

Bruck Assefa, Class of '09

My name is Bruck Assefa and I am a freshman at MIT. I was born and raised in Ethiopia. When I was a child, my father brought up a unique way of celebrating my and my siblings' birthdays. After the usual ceremony of cutting the cake and singing 'happy birthday', he would ask all the children in the house what they wanted to be in the future. Looking at the video recordings of those days, it strikes me to notice that most children said they wanted to be a doctor, engineer, or a pilot. They thought those three were the only respected professions worth pursuing. It was interesting for me to examine why that was the case. After a lot of thought, I came to the realization that we were not exposed to other career options. No one ever thought about becoming a nuclear engineer or a rocket scientist because we simply did not hear about them.

I remember saying I wanted to be a scientist when I was a child – I was fortunate enough to hear of the profession from my father. What kind of scientist? I did not have the slightest idea. The truth of the matter was that I just wanted to be different. I had no idea what scientists did or how much they were paid. For me, it was all about proving myself different, going places where no one else ever went, and aspiring to do things no one ever did.

On the course of my middle school life, I found myself interested in mathematics and physics. My interest in them, however, was not really an attractive force to the field of engineering. It was rather a driving force away from the areas of the social sciences. With that line of argument, I entered tenth grade still believing that my career would have nothing to do with the social sciences.

It was then when I was introduced to International Relations. I had previous Model United Nations experience in ninth grade but it was the first time that I was taking it as a regular subject in a classroom. I found out that the range of subjects the UN delegates discuss, the rules and regulations that guide the General Assembly, the intricacies of politics and economics that influence decision-making were all astonishing to me. I began to reconsider my stance on this particular area of social science, which now proved as a possible career path for me to follow.

Having been accepted to MIT, I can say there is little possibility of me studying International Relations in the next four years simply because it is not offered at an undergraduate level. However, MIT is a place where one's aspiration to explore is never contained. My exploration of MIT began with the course Careers in Biomedical Research. I should say the course gave me a clear insight into what professionals in biomedical research do and how they came to be where they are now. I came to be acquainted with research centers such as the Massachusetts General Hospital, Martinos Center, HST and others. Above all, however, I came to see renowned researchers come to the class and talk about the areas of research they are engaged with. I strongly believe that it was a rewarding experience.

At the end of the day, however, one might want to know if I am considering pursuing a career in biomedical research. In all truth, it is too early to tell. I will make sure that I consider all the options before I make my decision. I am glad that I am in MIT because I can consider all the numerous career paths that are available in the 'real' world. The fact that I missed out on this unique opportunity when I was a child makes me want to keep my options alive as long as possible; and God willing, that is what I intend to do!