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SAMPLE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ESSAYS

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SAMPLE ESSAY NUMBER 1

She struggled to find the seat belt buckle, her left hand frantically pushing down on different places on the seat. She giggled nervously, but graciously smiled to hide her panic. After a few failed attempts, my mom pressed the button for her. The seat belt snapped back into place.

Gram had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease when I was about eight years old. The progressive disease hindered her ability to use silverware, remember facts, and put on a seatbelt. As Gram began to "lose her words", where she knew what she wanted to say but could not say it out loud, I witnessed my family endlessly guessing words so that she could finish telling her story. As time went on, Gram remembered fewer words, but every time she spoke, we all continued to throw out random ones, even though it became increasingly difficult to do so. This small example caused me to realize my family's value of pushing through. Despite Gram's condition getting progressively worse, we were still determined to guarantee that Gram had the best life that she possibly could.

In my own life, I see how I have adopted my family's notion of pushing through, from running cross country to pursuing both nonfiction writing and math. Cross country would be impossible without this mentality. After the first mile, my legs begin to ache, each breath is harder, and doubt creeps in whether I can keep up with the next girl. Telling myself that I can maintain the pace and keep going stems from the lesson of pushing through even when times are difficult, or in the case of cross country, pushing through even when one wants to stop.

My intent of combining nonfiction writing with mathematics has also forced me to push through people's judgements and warnings of not being able to find employment. My determination has allowed me to curtail people's questions of whether I am interested in STEM or the liberal arts, and has enabled me to find a way to engage in both subjects.

My mother and I continued to push through every Saturday morning when we visited, with more tasks and responsibilities to take care of each time. But, as each stay got longer, each conversation with Gram got shorter. Eventually, she was not able to speak at all. The conversations then turned into ones with my grandpa, where we would talk about the weather, the Patriots game, and the neighborhood gossip so that he could also have the best life.

My family's value of pushing through and taking on the heartbreaking challenge of caring for Gram has allowed me to take on a similar mentality when I face obstacles in my own life. Not only has caring for Gram taught me the lesson of pushing through, but also the importance of growing and changing. As my family witnessed Gram's condition worsening, we changed with her. We purchased sippy cups so that she could drink without causing a spill, we coached her as she grappled with taking her daily pills, and after long and tireless debates, hired Cathy who came in several times a week to fold laundry and get Gram dressed. Adapting to the countless problems that came with Alzheimer's disease allowed us as a family to learn and change for the better. I see those changes reflected in changes I have made in my personal life. When I tackle adversity head on and struggle through the process, I know it often leads to self growth. My determination and adaptability have become the two most important strengths that I utilize as I continue to face new challenges in my life.

SAMPLE ESSAY NUMBER 2

Narcissistic. Selfish. Egotistical. Three adjectives used to describe me, and from who I used to think was the most credible source, my mother.

In the ninth grade, an unintentional conversation about religion with a few of my friends ignited the spark that set me on the journey to self-discovery. As we talked about different beliefs, one of my friends said that “an agnostic person does not accept or deny the belief in God.” The words struck me with a realization that needed to be acknowledged. They reached into the farthest depths of my soul and opened my eyes to who I truly was.

When the realization struck me that I did not need my mother’s acceptance, the world obtained new colors. I did not have to continue going to church, praying to a god I was not sure existed. I did not have to fake being happy with things that made me feel invisible. I no longer needed to be what my mother, nor the church, deemed the ideal woman. I could finally be myself.

I submerged myself into the world of Agnosticism. Every article I read reassured me that this is what I was. Through online agnostic communities, I found the courage to tell my family and religious friends about my beliefs. My friends' lack of surprise and immediate acceptance of me brought me comfort. When the time came to tell my mother, I could not muster up the words. All I knew was that I could not bear another Sunday service. I grew exceedingly tired of feeling silenced and constrained by beliefs that were not mine. My self-identity was nonexistent. I could feel the words suffocating me. I had to release them.

“No estoy segura si creo en dios-”

“Que?”

“Creo que soy agnostica.”

“¿Eres una impía?”

“No mami, solo no estoy segura. No me gustan todas las reglas.”

“¡Porque eres una athia!”

I felt as though a weight had been removed, but a new one was placed.

We did not talk for a few days. On Sunday, as she prepared for church, I laid in bed. Before leaving, she opened my bedroom door and we stared at each other. She left without a word and disappointment filled her face. I would soon become familiar with that look.

