowing the small contribution I can make. When nurses soothe patients, it is as if they have some magical wand that eases the patients’ symptoms. Despite how busy the ER might be, with a small smile, I tell myself, “Bring it on!” I have chosen nursing because working with patients gives me the greatest satisfaction.

Thursday finally rolls around. I wheel in a middle-aged patient from the disarray of the ER waiting area. She cautiously holds a white towel against her tender right eye. Suddenly, she jerks forward in the wheelchair. I walk in front of the wheelchair. Oh my… Her ocean blue eye popped out of its socket. I call the nurse, and we manage to carefully rest her on the gurney. Somehow, once in the care of the nurse, the woman is calm.

It will be a busy morning. Now, an elderly man reaches for something under his bed. He is determined to finish the job he started. Knowing an accident could happen easily, I rush to his bedside. I search underneath the gurney to find his prized possession: his WWII veteran’s hat. I hand it to him as he thanks me profusely. He proudly places his cap against his white hair as he closes his eyes in exhaustion. A man with long, tangled hair who emanates a funky smell still maintains a haughty attitude even though he is homeless. He calls me “beauty” and himself “beast.” He is thankful for his cozy hospital bed, ultra soft blankets, and the strawberry jelly in a fancy plastic cup. When the nurses are with him, he is clearly content. Okay, fine. Beauty and the Beast does deserve some credit for putting him in a good mood, but I know the nurses did the majority of the work.

A code blue rings abruptly through the hospital. Within milliseconds, nurses and doctors sprint into the ER. Nurses administer life-saving drugs; doctors constantly rotate to perform CPR. I rapidly move out of the way. Disorganized organization. Every minute feels like a lifetime. I do my part by comforting the family in the waiting room; they have a thousand questions. “While unfortunately I do not have the technical answers for you, I can assure you that your father is in good hands.” They were so grateful I had given them a snippet of information; as small as it seemed to me, for them it was priceless.

And finally, another ambulance call. A 16 year old girl has cut her wrists. She is coming from a group home. Once she arrives, the police also arrive. The police Baker Act her. The girl is confused and scared. Despite everything, the nurses stay strong and help her through this process. As the medical team trickles out of the room, I go in to speak with the young girl. I sat next to her for a few minutes. I do not want her to feel alone.

While my experience in the ER is my primary motivation for wanting to become a nurse, there is one more important piece to the puzzle. That other piece is my cousin’s recent suicide, but it was not without purpose. His death was tragic, yet it led me to continue in my journey to obtain my BSN. I have been lucky enough to see and experience the real world of nursing, but I have been unlucky enough to witness the devastation of suicide. Together, they have formed a powerful catalyst of my future career: nursing.

# Watching, Listening, Creating Anonymous

## Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.

"Someone must watch, it is said. Someone must be there."

When I first read this Kafka quote, young and ambitious, I set my goal as an artist to be "the watchman "of the world - to reveal the truth to the audience. Like many children, I was brought to various painting classes by my parents because of my love of art. I was taught to meticulously depicted and recorded beautiful scenes in nature-tonality and depth perfected, proportion precisely measured and layout carefully designed -like a camera or a photocopier.

My watershed was in that summer of eleventh grade. When asked to create a series of illustrations for the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riot, I was frustrated -the realism I so dutifully adhering to failed to convey my message. Looking at my work was as if reading cold definitions in Wikipedia: precise but void in content. They failed to capture the powerful incentive that empowers hundreds of people in Stonewall Inn, and a million others in the LGBTQ Community, to take on the fight for freedom.

How can I convey such elusive and abstract messages through a plain 2-D image? When I relate to my experience in the Pride celebration this summer, the image of a young gay couple emerged in front of my eyes. The rainbow flag on their back fluttered in the summer breeze, mingled with the sea of thousands of other colors: black, brown, yellow, and every other stripe on the American quilt. My hand that was ready to take out the camera stopped: "Why don't you physically go into their midst to feel their life?" I hesitated, but when the couple smiled at me and the sea of rainbow flags waved invitingly, I got the courage to walk among the marchers. "Out loud! Proud and gay! "they shouted, faces radiant with pride and their hands held tight. I did not know any of their names; but joining them, marching with them, I saw the message that my art is supposed to but had failed to convey.

