

## Unique Experience

When I was young, my mother thought it was time to take me back to our homeland, Ethiopia, so that I could better understand myself. Addis Ababa is a beautiful city, full of culture, history, and shimmering skyscrapers. But in the shadows of those tall buildings, I witnessed a poverty that my life at home hadn't prepared me for. I remember the disquieting feeling I got people watching on my walk to school. It's one thing to witness a children your age begging in dirt roads. But because I saw the same people every day, I developed a rapport with the parents and their kids; my mother would even arrange play dates. When you're so close to that level of poverty, the humanity of those "UNICEF kids" are tangible, and it rocks you. And when you leave, you have no choice to take them with you, to carry them in your heart. Sami, Kalkidan, Surafel: it is because of them that I never forget what I've been given and what I have to give. I remember after Sunday mass, we would cook and hand out food to the maimed and mangled of the streets. Every week I saw new and familiar faces; many avidly accepting the handouts while others did so apathetically. What could be consistently felt among them, though, was a comprehension of their impotence to markedly change their state, and the future that waits for them (or lack thereof) as a result of that. This inability stems from their fractured healthcare system; many of these people (parents often) were injured through work or disease and were turned away at the hospital because of their inability to cover their treatment costs. This problem among the healthcare system hits very close to home to me because it is this shortcoming in the system that led to my aunt Lemlem's death. I recognized this reality, and every week my mind was pervaded with the sentiment of having more to give than a days' worth of satisfaction. In that summer abroad sparked the first inkling of a plan to one day organize a health institution to empower those to be able to rejoin the workforce and have the dignity of sustaining themselves. Because of all my bonds domestic and abroad, service is no mere side project or whimsical pursuit, but as real an ambition as the reality of millions of Americans, Africans, and people worldwide. So in my studies, my pen is heavy with responsibility and a very big dream. My aspiration to be a physician and make an impact in the healthcare field is all about expanding my capacity to serve these disadvantaged communities.