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The smell of fresh munitions and the score of artillery saturated the atmosphere as the automobile curved through the downtrodden village roads. The woman, convulsing in pain, screamed in unison with the explosives that decimated Serbia. She yelled at the driver to race faster toward the hospital, as blood fluidly streamed throughout the automobile cabin. Bullets pierced through her countrymen, and death was ubiquitous. Yet, the piercing sensation endured by the woman was not a bullet, and she was momentarily oblivious to the ongoing war and death unfolding outside the cabin of the silver Mercedes sedan. This woman was giving life, namely, delivering me into the world while *her world* was in shambles. An explosive nearly hit the automobile as it raced northward, and the woman's shrieks rang louder as shrapnel pierced and shattered the windshield. Death nearly claimed me before I had an opportunity to breathe my first air of life. This realization, revealed to me fifteen years after its occurrence, fuels my philosophy to maximize every opportunity *life* presents.

I was brought into the world on one of the heaviest day of bombing during the Civil War. My personal narrative cannot be duly told without prefacing it with my volatile *introduction into the world*, which impacted my life both practically and personally. The war started shortly after my birth, and several months into my life the ongoing strife prevented my parents from securing my birth certificate. I was not alive, *per se*, yet the silver Mercedes' ability to dodge oncoming explosives and imminent armory delivered me from death. Three months later, the government issued me a long-overdue birth certificate fit with my name, the name of my parents, and an arbitrary birth date. Years later, this tardy certificate is neatly framed above my bed, serving as a constant reminder that life, individuals, and opportunities are not to be taken for granted. As a volunteer for a dynamic nonprofit organization, I routinely assist immigrants adjusting to new life in America, survivors of domestic abuse, and most gratifyingly, new mothers cope with the challenges of motherhood. Each day, I aspire to breathe life into every activity I partake in, which has empowered my ambition and desire to advocate on behalf of others.

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Naturally, my experienced informed my social and political worldview, and I undertook community service work helping indigents, victims of domestic abuse, and the homeless in the Metropolitan Philadelphia area. In addition, I tailored an academic course of study that nourished my intellectual interests but also cultivated my leadership abilities, *en route* toward an eventual career in law. At the University of Pennsylvania Wharton School of Business, I was unanimously elected to serve as Student Senate President, a distinction held only by a few women of color. I encouraged extracurricular involvement that bridged education with community service, investigating business models that demonstrated both a commitment to community and its surrounding citizens. The City of Philadelphia, seat to UPENN, is perhaps an archetypal reminder of a metropolis in economic decline and social neglect, and thus a context where responsible business paradigms are most needed to breathe new life into the “City of Brotherly Love.” As a law student and aspiring lawyer, my intellectual interest is to explore the practical intersections between the law and community economic development, from both a domestic and international prism. In addition, the day’s sociopolitical climate has also engendered a keen interest in the existential legal questions addressing Serbian American identity, national security and terrorism. The Columbia School of Law is the ideal forum to engage the study of law because of its vibrant and diverse student community and rich curriculum.

I was lost among the throngs of celebrating Americans bustling through the thoroughfare on that mild April afternoon. Music, dance and nationalist chants filled the afternoon sky, as the crowd rejoiced. As I gripped my mother’s hand, I could not help but recall the unforgettable day that was both my birthday and the day my life was preempted. My mind drifted away from that inaugural encounter with death, and I felt as *alive* as ever as we celebrated the final remnant of the war. After an exhausting day of celebration, I returned to my bedroom and gazed in the direction of the framed birth certificate nailed atop my headboard, and envisioned an adjacent framed certificate also containing my name, with *The Columbia School of Law* prominently scripted on top.