As our relationship deteriorated, I decided to stay at my father’s house more. He had always encouraged me to be myself, which my mother saw as one of the reasons I turned out “this way”(Agnostic). From a young age, my father allowed me to learn how to do things I was interested in, like change the oil of a car or assemble a desk. He even challenged me by asking me to fix things around his house. When I took my first course, an Introduction to Computer Hardware, he assured me of my success with his smile. I did not feel the full extent of his unadulterated acceptance until I began taking programming classes in another city. He would leave work early twice a week for two months, all so I could learn to code in Python.

SAMPLE ESSAY NUMBER 2 CONTINUED

I was not sure I would pursue a career in engineering until I was part of the Spira Summer Engineering Camp at Brown University. Learning about the different types of engineering and getting to experiment with them emanated from me a thrill that coding could simply not measure up to. Engineering allowed me to put all of my skills to the test. I could build and program something for a specific purpose, and then alter it to fit other needs. My curiosity roamed free and I uncovered and explored the darkest chasms of my mind, lighting them up as I went along.

Inquisitive. Resilient. Diligent. These are the three adjectives I would use to describe myself. I am the only person who may define who I am.

SAMPLE ESSAY NUMBER 3

My mother smilingly claims that she started reading to me while I was in utero, which is why I was born with a passion for books. The hundreds of books I have read since my earliest childhood have brought me adventure, provided solace, and encouraged me to reflect on life and the life experiences of others. I have lived vicariously through the experiences of the many characters I have encountered.

The summer of my junior year, I decided to do an internship at a local independent bookstore and truly began to appreciate the richness reading has brought to my life as I recommended novels to customers and shelved treasured childhood stories. The children's book buyer with whom I worked often offered ideas for my next read. She proposed the young adult novel, *The Sun is Also a Star*, which detailed the story of two lovers with striking cultural differences as one character faces deportation. I devoured the book, finishing it within a day. The next day, my eyes gleamed as I recounted to the buyer how much the book resonated with me. It reminded me of the cultural differences of the students in my own high school. With a seventy-five percent minority population, my positive views about our multicultural society were confirmed. Much like the two main characters in the novel, rather than divide us, the diversity of my urban high school has made my friendships stronger.

Since my youth, books like *The Sun is Also a Star* have opened my outlook on the world. As an only child living with a single mother with a full-time teaching job, I frequently stayed home for hours on end with my mom in the peace of our home. The faint background noise of her feverish typing on the computer or her brisk cutting of vegetables for each night's dinner set a simple yet tranquil atmosphere. I took advantage of our two towering bookshelves and a library less than a mile from my home. From the day I began to read by myself, I spend many of my spare hours at home reading captivating novels in one sitting, utterly incapable of putting a book down once I became immersed in it. My childhood reading experiences motivated me to seek the summer internship. It was truly fulfilling to work with others who shared a similar passion for one of my favorite hobbies.

On my final day at the bookstore, I was shelving a stack of children's books when I noticed the vibrant cover of *Rosie Revere, Engineer*. The picture book was filled with toys and gadgets Rosie created during her downtime. Suddenly, similar memories from my childhood were rekindled. I remembered impressing myself by creating a paper roller coaster for my marbles. I then recalled the excitement I felt as I developed innovative paths for my magnetic trains to drive along. I saw a younger version of myself in Rosie, but I did not realize the significance of her story until a few months later.

At the start of my junior year, I began exploring ideas in anticipation of my school's mandatory research project. For one semester, students were required to research and write a paper on a topic of their choice and finally present it to several judges. Remembering my admiration of Rosie, I researched recent experiments related to engineering. I began to pursue articles about the potential of stem cells to engineer organs. As my interest in the topic grew, I realized that my passion for biomedical engineering, which I hope to study over the next four years. The

SAMPLE ESSAY NUMBER 3 CONTINUED

experiences I have gained from reading have contributed to my understanding not only of the world but also of myself. I know that I will be a life-long reader, and I aspire to benefit the world by continuing to read and invent.

SAMPLE ESSAY NUMBER 4

Being from an immigrant family means it is important to seek out resources to navigate the world. I would never have been the person I am today without my parents' support. They have always motivated me to take on life's challenges. My father worked a night shift job. My mother struggled to learn English to make sure my sister and I entered pre-K speaking English. I am thankful to my parents for providing me the resources I needed as a child.

