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Graduate Diversity Statement

My dad joined the army at the end of the Sino-Vietnamese War. So did my mom, who was a military doctor. Neither of them was sent to the battlefield. I was born and grew up in the residential area of a military base.

The impact of the war, however, did not spare me. Ever since kindergarten, I have heard some of my uncles bragging about war experiences in gatherings. These always lead to a climax of praise and profanity. But I was also aware that not all war heroes were welcomed. One of my playmates' fathers was paralyzed due to the war. His family lived in a small bungalow far from the area where other military families resided, and my friend was often mocked by other kids because of her disabled father. I was therefore extremely apprehensive when my father participated in military drills, and I felt a strong aversion towards war. The glorious purpose of a community didn't by itself guarantee its members a decent life; only care and sympathy for individuals did. And the community I lived in seemed not to have much compassion for its own members.

At the age of thirteen, I moved with my father to another military base in a big city. My mother didn't migrate with us; she had to stick to her own post. My father was rarely at home because of his work, and I have taken care of myself since then. Whereas my classmates came home to cooked meals on the table, I had to ride my bicycle to the supermarket and prepare a dinner before doing homework. In meetings with my parents, I wrote down instructions only to remind myself. Being invited to birthday parties was bittersweet for me; I enjoyed the company of friends, but seeing them being cared for reminded me of how lonely I was. My parents also loved me, and I understood; they just wanted to equip me with the independence and bravery to build my own life at an early age.

Growing up in an environment where absolute obedience and unconditional sacrifice were prioritized, neither of those values was shared by me. Although born in a lovely family, I tasted the hardship of independence, aware that my peers were well-protected. My growing experience taught me to observe with my own eyes and heart, and to fight for my pursuits as gallantly as a warrior, even if alone. I will practice those lessons throughout my whole life.

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