Reflect on the education (formal and informal) you have received: what experiences have you felt fortunate or unfortunate to have? Based on these experiences, tell us what unique perspectives you will bring to TASP.

One of the experiences that I feel the most fortunate to have had is the chance to attend York House School, an all-girls school in Canada. I attended York House from 4th through 6th grade, a time in a young girl’s life in which she begins to mature intellectually and forms her own views of the world. At York, I developed a mindset of acceptance and respect for all the girls around me, despite living in a society in which girls are often pitted against one another.

We live in a highly competitive society. ,This habit is prevalent in social media and our daily, personal lives. Praising one girl is sometimes at the cost of shaming another. The practice has led to the creation of derogatory female stereotypes such as the idea that girls are combatant, hostile creatures who thrive off drama and gossip, prone to fight and tear each other apart over petty ordeals. It not only fuels animosity and hostility between women but also propagates the notion that women must compete against each other and put others down in order to advance or rise to the top.

York House fostered the atmosphere of a friendly and supportive community for girls. Every day, we grew and matured together by learning from one another. The York girls supported each other and stood unified in solidarity through thick and thin. I felt incredibly lucky to be a part of such a closely-knit and loving female community. During my time at York House, I developed my own views of the women’s place in today’s society. I realized that powerful and successful women can coexist peacefully without having to put one another down, that girls should stick together and support each other instead of constantly trying to compete against one another in unnecessary feuds as often portrayed by the media. Wherever I am, I will try to create an accepting and supportive environment for the girls and make them feel comfortable in the company of each other rather than view each other as competitors, or, even worse, as potential foes. This mentality of unity and cooperation is what I would like to bring to TASP, where I will reserve the utmost respect for and appreciate with the most genuine gratitude every single person and see the best in the people around me rather than try to advance at the deprecation of my peers.

Another factor that I believe has shaped me into the person that I am today is the incredible privilege that I’ve had of traveling around the world. Throughout my life, I’ve been fortunate enough to travel to far corners of the globe as well as to live in three different countries on two continents. Overall, these experiences allowed me to learn from the different cultures of the world and to broaden my perspective and knowledge. Ever since I was a child, my parents would take me with them on their business trips to Dubai, Rome, Paris, Hong Kong, and many more faraway and beautiful cities. Having crossed so many international borders, I feel as if my mind and my vision, too, expands beyond its boundaries every time I travel to someplace new, learning from and absorbing the foreign cultures that I am exposed to. For example, during my travels in Dubai, I was told that many of the restaurants do not serve alcohol due to religious reason. The Islamic faith encourages loving one’s own body by limiting harmful and toxic substances, hence the discouragement of alcohol consumption. The religion also preaches many other ideals such as moral righteousness and humility. Although I am not Muslim, I remember my experience in Dubai and keep these values in mind while live a life my own way. Over the course of my life, I’ve picked up little bits of the world and incorporated them into the making of who I am today.

In addition to traveling, I have been able to live in three different countries throughout my life: China, Canada, and the U.S. In China, I learned about the culture that my family comes from, which has helped develop my own identity as someone of Chinese heritage. When I moved to Canada, I was exposed to western values, new views, and approaches to life that I had never known before in China. After six years in China, and six years in Canada, I now live in the United States of America, one of the most influential and leading countries in the world, where I continue to grow and mature daily. With each move, my perspective changed and expanded. My personal character is a sum of my experiences in these three countries and a mélange of the ideas and values that these three cultures have presented. At TASP, I will approach everything with a cultured and sophisticated mentality. Moreover, I would never judge anyone based on differences in culture or religion. I will continue to employ the knowledge that I have learned from traveling around the globe, when learning new things or approaching new and unfamiliar situations.

Finally, at my current school, Harvard-Westlake, I have gained experiences and received opportunities that I feel extremely fortunate to have. In terms of academics, Harvard-Westlake has been exceptional in educating me on a large array of subjects and in preparing me for college and ultimately, the real world. The education that Harvard-Westlake provides is absolutely phenomenal, and I would say this not because I am biased toward my own school but because after having attended so many different schools in different countries, I truly believe it. Our school offers courses on criminal law, psychology, marine biology, jazz music, engineering, and many more intriguing subjects that I know other schools do not offer. In that respect, I am grateful for Harvard-Westlake for educating me on so many different topics. The school also pushes its students beyond their comfort zone, to do their best and work their hardest, which I believe has helped me cultivate a good work ethic. Moreover, our school is extremely modern and innovative, something that I greatly appreciate because without it, I would not be able to develop the liberal and tolerant mindset that I possess. One such example would be The Chronicle, which is the school’s newspaper that I write for. While many other high-schools require their administration to approve all articles before they are published, Harvard-Westlake’s administration has always allowed The Chronicle to publish whatever its staff sees fit. The school’s freedom of press and lack of censorship have allowed me to think freely and develop a wider range of ideas. I perceive myself to be a progressive and broad-minded thinker, something that I owe to Harvard-Westlake and all the opportunities it has presented me with.

Every coin has a flip side. As I have mentioned before, Harvard-Westlake encourages students to work hard and to attain new personal bests. The downside of this ostensibly well-intentioned desire for students to push themselves often creates an atmosphere of stress and anxiety among students. Many times, I have observed the negative results of the school’s intense workload. Students are held to an extraordinarily high standard, which has unfortunately caused them not only to feel stressed to attain good grades, but also to feel as if they are in constant competition with each other. This competitive and high-pressure environment causes me and my peers to be chronically sleep-deprived and unhappy during our pursuit of academic excellence. At Harvard-Westlake, I have learned how to deal with my workload under high amounts of stress without cracking under the pressure. I have also learned how to look for the brighter side when things look bleak and dismal. Even in difficult times, I tell myself to be optimistic and to keep going even when I feel like I need to stop and catch a breath. I will bring my determination and perseverance to TASP so that I make the best of my time there and learn as much as I can. I will also keep with me my optimistic spirit by approaching everything with a positive and hopeful spirit.