

BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE
2022 ARCHES Fellow
SOLLIANA KINEFERIGB

I was born and raised in Denver, Colorado, however, my story doesn't start there. My parents, Abrehet Tesfaye and Kineferigb Hagos, are both Ethiopian immigrants from the Tigray region of Ethiopia. Although both were born in rural villages, my mother left with her brother at the age of ten to live in the capital, Addis Ababa, where she was able to receive a formal education and eventually travel to the United States on a student visa. My father, however, stayed in the village and received no formal education; rather, he pursued biblical studies, and ultimately dedicated his life and pursuits to God at the age of thirteen to start down the path of becoming an Ethiopian-Orthodox Tewehedo priest – he likes to say that meeting my mom redirected his goals of priesthood. My parents married soon after meeting one another, and it wasn't until my mom was diagnosed with preeclampsia when pregnant with me that they ever considered moving to the United States. My mom was able to obtain her visa relatively quickly, but I unfortunately wouldn't meet my dad until nearly three years later when his visa finally cleared. Although my father never became a priest, he did become a preacher, *Memhir Kinfe* – *memhir* meaning teacher in Tigrinya – as he is affectionately called in our community. He dedicated himself to obtaining his GED and subsequently a decade's worth of night schooling to obtain his bachelor's degree in Computer Information Technology, and my mother, equally dedicated, worked to receive her CNA certification.

I received my high-school education at one of Denver's top charter schools, the Denver School of Science and Technology, where I was heavily encouraged for a college education to be at the forefront of my goals. Outside of my college pursuits, though, something beautiful happened to me, I was able to explore my love and passion for community service. Through the school, I was privileged to take two community service trips with Homes of Hope International to Mexico and the Dominican Republic to build houses for those in need. Additionally, I was able to serve in leadership positions for several community service programs in Denver such as the Girls Leadership Council of Colorado and the Central Youth Board to name a few. Building these community connections in tandem with the exceptional scientific education I was receiving fueled my passion to pursue those same values of servitude in my university education. Because of the passion for social equity instilled in me by my community, when I decided to become a biology major, the love I had for the science wasn't my largest motivating factor but rather it was the potential I saw in the impact and change I could bring to my community by doing so.

Some of my major accomplishments come as a direct result from both the formal and social education I received from my community during those formative years. I was able to receive the Strong, Smart, and Bold Scholarship from the Girls Inc. of Metro Denver in 2017 which led to my being a keynote speaker that same year for the Women's Foundation of Colorado's annual luncheon. I interned at the the Children's Hospital of Colorado in 2018 with the Medical Career Collaborative program. In 2018 I was also awarded the Princeton Prize in Race Relations for the work I had done in cofounding a student social justice organization (People of Color, Point of View). I am also a recipient of the Sachs Foundation Scholarship which is a scholarship for exceptional Black students from Colorado. I continue to serve my community at Howard University, I have served in executive board positions since my sophomore year for both the African Student Association and the Ethiopian-Eritrean Student Association, the latter of which I will be serving as President this upcoming academic year.