A Day In My Shoes

Essays, Poetry, and Art by Estacado High School Students

AVID #collegeready

This book is a product of the AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination) program at Estacado High School.

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There is a kind of peace and assurance that comes over me while I shower. The sound of water shooting out from the showerhead, and the sweet sensation of the warm pleasant water running from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet, seem to ease my worries and concerns for the night. On this night specifically, I thought of all the grace that I had been given to overcome the challenges I faced as a child and even as an adult. I thought of everything that I thought I would become as a child, and I thought of everything that I am becoming as a woman. My mom was single, fifteen with two children, and had no clue how to be a good mother. With such little knowledge on what the world saw as fitting for a mother, my mom worked two and even three jobs at times to provide and shelter us. At a very young age I was exposed to sex, violence, drugs, and abuse, but in the Thunderbird, it was normal. Neighbors in the Thunderbird were mostly African American and Hispanic families. I remember the awful smell of decomposed grass, spreading from the feedlots, in our homes and across East Lubbock, Texas. They say you learn the most from ages two to five, so I guess that explains why my mind was set on worldly things, and yet as child I had the worries of an adult…I always wanted to be somebody special.

At Dunbar and Estacado, I did a respectable job of masking my identity. I was the pretty light-skinned girl, with good hair, built like a white girl, athletic, an honor student, who thought she was all that. At home I worked a part-time job, took care of the house, my two sisters and two younger brothers, and prayed for my older sister to come home and for my mom to be protected and to happy. My senior year other peers in my class were recognized for scholarships and for acceptance into different universities and colleges. I, on the other hand, had never been passionate about pursing higher education. I doubted my abilities and my individuality. Not having an education was normal in my environment, not just in my immediate family, but as far as I could look back no one in my family had a college degree, and only a few received a high school diploma. I resisted the idea of college for a while. This was a huge decision. I was smart and talented, but I just wasn’t confident enough to step into a new domain. I began to ask questions, and boy did my advisor run with the idea. College was a last minute resolution for me. My intentions were never to attend college, but I am a first-generation college graduate of three generations, and from here it only gets better. Who I thought I would become as a child is now the woman I am overcoming. Unhealthy relationships, the hustle mentality, and the pride of life have all worked together for my good. Today, it is a tremendous gift to have such a special place of importance and security in the lives of so many, especially from the youth of who I once was.

This is roughly three minutes of my story, but will possess a lifetime of connectedness with today’s Estacado students. As I have embraced the essence of learning and inclusivity, I am confident that knowing the student has heavily depended on my self-knowledge of where I have been and where I am going. The purpose of A Day in My Shoes project was to create a culture of connectedness for both students and teachers to feel comfortable and confident in achieving educational goals. With this opportunity, I challenged students to share their stories with me. I asked the students to describe a day in their life--include school, home and work (if applicable) tasks. Additionally, I asked them to describe challenges they faced at home, at school, or at work. Lastly, I asked them to share how they will overcome these challenges in order to be college ready. Students were encouraged to be creative and to boldly express their lives. The use of
imagery, poetry, and other literary devices were also encouraged. Sharing and collaborating stories with such strong personal identities opened the door for inspiration and the sweet sensation to persevere even in the midst of trial.

Throughout this book you will find a group of bold and ambitious AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) students who have learned to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects, and other activities. This is a compilation of *Voices of Hope*. In every voice there is detail, and in every detail there is a distinctiveness that portrays the existing or possible realities that we face. However, if we truly listen, we will experience a sense of freedom, gratitude, and an abundance of potential in each shared student voice.

Kasaundra Garcia

Estacado High School Class of 2006

March 2, 2016
The Change

When I was at Dunbar College Preparatory Academy, I had bad habits; I disrespected my teacher, judged other students, and had low grades. I was sent out of class for being disruptive and not staying on task. I simply could not find a reason to succeed.

There were times when I didn’t want to do my assignments, so all of them would either be missing or late. One day my mom received a phone call from my teacher about my behavior and low grades. When I arrived home, my mom was furious about my bad behavior and grades. I felt like I had failed because of the problems that I was causing. My mom said, “Either your grades go up, or you’re going to deal with me!” That day, I absolutely had to make significant changes in my behavior. I started by completing my assignments. The next day, I went to school and decided to improve my grades by staying focused, and avoiding the bad behavior I was demonstrating at school.

After a few weeks, I noticed my grades and behavior improved. My teachers and counselors started recognizing me for academics. My GPA increased above a 4.0! I was thrilled and thankful for my teachers who believed in me. I even received awards for being Teen-of-the-Month, National Junior Honor Society, and all around Female Athlete of the Year. When I left Dunbar, I kept the memories of all the struggles I had, and how those struggles helped me become successful.