During my coming-of-age, I sought to seek resources myself. For a couple of years, I spent time doing activities such as going to public events, learning how to talk and ask questions to strangers, and riding the public bus on my own. Looking back, although they seemed very simplistic activities, these activities gave me the push I needed to become a more social and independent individual. But sometimes it was necessary for me to ask my parents for help. My mother asked our state representative to refer me for the State House page position. I am grateful for being just a teenager and now having one of the most prestigious jobs anyone would desire.

With the resources I was able to use for self-improvement, it was time to help my community as well. The whole state was in shock when a report came out that my city's school district is among the worst in the country. I wanted to do something about it. I decided to team up with my friends to write a letter to many high-ranking officials addressing these concerns. But even then, just a random letter petitioning for school aid was not going to be enough. We were able to utilize some important resources, two other state representatives, to co-sign our letter.

The school superintendent, city mayor, state governor, and two congressmen wrote back eagerly to cooperate with us to fix our broken school system. We brought our action to the attention of the local newspaper and they published a story about our efforts to change the system. It led to a great opportunity to discuss policy with the superintendent on a periodic basis, and I have learned many things. People tend to blame the school department for the city's education problems. It is completely understandable. They oversee the school system but this is a problem that extends beyond their authority. Education laws, funding, and regulations are administered by the local and state government. We sought to help the superintendent out by drafting state bills which would reform our education laws so they would be upgraded for the 21st century classroom. We sought to help the school district by working with a youth community organization, so we could be much closer to the Providence students, their parents, and their community. As our organization expands, I sought to recruit my friends from my school district to our team because of their resourcefulness.

When one is trying to become a better person, from being part of policy change or simply being able to live on their own, one cannot do it alone. In moments that one asks for help, it can come from unexpected sources. I would not have become a bright student without my mother's effort in my early years in life. I would not have been more independent if it were not for the motivation that was instilled in me. I would not have gotten a job at the State House if it were not for the connection with an elected official. And I would certainly not be helping fixing the city's school district if it were not for the help of my friends.

SAMPLE ESSAY NUMBER 5

It was the first day back to school after the Christmas break, and I was excited to see my friends. From my room, I could hear the meteorologist on the radio in the living room saying that it was going to be a beautiful, sunny day. On my way to school that morning, I could see the hope of a promising day in the eyes of the people. It was one of those days where everything was in sync and everybody seemed connected.

After a long day at school, I fell asleep on the bus on my way home. I woke up to what felt like a train approaching; the loud rumbling emerged from the ground shaking my bus as if it were a child's toy. When it finally stopped, my ten-year-old self was confused and oblivious to what was going on. Traffic came to a standstill while thousands of people poured out onto the street, screaming and crying for help. As houses crumbled, the air felt heavy and smelled of thick dust and blood. Bodies were piled in the back of a truck and rushed to a nearby hospital; the injured hoped for medical attention even though they knew the healthcare system was non-existent. On January 12, 2010, an earthquake of 7.0 magnitude made me feel powerless in the face of destruction and suffering. Witnessing all those people suffering and dying that day ignited a fire in me to help people that are in desperate need.

I was born and raised in Haiti in a single-parent household. I have witnessed my mother working tirelessly so that my three sisters and I can have something to look forward to in life. Her resilience is a quality that I hope I inherited. Even after the devastating earthquake, I lived for six years in Haiti. Although I did not lose my life and my family was alive, the weight of my mother's worries about my future were felt in my daily life. I lost hope of being able to continue my education because the country's situation worsened. Every day became a constant reminder of how blessed I was to even be alive. Finally in 2016, I had the opportunity to come to the U.S. in search of a better life.

Coming to the U.S and adapting to a new culture and environment was the biggest challenge of my young life. I thought that knowing a few English words was going to help me integrate into this new environment. Reality hit me hard when I was told to repeat the ninth and tenth grades. What I learned in Haiti was not enough to earn credits in Providence because I could neither speak nor understand English. The language barrier became my most difficult challenge—one I thought I would never be able to overcome. Giving up crossed my mind many times; self-doubt and frustration filled my head, but then I remembered that was not the first time I overcame an obstacle. I remembered the promise I made to myself after the darkest hour of January 12th—to become a nurse, and care for people to make a difference in their lives. I realized how important learning the language would be for me to attend college and fulfill that promise.

Realizing I would need English to help others motivated me to become multilingual, to work tirelessly and break the intergenerational cycle of illiteracy in my family. This motivation will carry me through college and keep me grounded in the face of challenges. Nursing will give me the opportunity to go back to Haiti and help make a change to the corrupt healthcare system. Through my work as a nurse, I hope that I will be able to honor the thousands who died on January 12, 2010.