Thus I realized the fundamental gap in my understanding of "truth". It is the difference between the definition in Wikipedia and the voices echoed when hundreds of people ranging in ages, ethnicities and gender expressions shout out the same simple but powerful slogan. It is the difference between drawing revolting bodies on the street and actually engaged with a community. It is the difference between surface manifestation that I want to depict, and the abstract but deeply meaningful message that art can convey.

When a moment of silence began, there was a somber awareness of the past discriminations suffered by the L.G.B.T.Q community. In that silence we made an unspoken commitment to face the future challenges together. I lowered my head, together with thousands of other people in the parade, feeling something large and meaningful flowing in my heart. It is at these moments I truly "watched": not something I see, but something I understand. Although most people that experienced the Stonewall Riot are no longer around to tell us their story, the truth lays immortal. It expands beyond the collective imagination of bodies revolting in the street to include a broader story about equality and acceptance.

To be the "watchman" is to capture and impart these revelatory understandings. Their eyes see not just pictures, but stories. This understanding endows my art with an authenticity beyond what can be offered by principles of tonality and contrast. A mature painter is a "watchman" using brushes, thoughts and feelings to share all aspects of an experience. Their artwork creates resonance and makes the gap between differences no longer unbridgeable.

# The Road Less Traveled By Anonymous

## 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.

A flurry of snow blew into my mouth as I took a deep breath and trudged down the street. I could not see the pavement ahead of me; my thick scarf had blocked off view. I pulled down my scarf and looked to my right, observing the row of cars making the same journey from school to home. The first graders in these cars were dry and warm, protected by a moving vehicle my family deemed unnecessary.

"Why, mom and dad?!" I cried out in my head, angered at my parents for making a decision that I had no part in - a decision that, at the time, I disagreed with.

My family, unlike most other families in my hometown, has never owned a car. When my parents migrated from Moscow, Russia to Brookline, Massachusetts, they decided that being close enough to a big city meant that we did not need to rely on a car for our transportation. As an elementary school student, I envied the kids who could go to out-of-town birthday parties and the kids whose cars dropped them off outside of the school when a blizzard raged outside.

To me, a car seemed like the best mode of transportation; it seemed like something that would make my family fit into our town's culture. My parents continuously reminded me the environment would later thank us for not owning a car, but I would not listen. Without a car to get me around, I felt unconventional when all I wanted was to fit in with the other kids.

When I got to high school, I found myself responsible for my own means of transportation. I began to walk everywhere possible. In order to get to and from rehearsals, math classes, and fundraisers, I had to walk around and beyond town. With each and every walk, I began to find purpose in the activity. I planned out my routes, managed my time, and explored new places. My walks were the moments of my day in which I could be independent and focused on the task at hand: to get from one place to another. Multiple days per week, I would put in my headphones, walk the streets of my town, and enjoy the sights passing me by.

A particularly unforgettable walk was my excursion to a neighboring town for a performance that my A Cappella group had participated in. A heavy mix of rain and snow poured from the sky, but my determination to make the performance trumped the unfortunate weather. I continued walking down the slippery road, knowing that my destination would be worth the trouble. When I reached the performance, I felt empowered knowing that I had successfully navigated a new neighborhood on my own. Rather than wishing I fit in with everyone else, I relished in the pride of my independence.

It was during these walks that I not only began to understand, but to appreciate my parents' decision not to buy a car. All along, they had been helping me build my self-reliance, creativity, and persistence. Not owning a car shaped the way I grew; since I have spent years walking, exploring, and finding my way around, I can now navigate through new places and situations with ease. Living without something that so many people see as a necessity has allowed me to cherish and make the most of what I do have, and this is a mentality I will carry with me throughout the rest of my life.

# Puppet Strings Annie Geng

## Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.

A year ago, my mother casually said that if I had a brother, I would receive nothing from her. Distraught, I had asked her to clarify. However, she coldly maintained that she always believed that sons are superior to daughters. Every time I make my biannual journey to China, I sense the tug of the same strings that compelled my mother to say those harsh words.

