

## **Maria Butina Statement of Purpose for Studying Tai Chi**

I was born in southern Siberia at the crossroads of four nations: Russia, China, Mongolia and Kazakhstan. My region is called “The Territory of the Bolshoi Altai” because all four of these countries share a part of the Altai Mountain Chain. There, the West and the East meet each other. On the Altai territory, all these different nations and cultures successfully co-exist and naturally add to each other. Therefore, being Siberian, I was predisposed to trying to understand these two different worlds: the practical West and the philosophical East. While studying in American University will help me to understand the West, learning the Chinese martial art Tai Chi is my first step in understanding the East.

After finishing both a bachelor and a master’s degree from Altai State University in my native Siberia in political science and teaching social science, I spent several years living and working in Moscow. During these years, my interest in studying the two worlds has increased. Russia has always been considered a buffer zone between the East and the West. In Moscow I felt it even more than in my native Altai. In the fall of 2016 I began my master’s degree in the Global Security program in the School of International Service at American University in Washington, D.C. I believe that a Western school and several years living abroad will help me to better understand the west.

But to build harmony, I must study the east – and the Eastern world is still mysterious for me. China with its completely different history, religion and culture has been always interesting for me. During my life, I have taken some classes in Chinese and I am studying Chinese religion

and philosophy. I believe that classes in Tai Chi will help me to take one more step in exploring the Eastern world to see the ways of harmonizing it with the West.

So, I believe that my destiny is to help to form the world as a safe place where the West and the East co-exist in harmony. The first step must be to understand the philosophy of both worlds.