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When I was young, I developed a strong passion for engineering focused on sheer technological power which through many experiences developed into the socially conscious global perspective I have today. Growing up in Pittsburgh, home to Carnegie Mellon University, I was inspired by the revolutionary technology being developed at the world capital of robotics, particularly self-driving cars. My first job was working for a U.S. military research project, writing machine learning software for autonomous military vehicles. I continued research in robotics until the summer before my sophomore year of college, when I was working for another military funded project designing a humanoid robot. Every day that summer I was bothered by the fact that someday, this technology would most likely be used to kill people. My guiding principles had always been to work on projects developing powerful technology, but I realized this philosophy would not lead to a career focused on meaningful change.  
  
Disgusted with the project, I took some time to think about a new career philosophy more aligned with my personal beliefs and experiences. At fifteen, I suffered a severe concussion playing sports. For six months I could barely read because my vision was so messed up, and I would lay awake for hours at night because my migraines were too painful to sleep. No doctor could tell me what was wrong the entire time, and the worst part was the fact that I was told I may never recover. After a couple of months, past the timeline of normal recovery, hopelessness and real emotional pain had set in. Fortunately, I recovered, but others like me are not so lucky. I use this experience to identify with those who feel truly hopeless, and it purely motivated my transition from robotics to neuroengineering research. Receiving a Fulbright award would not only sponsor my research project at EPFL, it would allow me to pursue my passion of bringing affordable healthcare solutions to hopeless people.   
  
Cognitive neuroscience, a field traditionally studied by those with biological or other pure scientific backgrounds, is being studied increasingly by mathematicians, engineers, and computer scientists. I decided I wanted to be a part of this movement, and I have been working hard in many areas of neuroscientific research ever since. New to a discipline so deeply rooted in biology, a field where I had little experience, I was unsure of where to start. Fascinated by network-based computation, the fundamental function of the human brain, I decided to work on an undergraduate research project in neural network analysis which lead to a pivotal experience for my early career.   
  
Giving an oral presentation at the International Symposium on Biomedical Engineering at 21 years old to a room full of professors, industry representatives, and graduate students was the proudest experience of my life. I felt that I was contributing to something meaningful, and the positive energy I experienced in that moment is hard to put in words. My work could really help researchers finally understand chronic traumatic brain injuries. For a brief moment I felt a connection to my younger self and all of the hopeless people with injuries. All I could think was, I am fighting for you, and it was true. Leaving the conference, reflecting on my presentation as we emerged from the inspiring skyscrapers of New York City, I realized I was capable of making a meaningful difference in the lives of others, and that was something I had not believed before.  
  
Since the conference, I have thrust myself even deeper into the neuroengineering research. In the past 4 months, I have worked on projects ranging from calcium fluorescence imaging to dimensionality reduction on population recordings from brain machine interfaces to cortico-muscular coherence from EEG-scalp recordings. I would say that this vast exposure to the field of neuroengineering has convinced me to make a career out of this field, but that would not be true. Ever since my presentation at ISBI, I have never been more certain that neuroscientific research is not only a passion of mine, it is a fundamental part of who I am.