Despite my frequent travels to Chongqing, I always feel like a stranger in the crowded, ever-expanding city. Sitting three seats away from the head of the dinner table, I see these puppet strings of filial piety and patriarchy manipulating my family members. My grandmother’s words are drowned in the sea of my grandfather’s aggressive proclamations, while my opinions are overshadowed by authority. The stuffed doll I may have been as a young child has gradually been flattened, now resembling the picture-perfect image of a soft-spoken, quiet, and “respectful” daughter. Whenever I return to my home, Taiwan, I realize that my classmates are not bound to the same strings that consumed me in Chongqing. I love talking to people and understanding their perspectives; however, because I am not as brazen and outspoken as my extroverted peers, I feel inferior. I privately loathe my reluctance to speak up.

To overcome my diffidence in ninth grade, I tried out speech and debate. I sought out a good friend of mine, who is a rather experienced debater, to compete with me in the Nanke Invitational Forensics Tournament. As a novice, I desperately clung to his expertise. Initially, I merely regurgitated fragmented sentences, creating unconvincing arguments. My partner was absolutely disappointed. During our first mock debate, he looked to the side and audibly asserted: "We're going to lose." When my performance improved only by a narrow margin after several practice sessions, I felt responsible for our defeat in every practice round.

When we entered the competition, I contended I would prepare by myself, hoping to establish confidence in my own voice. With no external voices bombarding me, I sat down and began researching. This time, I was more familiar with the material and did not attempt to imitate his vehement voice. Instead, my soft voice introduced statistics and refuted counterarguments, gluing together the cracks of the argument that we were building together. Remarkably, he and I gained the most speaker points of that round. I rejoiced at the thought that the strings that have held me back can be destroyed; I now believe that my ideas are worthy of being heard by others.

When an opportunity arose in my junior year for a speech competition hosted by the National Speech and Debate Association, I seized it without hesitation. I felt motivated to speak about a pressing social issue that continues to plague Asian and many societies around the world: families preferences for male children. Reflecting on such a personal topic allowed me to ask and find answers to questions such as: “how does Confucian culture contribute to an unbalanced gender ratio in China?” and “what is the significance of preferring sons over daughters?” The invisible puppet strings that directed the odd behaviors of those around me suddenly became palpable.

After struggling to find my own voice, I discovered that my words can be evocative, inspiring, and worth-hearing. When I looked into my mother’s watering eyes as she first heard my speech criticizing her belief that sons are inherently superior, I realized she did not intend her words to sting like they do: she was just mirroring my grandmother’s attitudes. Although the strings of one’s culture may seem impossible to break, we always have the power to choose differently. Similarly, I can let go of my own self-doubt; I can voice my opinions at the dinner table or in the classroom with confidence. I, and many girls like me, can overcome the seemingly inevitable strings.

# Why NYU? Rio Tang

## We would like to know more about your interest in NYU. We are particularly interested in knowing what motivated you to apply to NYU and more specifically, why you have applied or expressed interest in a particular campus, school, college, program, and/or area of study? If you have applied to more than one, please tell us why you are interested in each of the campuses, schools, colleges, or programs to which you have applied. You may be focused or undecided, or simply open to the options within NYU’s global network; regardless, we want to understand – Why NYU? (400 words)

I, a lonely marble eagle, perched upon the almighty Washington Square Park Arch, am sad. What cruel torture it is for me to witness waves of new students flock into NYU, my wings tauntingly spread open, but fixed in place!

I remember watching the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory burn down in my youth. The fire left my stone-cold heart indifferent (I was after all, but marble). However, NYU and NYC united to fight, eventually enacting the Sullivan-Hoey Fire Prevention Law. Even today, at my frail centenarian age, the city does not rest. Ruth Segel’s annual art movement “Chalk” sees hundreds of students and NYC inhabitants remember the tragedy. NYC’s social activism has influenced that of NYU, much like how NYU’s Stonewall march influenced NYC half a decade later. Curse those people who uttered with complete snobbery, the blasphemous phrase “NYU has no campus”! They could not be farther from the truth. The enduring symbiotic relationship between the city and the university only proves that NYU is, in fact, a campus on steroids.

Just last year, when the Michael Rectenwald debacle was the talk of the town, the NYU local was filled with opinion articles uniting for the protection of basic mutual respect. NYU embodies the NYC spirit, never failing to protect what they hold so dearly.

Today, a different fire — the one in the eyes of NYU students — now warms my once stone-cold heart.