Now I am 17 years old, a student at Estacado High School, and my grades are top-notch! My behavior has changed drastically, and that has affected every area of my life. I am very thankful for my mom, teachers, and friends that believed in me. I will always remember being nominated for all around freshman and sophomore of the year because this was one of the most difficult time periods I experienced. I received the President’s Education Award, National Honor Society, Rotary Youth Leadership Awards, and discovered I was also top 10 percent in my class. I am very proud of my accomplishments, and I am humble to have had my mom, teachers, and friends support me as they did. Without them, I wouldn’t have made it this far.

As I continue through high school, I want to strive for my goals. I want to stay in the top 10 percent, get accepted to Texas Christian University’s medical program, and earn my BSN and MSN in order to become a nurse practitioner. I also plan on being married and having two children. I plan on being an extraordinary nurse and an exceptional woman as a model example for my family.
Held on the Highest Pedestal

A day in my shoes, looking from the outside would seem pretty simple since I’m what you would call an “average teenage girl.” Both parents are present in my household and I have two older brothers. My dad is the pastor of our family church the Difference Makers Fellowship Church, and my mom is a beautician. People usually suspect that since I’m a “P.K.” (Preachers Kid) and since I have both parents with me, my life is handed to me on a silver platter. There are lots of stereotypes set in society for teenagers that are similar to me, majority females. But, those stereotypes are wrong.

My life is honestly pretty tough, since I am a preacher’s daughter. People hold me to a higher standard than which they would a normal teenage girl, which is difficult sometimes. All eyes are always on you and you rarely can get away with anything. People look to you as the leader of the pact in every situation, but being the leader isn’t always the best feeling especially if you feel like you’re the one that needs to be led. It’s kind of hard being the daughter of pastor because it comes with so many responsibilities that you didn’t sign up for. You learn to “grin and bear it.” Due to that, I had begun to hold my emotions in and put on a false smile through my pain. Even though there are some predicaments to my life, there a huge amount of up-sides. You learn to be wise and humble in any situation that you are approached with, and to be thankful in the good times and bad times. You learn to look at the brighter side of each situation even when it seems there is no bright side.

Once I got to high school I realized that I am getting closer and closer to college then what I think, which means I need to be on top of my game. I tried to get in a lot of extracurricular activities like, student council, Academic Decathlon, cheerleading, sports, and etc. It was very overwhelming to me and I wanted to give up. I felt like I was by myself and that I had no help from anyone. But my parents and teachers came in to help, because I actually asked! I learned that when you keep your eyes on the prize the stress floats away. I know there are a lot of different scholarships that are just waiting for me to claim them, so my focus has to be intact. A teenage girl like me who’s very outgoing and sociable makes it very challenging to stay focused. It’s hard to listen to a teacher go on and on about the “slope of the x-intercept,” when you hear your friends next to you gossiping about what just happened in lunch, or, “that new boy that just got here from California that has the gorgeous hazel eyes.” I realized you have to be strong and buckle down in high school because no one is just going to hand you a free-ride scholarship if you aren’t applying yourself. You have to get up, get out, and go get it.

A day walking in my shoes isn’t as easy and as simple as you think. Peer pressure approaches me every day like it’s my best friend. It causes me to challenge myself mentally and emotionally. I read a scripture once, Philippians 3:14, which said, “I press on to reach the end of the race to receive the heavenly prize for which God has called me.” This scripture not only means something to me spiritually but academically as well. I believe it is saying I have to use the gifts that I’ve been given and apply them in order to win what I am working so hard to earn. In order to walk in my shoes, you need to be dedicated, persistent, strong-minded, and wise. You can’t give in to the many calamities that aim towards you in your everyday life. You must know who you are and what you stand for. I want to say that I made it.
Stay Strong

Believe in yourself.
Believe in the ones who love you.
Faith will keep you strong.
A Day in My Shoes: Struggles in life

One of my biggest struggles growing up was dealing with the fact that I rarely got to see my dad. He lives in Cedar Hill, Texas. I live in Lubbock Texas, which is five hours away. My dad and I don’t have a typical father-daughter relationship. We don’t talk. I hear from him every so often. I try to call him at least once a week. Of course I love my dad, but it gets overwhelming at times because I feel as though he relies on me to call. That type of responsibility is very stressful. Because of financial reasons, I don’t see him often. He’s made promises that unfortunately, he couldn’t keep. My dad missed most of my birthdays. If he could be there for me more, he would, right? I’d ask myself that question time and time again. My dad isn’t a bad person; he just wasn’t there as much as I wish he would’ve been. No matter what anyone told me, I always had faith in my dad.

