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What challenges have you faced in your life that led you to seek higher education? What helped you on this journey? What other resources would support this goal?

My identity as an Asian-Canadian woman is one that I hold onto proudly and it has influenced all areas of my life. I previously trained at one of the most competitive acting conservatories in Canada where I was uncomfortable with the Eurocentric curriculum. I felt isolated because the faculty and my fellow students visibly represented the white-dominated industry of Canadian theatre. As a racialized actor, it was difficult to advocate for myself while needing to assimilate into a school culture that was systemically racist. The COVID-19 pandemic also made me acutely aware of the harmful prejudices others may hold towards me due to my racial background. I had the misfortune to experience two instances of overt racism during a family trip to Victoria in 2020, and I was angry and taken aback as BC is my home province.

These experiences ignited me to take action as I recognize that my Asian identity is one to be celebrated, not overlooked or discriminated against. I started volunteering with EliminateHate, a social advocacy organization that harnesses the power of arts, film, and media to combat anti-Asian racism. Being a part of EliminateHate has allowed me to speak up for myself and all Asian-Canadians, and educate others to say that racial injustice, whether it be violent cases of assault or the everyday microaggression, is not okay.

Additionally, my lived experience with mental illness plays a large role in my pursuit of higher education. In the past, I held a lot of self-stigma and constantly told myself there were limits to what I could achieve due to my struggles. Following my theatre school experience, I lapsed into an intense depressive episode and knew it was time to change my own narrative by seeking professional help. On October 28, 2019, I was diagnosed with clinical depression, generalized anxiety disorder, and social anxiety disorder. This date is recorded on an appointment card that I keep in my wallet as a reminder of my self-determination to own my recovery. I started seeing a private therapist, attended group therapy, and worked with a clinical social worker in order to support my wellness. I admired how each mental health professional balanced their professionalism and strong sense of empathy while working with me.

Ultimately, it was my positive interactions with the hospital staff and my therapist that solidified my decision to become a social worker. Mental health was always an important topic for me due to my lived experience, and now I saw the possibilities that existed for me as a service provider. Furthermore, my theatre school experience sparked my passion for a career that embraces anti-oppressive and decolonial practices. The mission I had as an actor is the same mission I envision for my social work career: I am committed to creating opportunities for myself and others from marginalized groups to share our voices and experiences. To support my goal, it would be a dream to engage with a mentorship program specifically for Asians in the social work field.