

*1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.*

My family is originally a German Jewish family that traces its origins to the mid 18th century. My ancestors are perhaps best known for establishing banking houses throughout Europe. Since that time, the family has divided into several branches, notably the English, French and Austrian branches, and greatly diversified the domains of activity where it has a presence. Hence, nowadays, this family takes part in the arts, social entrepreneurship, banking, finance, education, philanthropy, agriculture, and healthcare sectors. Moreover, my family has close ties with the the creation and financial support of major international philanthropic networks in the arts, in entrepreneurship (promoting sustainable development, technological progress and social development) and in healthcare (supporting scientific and medical research especially in ophthalmology and neuroscience).

I had the great privilege to be raised in an environment rich in intellectual, artistic and social diversity. Constantly surrounded by people looking for ways to innovate, determined to explore and improve the world, I am born with the desire to break through, to be part of the ones making a difference in the world.

My motivation to “put a ding in the universe” as Steve Jobs called it comes primarily from my mother; she is the first woman in my family’s history to serve as the CEO of a Rothschild bank and is a prime example of a person driving important changes in the world. From a very young age, she insisted that I grow up with all the responsibilities that come along with being part of this family. I was raised with the idea that from those to whom much is given, much is expected. I believe this, absolutely.

To prepare me to participate in the family’s activities and to guide my own journey in life, from a very young age my mother took me on her trips and to meetings around the world. I have traveled across Asia, seen most of Southern Africa, spent considerable time in both North and South America, and visited most European countries.

During voyages with my mother, I had the great fortune to meet many extraordinary men and women who are striving to make positive changes in the world. Whether they were heads of state, business executives, artists, philanthropists, researchers, doctors, designers, or simply someone on the street, many have had a profound influence on my vision of the world.

I conclude this essay by briefly describing four of the people that are true sources of inspiration to me. The first is Azzedine Alaïa, a French-Tunisian fashion designer. He emigrated from Tunisia with nothing to follow his dream of working in Paris. After decades of hard work, Alaïa is today regarded as amongst the best fashion designers the world has ever seen. From Azzedine, I’ve learned that there are no shortcuts in life and that big dreams are realized through very hard work. The second person is Shimon Peres, a former President of Israel and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994, who, through a series of simple conversations, helped me understand the importance of an open mind towards a difficult situation. Jean-Paul Meningaud, a French plastic and reconstructive surgeon with whom I did an internship, made me realize how important it is to constantly be searching for better solutions to problems and to never become complacent. Finally, the fourth person that inspires me is Tidjane Thiam, the CEO of the Swiss bank Crédit Suisse. He has shown me that to be successful in life, you have to set very high goals, but allow yourself some free time to enjoy what you like to keep a “human side”.

Exposure to such brilliant people motivates me to build myself a little more everyday, remain loyal to my moral and ethical values, strive towards excellence in my life and my work, and to seek innovative ways of giving back to a world that has given me so much.