**Common Application:** 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. (650 words max)

Matiyevsky—If you weren’t sure what that jumble of letters following my first name was, you are not alone. My indecipherable family name with a v, *two* y’s, a mat, and a sky jostled within its ten characters says it all. Just as it can’t possibly allow seemingly random letters to pass it by without considering what an amalgamation of them could become, I too can’t possibly turn down potential opportunities.

For my parents, growing up Jewish in the Soviet Union meant that opportunities were scarce at best. Prejudice, on the other hand, was prolific. Seeking a better life, they escaped to the United States—to the land of opportunity—with an irrepressible urge to finally experience the very thing they never had in their lives, and experience it they did.

As individuals, many of our most fundamental principles are byproducts of our parents trying to perfect in us the very elements they had yet to refine in themselves. To that end, mine made certain that if they gave me nothing else, they would proffer the immense drive, determination, and empathy that allowed them to survive for two decades behind the Iron Curtain.

Because my parents grew up pummeled by adversity, I learned the importance of tracking down every possible opportunity I could, and forging my own if none seemed to exist—that’s how my business was born. Because compassion became their antidote for anti-Semitism and discrimination, I learned the value of kindness and the importance of humility, no matter the circumstance. Because they grew up with lies proctored by their very own country, I learned to think for myself and never be forced to take someone else’s word for granted. I was raised as the son of Mother Russia, primed to live life in the nation of tribulation—but here I find myself, in the land of opportunity instead.

Above all else, perhaps the most important thing they instilled in me was to always be prepared for opportunity if it came knocking at the door. When training for the Olympics, you train with someone stronger than you. You face someone faster than you are, and labor until you can leave them in the dust. You arrive at the race so over-prepared, that when the chance to leap ahead of the runner in front of you finally comes, you will not let that window pass you by. Frankly, being undeniably beholden to my parents for my work ethic, resilience, and concern for others leaves me unsure where *nurture* ceases and *nature* takes over—where they end, and I begin. One thing I do know for certain, is that they did not leave me—my nature—unprepared.

To this day, I can’t help but say ‘Yes’ to joining a fifth club (Chamber Music) or being the Vice President of our school’s Concert Band, even if I know time will not be on my side. How can I possibly close a door wide open in front of me when I know how much I’ve gained by crossing that threshold in the past? If I had never decided to take a chance and invest all my savings into what was once a mere coin collecting hobby, I would never have discovered a passion for numismatics or realized how much I love building my own business. If I had never stopped by my history teacher’s classroom on a Sunday afternoon four years ago to try out for a ‘Mock Trial Club’ I had heard so much about, I would have missed out on an incredible team and one of the most rewarding experiences of my high school career.

It’s safe to say that I relish every opportunity I can get my hands on, and perhaps one day my list of achievements will be as seemingly random as my indecipherable last name, but as long as I am a better person because of them, they would all be worth it in the end.