Dealing with the fact that my dad wasn’t always around was something I struggled with for years. Sometimes I’d get upset with my dad for never being there. It was one of the biggest struggles I dealt with growing up. My only dream was to just come home from school and show my dad what I learned that day. I was raised by my mom, and I admire my mom. She’s a kind and strong woman. She’s my hero. But hopefully things will change one day.

Another big struggle that I deal with in life is the ability to speak in front of others. Speaking is hardest when I have to do presentations in school. My nerves get bad, and I feel my heart start to race. I fear that I’ll make a fool out of myself and everyone will laugh. Whenever I speak in front of my classmates, it is a constant battle between me and my ability to control my nerves. I really hope that one day I can win the battle that is between my nerves and me. My struggle with being terrified to speak and present things has put a toll on my grades. For example, in AVID there are tutorials every Tuesday and Thursday that require speaking in front of a small group. The group’s attention is focused on me. I think it’s time that I overcame this struggle. My education and making good grades are important to me. My education relies on being comfortable to speak in front of my peers.

One day I hope to overcome my fear of speaking, and I hope to have my dad around more in my life.
Heart of Steel

I am tough,
Real
Rough,
Also Mean.
I don’t care what you think
Hear
Nor Feel.
Ask me,
And I’ll speak nothing but real.
I tell your ears not of what they want,
But of what they honestly need.
Fear none
Not even the unreal.
It’s just my heart of steel.
A Day in My Shoes: The Hidden Cost of High Calling

At school my peers and my teachers know me as Jennifer, but at home, I am “Gee.” I am the mother figure in my home; the urban dictionary actually defines a mother as the woman who loves you unconditionally from birth, the one who puts her kids before herself and the one who you can always count on above everyone else. But if am the mother, then who can I count on? I am a Hispanic female that lives in a household of four. I am the only girl, I live with my dad, two brothers, and our dog Wendy. I am only sixteen, but I wear the shoes of a forty-year-old woman. A good woman at least.

I work at a burger joint known as Whataburger, I am a full-time student, and I have full time responsibility for my brothers, and my dad occasionally. So, I know what you’re wondering, you’re wondering what this could possibly look like for a sixteen-year-old, right? Well, on a regular day I am responsible for cooking all meals in my house, this includes breakfast, lunch, and dinner. I am also responsible for the laundry. It must be washed and dried, and most importantly my dad’s work clothes must be washed and folded for the next workday. To manage the remainder of the household more efficiently, my younger brother and I both divide house chores for the week. Most of this happens before I head out to work after an eight-hour school day. I normally work from 6pm-10pm. Although my days are long, I know that we need the money. This school year my dad did not have the funds to purchase all of our school clothes, so I worked extra hard and saved enough money to buy my brother and I school clothes this year. Sometimes after having a bad day at school or at home being at work can be frustrating. I have to deal with a lot of unhappy customers even when I am not the person who made them upset. I try really hard not to let my emotions interfere with my life because if I do I know I must pay the consequences of my actions, and I cannot afford to lose my job or drop out of school.

My birth mother left when I was six years old, I never knew the real truth of why she left, but family always said she had a drug addiction, and one day she never came back for us. Occasionally I hear from her, but that’s about it. Our conversations are pretty random; I only know what her voice sounds like. Ten years ago my dad remarried my stepmom who I grew to call mom. My mom was my best friend; she was easy to communicate with, and it was easy to listen to her. I could talk to her about anything because she was so wise. I do not have this kind of relationship with my dad, so it makes it difficult to communicate with him and sometimes I feel like there is a huge wall dividing us from one another. It has been two years since my parents separated. My father does not like me talking to my mom for whatever issues they have with each other. I talk to my mother behind my father’s back and as his daughter it hurts me to disobey him. This separation has torn me apart emotionally and physically. I hate it, and I hurt because of it. Just as I thought things were better and just as I thought I finally had a mother for myself, everything changed as if it never happened, and now I am back to relying on myself. I try really hard to stay strong for my family, and being at school helps. Although school can be tough at times, I know that it will allow doors to open for my future, and this encourages me to finish school and to be successful. When I am at school I feel like I can breathe because I am around my friends and teachers who motivate me in more ways than I can explain. At school I
have friends and teachers I can count on like Coach Weaver; she is always making sure I am making right choices and staying out of trouble. I am also in sports, and I love it because I feel like it is a good way for me to release stress, be healthy, and have fun.

