

Throughout my life, I discovered a personal truth, that I have no limitations other than those I choose to impose upon myself. No one is exempt from Obstacles during their lives, and I can honestly say that I am thankful for the adversities and challenges which have crossed my path because they have strengthened my character and brought forth certain traits and taught me lessons that I might otherwise never have known. There are various personal challenges with which I have struggled and I have no doubt as to where their foundations lie. A major shift in my life was immigrating to America from Egypt at 13-years-old, due to religious-persecution. The language and culture barrier made me feel as if I was not only from another country but from another planet.

It was extremely difficult to make friends, perform in classes, express myself and pay expenses. In the classroom. I knew the answer to a question or wanted to ask for help, but my inability to communicate prevented me from doing so. But within myself, I knew I knew my determination would overtake this challenge. I started reading Dr-Seuss books, watched countless movies with subtitles and made a new friend--Google translate. I would spend 4 hours weekly in after-school tutoring to improve my pronunciation and comprehension.

After much effort put in, I finally connected with my classmates and my grades in English-class improved drastically. As a result, my high-school experience was completely changed. I became more socially confident, and collaborative in the classroom, and more involved in various extracurriculars later in high-School. I was able to become a leader in the family by translating for them during doctor appointments, and documents to them and explaining procedures and concepts as I, myself, am learning them. It became clear that if I managed to learn a difficult new language in a new country, I could face any challenge that came my way.

But my share of adversity didn't stop there. An experience that has strengthened my determination and perseverance was when I got accepted to an Engineering Program at Notre-Dame. My excitement was through the roof. But my economic background has always included financial stress. My mother is the only one who's able to work and support the family (\$11,000 a year) which makes it very difficult to afford any expenses. So I didn't have the necessary resources to attend. At that point, I realized I was faced with two options. I could continue sitting in my bedroom, or allow the setback to serve as motivation, and move forward. I never considered the first option. That same day, I called every engineering company in my town to ask if they offered job-shadowing opportunities, mentorship programs, or advice related

to engineering. Within a week, I was out in the field wearing a vest, a safety hat, and goggles, visiting a new ramp built on Highway 58. I gained hands-on experience and attended the morning meetings where the engineers and I went over the details of the design projects and spoke with them for 3 hours about their work routine and the job's pros and cons.

My drive to learn more didn't stop there. To further my knowledge about STEM, I attended an 8-hour Math-Engineering-Science-Achievement (MESA) conference, which offers support to disadvantaged students so that they can excel in engineering. I met industry leaders in the field and gained insights into the many tasks engineers perform as well as the problem-solving ability and creativity engineers must-have.

It became clear to me that sometimes setbacks in life can end up being hugely beneficial. In this case, my inability to attend the program encouraged me to rely on myself (utilizing all of the opportunities I was given at school: Taking the most rigorous math classes/Science classes), to motivate myself and to find ways to overcome my perceived setback as well as the importance of patience. Even though I experienced and still currently experiencing hardships, I let them serve as motivation, not a setback. These hardships are inspiring me to become successful and accomplish significant goals at college so in the future, I can have a stable career and break the financial challenges for my family and myself.

Everyone brings to the world unique talents, gifts, and abilities, and some of mine include my strong will and my determination to be able to give something back to the communities in which I was raised and moved to. I am certain that my Higher education will instill within me the skills and knowledge I need to pursue a career as a civil Engineer. It will not only allow me to explore a particular subject in-depth and learn all the specifics about it but will also prepare me for life outside of school due to the number of responsibilities and relations I will make. With my education, I hope to work for a non-profit organization and travel to undeveloped towns/cities and help rebuild them. I was born and raised in an undeveloped neighborhood with weak infrastructures and broken streets. I want to provide a better living for others who are in the same situation I used to be.

My economic background has always included financial stress since my parents did not pursue a college degree which only limited them to part-time minimum wage jobs. This makes it very difficult to afford any necessities such as food on the table, bills, and clothes. With a \$10,000 household income, my parents are unable to contribute any financial help. Since my EFC is 0\$, I

seek out scholarships to help me with my Higher education career. The PB&J scholarship will help me achieve my educational, career goals and give me an advantage I didn't have before. This scholarship will help me by lowering the costs of college, and the number of hours I'll need to work throughout my studies. With my time, I will be able to gain crucial experience through internships and design projects and focus on the rigor of engineering. The scholarship is an investment in my future in which I am confident not only I will accomplish great things but also give back to my community.