

We are interested in learning more about you and the context in which you have grown up, formed your aspirations, and accomplished your academic successes. Please describe the factors and challenges that have most shaped your personal life and aspirations. How have these factors helped you to grow?

**"Tell us about yourself"**

The first four years of my life were spent perfecting a language I would forget in almost an instant. From 2002 to 2006, I spoke Urdu in Pakistan with my family---and pretty well, according to my cousins. But when we immigrated to the United States, this language slowly began to fade. I remember exactly how I first learned English: I would talk to my first best friend and neighbor, except he would only get one or two words out before I ran away. I was running home from the playground to ask my dad, "Ye kya mathleb," or "What does this mean?" After getting the answer, I would run to my friend, hear something new, run back, and do this over and over. I probably looked insane, but with no teacher, I had no other way to learn.

However, when elementary school started, I couldn't just run back and forth... so I sat and listened. This caused me to grow up quiet. I was always looking around to hear what people are saying, being mostly gibberish, but sometimes a familiar word would pop up. Juggling two unlearned languages at five years old, the Urdu my family spoke began to confuse me with the English I was learning. I ended up being the only person out of my parents and five siblings who could not speak fluent Urdu, which distanced me from my culture and relatives in Pakistan.

On the positive side, this reset allowed me to establish a creative foundation. Being quiet from a young age, most of my talking was done in my head---in thoughts, to sound less psychotic. I would always be in thinking mode, either asking questions or connecting dots. When I did speak, it would be thoughtful. Slowly, I became more comfortable in my speech and began to express myself.

Late elementary and early middle school, I met my best friends, who would influence my English the most. I would get excited at being able to see them, which injected energy into my language. I moved past speaking thoughtfully to becoming much more comfortable in saying what was on my mind. However, this was only applicable to friends, so my language with most people remained awkward and uncomfortable.

Over time, my inability to converse without being awkward affected how I felt others perceived me. Accepting that my language gave off a weird first impression, I would end up being afraid of people's sense of judgement, especially early in high school. This not only fueled my uncomfortability and awkwardness, but also prevented me from getting to know people and people from getting to know me. These would be the years my introverted personality would be taken in and acknowledged by all, seeming to be fixed for the while.

Sooner or later, though, I grew tired of just sitting and listening. Late sophomore and junior year, I began to talk to more people and improve my social capabilities. By opening myself up to people, I became flexible in my sense of humor, which had been accumulating through middle and high school. On top of this, I would see myself become versatile in communicating with people from all different backgrounds. Creating more trustworthy friendships, I would become more comfortable in being louder... in being me. All of these factors would snowball to help me grow into who I am today.

Now, my language jumps back and forth from the numerous speaking habits developed throughout my life. Often, I'll be quiet and thoughtful, listening carefully to the words and sounds around me, speaking with clarity and conscious. Other times I'll be dancing, laughing, and singing at a friend's house, very loudly. Still, sometimes I won't know what to say, and my language may come off as awkward, shy, or scared. But occasionally, my true language will glimmer, saying what I mean, reflecting who I am.

**Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others. (unfinished. 500/650 words)**

February 14, 2018: 17 victims lost their lives to 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz. The Parkland shooting was a tragedy for families, friends, and others who lost their loved ones---who wished

they could see their faces just one more time. February 14 was a tipping point in my life. The heartaches and anger I felt from tragedies like this could no longer be brushed over.

Immediately, I contacted mayor Megan Barry. I demanded a change in local gun policies, to ban non-hunting rifles. I pointed to the 20 six-year-old victims at Sandy Hook Elementary and 59 deaths in Las Vegas when a 64-year-old man shot down a crowd. I gave solutions. I gave reasons. I gave Megan Barry 2000 words. But when she resigned from office two weeks later, I felt hopeless. Given the option to take my voice further, I let go. I figured my thoughts would end as just that---thoughts.

