C) Write about an experience in which you encountered a tension between personal freedom and community standards. Discuss the experience and the underlying issues, how you dealt with the tension, and whether or not there was a satisfactory resolution. (500 words)

For most of my sophomore year, I've been fighting against the recent MIT dorm security policy, fighting for students' personal freedoms against the new community standards imposed by MIT's Division of Student Life (DSL).

These policies matter because students have great autonomy to shape their homes, creating cultures that persist for generations. Indeed, MIT's [security task force's report](#) stated "the autonomy and local authority of each residential community […] must be engaged". However, the security policy implemented ignored this independence. Third-party contractors who saw students as threats replaced student desk workers who recognized everyone. Letting friends in behind you could result in a suspended registration for "disrespecting the community". DSL planned to install a fence around one dorm until the housemaster refused to "live in a jail". Despite student complaints, DSL was going to shape the dorms by their standards, not ours.

This new policy hurt me immediately. The deskworkers ironically stopped me from attending a public meeting about security. My friend stopped visiting me after being rudely forced to wait outside. After [one nasty incident](#), I became so furious at being treated like an intruder to my own home that I decided to fight the policy.

At first, I joined [mailing list discussions](#) and [letter-writing campaigns](#), but I found that people just complained without action. I reached out across dorms and soon had enough representation to start planning student protests. However, after talking with past student leaders, I learned about student-administration communications' complex nuances, appreciating the administrative perspective and the ineffectiveness of protests.

Eventually, I brought my concerns to President Reif and Chancellor Barnhart. Surprised by the student dissatisfaction, Barnhat encouraged me to search for actionable solutions. Inspired by her interest, I worked with the Dormitory Council's security survey and emailed the dorm mailing lists, compiling many possible solutions. I met again with Barnhart, optimistic that she would take these suggestions to DSL. Although Barnhart appreciated my work, she ultimately couldn't implement any suggestions because I was not representative of all undergraduates. Although I argued that dorms had already campaigned for these solutions and were burned out from the experience, Barnhart insisted that they needed to bring these ideas up the hierarchy again. I sadly reported my failure to my allies and the dorms, crestfallen that I couldn't do more.

My outlook changed when I checked my inbox. Overnight, several students thanked me for my efforts in representing student unhappiness, policy discussion picked up again, and Barnhart sent me a message saying, "I don't know what you did, but I've been getting a lot of emails…" I *had* made a difference, and that was enough to keep trying.

Currently, as chair of the Undergraduate Association's Committee on Student-Administration Collaboration, I am working to improve communications in the future. I'm also creating dorm cultural training for contractors and a committee to audit future security measures. Although the job is quite demanding, I still work in the hope that someday, I can shift community standards and help DSL understand students' perspective.