The years I have spent observing NYU has shown only that the school’s powerful culture of acceptance and activism is rivaled only by its culture of bridging academia and plain fun. How I longed to cheekily swoop down to steal a slice of NYC’s longest strawberry shortcake; after which I could perch on a chair listening to Professor Beatrice Longueness enlighten me with her lesson on the flaws of Kant’s categorical imperative. I recall peering over a student’s shoulder to watch videos of her Whitehead lectures on Youtube, dreaming that one day I could attend her lectures.

Some things never change, least of all my envy of NYU students... Curse my fixed wings for not flying me to Bagel and Bobs after Philosophy class! Curse my marbled talons for not being able to open the door into the magnificent Bobst! Curse my marbled talons for not letting me be a part of NYU!

# Chasing the Sun Anonymous

## COMMON APPLICATION PROMPT 1: 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.

In the corner of my room sits my grandfather’s diary: soft, well-worn, and cracked. The first entry, written in English, is dated “June 1st, 1970,” in the halting, elaborate script of a man accustomed to Bengali. The last entry, dated “November 31st, 2010,” is exactly a month before his death. The diary chronicles the life of a man—the refugee, the revolutionary, the poet—who gave me the name that’s come to define who I am.

My grandfather’s first brush with rootlessness was during Partition. Born in Bangladesh, Partition forced him to flee westward to India. Hounded in his native Bangladesh for being Hindu, and spurned in India for being Bangladeshi, my grandfather lived a life of continual reinvention, formatting himself to fit an alien environment. He spent the better portion of his life searching, not for material wealth, but for a sense of security—something more intransient than gold. In his diary, he often wrote about the sun, fascinated by its passage from East to West. Its regularity reassured him that something moving westward could still find a place in the universe. He collected watches, just to hear a predictable tick against his wrist every second. But perhaps my grandfather’s search for constancy best manifested itself in the name he gave me: Ketan.

My first name is an invariable source of phonetic grief for most people; honestly, I don’t blame them. I’ve pronounced my name as “Keaton” for as long as I can remember, and I introduce myself to people as “Ketan—like Michael Keaton?” It’s a name that’s been heavily anglicized, something that’s stamped out the traces of Easternism inherent in the way it’s spelled and adopted the linguistic conventions of a nation thousands of miles to the west. It doesn’t sound like it should. It’s spelled like an Indian name, and pronounced like a traditionally American one. In it lies the sense of belonging my grandfather had craved his entire life—the feeling of having a name roll comfortably off a foreign tongue.

The central irony of my name is the enduring dichotomy between its meaning and its nature. “Ketan” means home, hearth. Yet, its rejection of conventional notions of home and hearth are what make it mine; my name has escaped the domestic confines of its culture of origin and evolved into something wholly new. As a second-generation Indian-American growing up in a country where the majority of the populace looks nothing like me, my name’s ambiguity is a blessing. My name finds its roots in its rootlessness—my grandfather, uprooted time and time again, made sure that I’d be able to plant myself anywhere I wished.

It’s this sense of connection that’s made it possible for me to appreciate so much about the world. I’m intimately acquainted with a sense of belonging, thanks to my name, yet I’m also familiar with being an outsider, owing to the history behind my name. Roots—the way people interact with their various backgrounds—fascinate me. I’m defined by the crisis that shaped the trajectory of my grandfather’s life, the crisis that gave me my name. My namesake isn’t a person, an event, or an idea. It’s an innate human desire to feel accepted, to find a home. Belonging has played a central role in my life. Belonging to a vibrant, thriving immigrant community; belonging to a nation of passionate youth ready to take back their country; belonging to myself, but also to everyone around me. My identity, like my name, is multifaceted. It stretches to fit its environment, and assimilates what it can along the way.

If you’d told my grandfather, decades ago, that one day his grandson would apply to American colleges, he’d have laughed, called you insane—yet here I stand, living his American dream and chasing the sun he’d always dreamt of catching.

