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What Drives Me?

Growing up, my parents often reminded me of the Nepali proverb: *Sikdai jane ho*, translating to *learning is a journey*. To them, education wasn't just about going to school; it was about lessons in resilience, community, and action.

My parents' philosophy has shaped my drive throughout life. Simply put, what drives me is turning passion into action one step at a time, whether through researching the affordable housing crisis, building inclusive communities, or advocating for change through Youth Against Gun Violence.

As a child, I found comfort in crafting shoebox dioramas, making handmade birthday cards, and bringing Nepali food to school for my friends. I didn't realize it then, but these gestures were my way of building connection. This desire to create a sense of belonging led me to co-found the International Cultures Club in freshman year of high school, giving students from diverse backgrounds a space to share their stories and support one another. What started as casual gatherings has evolved into a close-knit support network.

This drive has also guided my academic interests. After taking AP Economics and AP Statistics, I became fascinated by how data can illuminate pressing social issues, particularly in the affordable housing crisis affecting my community. Last summer, I joined the housing research team at the University of Tulsa and looked into the relationship between socioeconomic

status and urban development in the City of Tulsa. Using econometric analysis and GIS mapping, I discovered a crucial link between public spaces and residential development and later published my findings in an economics journal.

But learning didn't stop with research - I wanted to take action. I sought opportunities to work with groups that help bridge the gap between data and real-world impact. I'm currently a data science intern at i2E, a non-profit organization dedicated to growing and supporting Oklahoma startups and small businesses. Every dataset I analyze represents real people, real families, and real communities and this has further pushed me to try my best to help find solutions and give back to the communities that have supported me since day one.

My drive to take action became even more urgent after experiencing gun violence firsthand at my state fair. The fear from that moment never left me, but instead of letting it consume me, I co-founded Youth Against Gun Violence with my friends. We've led awareness campaigns at our school and organized donation drives, providing stress-relief care packages to local middle schoolers. Through this experience, I've learned that advocacy isn't just about speaking out. Instead, it's about trusting the process of change, and helping people feel less alone in their struggles.

Sikdai jane ho continues to echo in everything I do. Learning is a journey indeed, but it's also a call to action. As I look ahead to college where I will major in Economics and Data Science, I'm excited to continue turning my passion into action one step at a time. One day, I hope to reshape economic policies in my community and beyond.