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Year: 10

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What Drives You?

The single letters “ies” found in opportunities drive me. Although “ies” have no seemingly profound significance, they have become the single most important driving force for me.

As a first generation Cambodian immigrant, the word “opportunity” was thrown around a lot throughout my childhood. My parents held high expectations because of their drive for this opportunity. At first, these harsh expectations to fulfill this opportunity seemed like an unattainable fever dream, especially for an only child who held its solitary burden.

Growing up, I never understood why my parents cared to cherish every dime they earned. I never understood why my parents alluded to the effects of the Khmer Rouge on their childhood in such a grime, besmirch light. I never understood the Cambodian Killing Field movies my grandparents watched. Why dwell on the past when you live in the present? What opportunities did America have different from Cambodia anyway?

I was ignorant then. My parents sought this great American opportunity for a reason. It was an opportunity they couldn’t find back home, where their pasts were clouded by warfare and genocide. For that, should I be the sole reason this opportunity and my parents’ ambitions go to waste? My past ignorance has fueled my realization of “ies” as my driving force. Why seek a single American opportunity when opportunities are so abundant?

The thought of seeking opportunities rather than meeting a single opportunity has driven me to want to pursue a broad range of passions in STEM, volunteering, equality, charity, and other community services. I have the opportunities and freedoms to pursue these passions, so why not go for them?

As a sophomore, I transferred to a STEM focused, early college high school. Opportunities to be a female STEM student, to be a part of clubs such as HOSA and BioBuilders, and to be held in a rigorous educational environment are opportunities that my parents held as

expectations (which once seemed unattainable). I have finally immersed myself in leadership roles and team-working as the opportunities arose. Just last week, I received opportunities to represent my school at the National Student Leadership Conference.

In the nearing future, I'm confident that more opportunities will arise. I am no longer seeking a single implausible opportunity and for that, opportunities can arise everywhere. I hope to change the STEM scene for young women as I pursue a higher education in STEM. I hope that fellow minorities will further pursue freedom in opportunities and peace in their own skin as they realize the power within their voices and actions as I have. I hope to be able to inspire others through community services and worldwide movements one day. One person won't be able to change the world entirely, but one contribution and a handful of opportunities will.

Oftentimes, drives aren't simply external rewards. Drives come as mentality changes or intrinsic values. My path is to serve the world fueled by the thought of copious opportunities, ones that come in whatever I choose next.