A year later, terrorist attacks in New Zealand appeared on the news. This time, it was 51 deaths, a hate crime on innocent Muslims praying peacefully. Instead of giving my voice to someone else, I decided to take action. I spoke about how I felt, hoping to inspire the same passion and fury in others. I wrote about the importance of raising awareness, "Lighting up the Darkness." I explained how the world needed us, with humanitarian crises occurring in Yemen, Sudan, Kashmir, Palestine, Syria, and China.

Then, I noticed the number of views on my posts begin to decrease. I wondered... why? Maybe people didn't care as much as I thought. For 25 weeks, when people clicked on my profile, they knew what to expect. When they saw paragraphs, they clicked past it without reading. Maybe they didn't want to see these things everyday. Maybe they, like me in 2018, felt powerless.

Although my posts became less frequent, this did not mitigate my passion to help the world. I knew I had to go further. I set my future goals: that whatever my career be, it would tie back to the world around me. Whether by creating international policies or managing businesses abroad, I knew I had to change the world for the better. I would do this for the innocent lives lost in Palestine, Yemen, Syria, and many more. Because I realized, for every second of inaction, someone, somewhere, was paying the price.

### Additional information

For Activity #5, Rising Scholars Academy is the housing program I participated in while taking ATDP courses at Berkeley. RSA is an opportunity for students who do not have family in other states, who want to participate in engaging courses abroad. RSA encouraged me to explore the area, tour campuses, get ahead on college applications, and take advantage of the opportunity to meet several impressive guests, including authors, professors, and entrepreneurs.

DECA honors: my experience in DECA has been driven and motivated by progress. Freshman year, my team did not make it past the first stage (regionals). After preparing properly the next year, we earned the 1st place award in our region, but did not place at state. The next year, my team placed 4th at state and even earned recognition at ICDC in Orlando. We studied extremely

hard because students who make it to ICDC score nearly perfect on both the test and roleplay. I look forward to trying to place at ICDC this year.

As part of the IB Diploma Programme at my high school, I completed a 4000 word English Extended Essay to demonstrate my interest in language and culture. I wrote a comparative analysis on foreign works written in French, Navajo, and Arabic, in respects to their English translation. I analyzed the linguistic factors unique to French, Navajo, and Arabic, as well as the words and structures which cannot be translated in poetry nor holy text. I learned about the impacts of translation on the text, different interpretations of subjective texts, and unique perspectives present in each culture.

Over the course of two years, I have regularly completed experiences of Creativity, Activity, and Service as part of my school's IB programme. These experiences range from learning skills such as cooking new dishes and playing piano, running in my community and playing soccer, and volunteering at events such as Music City Iftar and Second Harvest Food Bank. With this program, and for the rest of my educational career, I am always looking for opportunities to be productive, learn new things, and serve my community.

In the Family section, I listed that my permanent home is with Parent 1 (my mother). This is because my sister claims my mother on her taxes, making her a household dependant. However,

my mother spends a majority of the year in Pakistan, with my father. Having said this, since 2012, I have lived in Nashville with just my siblings.

Starting in 7th grade, I would wake up on the couch every morning, go to school, and come back to an empty apartment. At school, I was responsible for anything I chose to participate in. This meant that I was limited in school activities and educational opportunities, since I could only participate in what I knew about and could manage on my own.

The most difficult part was being so independent at a young age. I could handle the chores, cooking, and responsibilities. But for academic, emotional, and motivational support, I was forced to rely entirely on myself, which was never as easy.

However, I made the most of my situations. In the event of a benign tumor, for example, I never complained. I got through my surgery by smiling, laughing, and having friends, family, and nurses do the same. I was only able to see my parents once a year, occasionally, but even then, I was grateful that I got to see them. With my dad fighting cancer, not a moment I shared with him would be taken for granted. The love my mother showered me with when visiting would prove that no amount of time would be able to distance us two.

I did not have the space nor opportunity to mention this anywhere in my application, but felt that it contributed a great deal to understanding who I am and what I have experienced.