# Christopher Robin is the Best Movie in the World Jessica Fatzinger

## Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

Christopher Robin is the best movie in the world. Despite the poor acting and the animation that made the animals look sad and dreary, a movie is impressive if it can make the viewer feel an emotion, and Christopher Robin exceeds in that realm. Twenty minutes into the movie, my mother and I were cuddled together, bawling our eyes out in an otherwise silent movie theater. Christopher Robin had just told his daughter, Clare, that he could not go on their weekend trip because he had to prepare for a business meeting. The daughter’s slow change from a big hopeful grin to a completely blank face practically pulled the tears out of my eyes. The little girl reminded me of myself.

On school nights I wolfed down my vegetables and spent the rest of the night staring out the window waiting for my dad to come back from a late night at work or a business trip. Just like the weekend trip to her family’s cottage teased Clare, every holiday teased me with the question of whether my dad would be there to celebrate. Maybe if Christopher Robin never found the Hundred Acre Forest again and the movie's entire plot changed, his family’s evolution would be similar to mine. It became the standard to only see my dad once every few weeks, and that standard developed into only seeing him once every few months, and then a few times a year. He acted as a supporting role in my family, rather than the main character. I spent a lot of time hoping that my dad would change his profession to a plumber or exterminator so he could be home more.

As I grew older, I no longer resented living with one parent, but I preferred it. My home had a resurgence of comfort every time my dad would leave for another business trip. He brought tension and anxiety to my home; a feeling I did not realize was abnormal in a family until he began leaving for longer periods of time. While it came with a new set of problems, my parents’ divorce uncomplicated my life because it meant I would never live with my dad again.

Once my sister moved out after high school, my household decreased by half from its original state. My mother and I quickly accustomed ourselves to act as a team through unsaid rules. If you cook, the other will clean. If you are doing the laundry, wash the towels as well. If you are in a five-mile radius of a Market Basket, you need to stop to get whatever is on the grocery list. We became each other’s emotional and physical backbone, depending on each other to keep our house afloat. My fluctuating household has made me into a more adaptable person. I realized that conventionality is not necessary for a family to feel complete.

Family is more than just two parents and kids; family is a support system, family is comfort, family is making sacrifices to go on weekend trips. Any group of people can become a family if they are willing to adapt. I have adjusted to several different living styles throughout my life, and that has given me confidence for the change I will encounter in the future. And the fact that one scene from Christopher Robin has reminded me of all this shows why it is the best movie in the world.

# Why NYU Emma Riley

## We would like to know more about your interest in NYU. What motivated you to apply to NYU? Why have you applied or expressed interest in a particular campus, school, college, program, and or area of study? If you have applied to more than one, please also tell us why you are interested in these additional areas of study or campuses. We want to understand - Why NYU? (400 word maximum) \*

One of my first dissections was a cat brain. As my lab group carefully cut down the longitudinal fissure, we discovered tiny parasitic worms on the superior colliculi. While I’ve had the opportunity to dissect tapeworms, cow eyes, and rats, the cat brain was one of my favorites. Looking back, I feel it reflected what I love most about science— it follows an organized methodology, but also allows for spontaneous discovery. When my group and I discovered these roundworms, we decided to dissect those as well. We were left wondering if these worms contributed to the cat’s demise.

I imagine an education at NYU would be a lot like that dissection. I don’t mean full of parasitic worms (of course), but I do mean surprising. NYU is able to seamlessly combine areas of study to provide experiences that are instrumental in helping students chart their paths. Combining my passions of science, politics, and the arts would be a tremendous opportunity—a uniquely NYU opportunity.

Take the NYU Creative Arts Therapy program. I love how it combines the arts and science, with the goal of helping others reach their full potential. The program focuses on music and art, not just as a way of expression but also as a way to help patients in a therapeutic sense. Participating in a program like this would allow me to broaden my career path while gaining a new perspective on clinical trials and testing. I’ve always been passionate about scientific research, particularly oncological research. Leaders in scientific discovery are located within arm's reach of the campus. NYU students are able to take advantage of countless inspiring internships and professional mentors. For example, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center offers a research technician internship that allows students to assist scientists with molecular biology experiments.

At NYU, I’d have access to remarkable opportunities that you can’t find anywhere else in the world. Even a major like Science and Technology Studies has added depth because the curriculum spans across other areas of study, such as economics and history. I love how NYU motivates students to learn using different perspectives. I feel NYU wants me to explore beyond a declared major and leap out of my comfort zone. When I think about attending NYU, I think about self discovery, new experiences, and most importantly, “what’s next?”