Regardless of all the stress and responsibilities I have at the age of sixteen, my main priority is persevering. I am learning that although a day in my life may not compare to others, my struggle is just right for me. I am learning that although sometimes I am overwhelmed by my personal life, I have to keep going. I have to stay focused even when things feel impossible to achieve. I have to keep preserving not just for me, but also for my family. I want to be a math teacher after college someday because I want to make a difference in other student’s lives are just like me, but first I have to be successful today. I am very thankful and grateful for everything and everybody that is in my life. I am learning that a troubled life builds perseverance, and perseverance builds character, and I am only being molded into the woman that God wants me to be one day. Everybody has a story and this is mine, and this is what it looks like to live a day in my shoes.
Peace & Comfort

I love my bed.
It’s a place of
Peace & Comfort.
It’s ALWAYS there for me,
No matter what.
It’s hard
Trying to get up
Daily.
It’s like a consistent
Boxing match, with me
In both corners of the
Ring.
A Day in My Shoes

As an AVID student at Estacado High School, I am aware of some challenges I must face in order to get to college such as applying for scholarships, financial aid, and peer pressure.

I am a 17-year-old junior at Estacado, I live in a house with my mom, dad, and little sister I have another little sister, but I don’t really talk to her and it scares me because she doesn’t even look or tell me what’s wrong with her when I know there is something wrong with her. All my life my mom and dad have never really just been together; my mom has always kicked my dad out of the house over something that wasn’t even necessary. I never knew what to do, so I always left with my dad because I was a little daddy’s boy and just wanted to be around him. I am a 17-year-old junior who plays sports, comes to school, and has family problems, and I have a 1-year-old son. He made me realize I had to grow up faster than my friends and everybody else because I made a new life, and so I can’t do none of the stuff that I want to do because all I really want to do now is be around him and his momma.

My life isn’t exactly horrible, but it isn’t great either. I mean I am a kid who goes to the same school as his dad so every little thing I do no matter if it’s a big deal they go and tell him and try to make it something it’s really not, and we have a huge argument but, I kind of like it because if not I wouldn’t be as successful in life as I am now, so I really appreciate the teachers and my dad for staying and making me the best I can be. Once I get out of high school I plan to get a scholarship for either football or basketball if not then just an academic scholarship. In order for me to get a scholarship though I realize I have to apply myself and focus. Achieving a scholarship is my biggest goal, and I have to do what it takes to get to the top. Can you image a 17-year-old kid with a 1-year-old son who still has the abilities to be able to pursue his dream because his mom and dad has his back and will raise him while he gets his family out of the ghetto to live a better life. I am really not the type to talk about problems with anybody--not even family members who it makes mad because I don’t talk to them about how I feel--the only person I was really able to talk to was my granny. She was a real nice church lady who never missed a day of church. She raised me while my mom and dad were away for school so really she was my mom and dad in one. She left this world when I was five years old due to being real sick and nobody wanted her to go, but I guess it was just the time that God was telling her to come in the house because she was done playing. There isn’t a day that goes by that I don’t sit and think about my granny and the little fun moments we had while she was here.
Grace of My Life

As an AVID student at Estacado High School, I am well aware of some of the challenges I must face in order to get to college, whether it is financial or just the pressure to get in. Attending college isn’t the norm where I come from. Lots of kids my age don’t have college on their mind at all. My main goal is to be successful, and I know exactly what I have to do to achieve that success.

I am a 17-year-old junior at Estacado High School. I live in a single parent household with a brother and a little sister. One of my goals that I want to accomplish is to go to college and study sports medicine. One of my biggest fears is not being able to help support my family. Growing up with just my mom was a big challenge that I was blessed to overcome. She taught me a lot about growing up and being the young, respectful man that I am today.

My life at school is pretty much the same at home. Peer pressure was a common challenge I faced growing up. I always knew that I was going to be successful, so hanging out with kids that provided positive motivation wasn’t difficult. My older brothers did a great job at making sure that I stayed on the right track. Even though I didn’t have a father in my life growing up, they were the male role models for me.

My goals in life are to be the best citizen that I can possibly be. Being good and staying on track really wasn’t hard for me to do. I would say that most of my challenges in life occurred because of situations around me and events in which I didn’t have any control. I am proud that I have overcome tough obstacles in life. I am even more proud of the fact that I learned from these lessons. I can honestly say that everything I have been through so far has made me into the person I am today, a bright, gifted, and ambitious young man.

All the grace in my life I owe to my mother. She has always given me that spark and motivation I needed. She is truly my backbone. I would be completely lost without her. She is the reason that I’ve never given up hope. I never take anything for granted, and she has taught me that attitude. Even when I thought I was right, instead of yelling and arguing about how I was wrong, my mother would teach me the right way to act.

My brothers supported me in many ways and taught me a lot of valuable lessons. When I was younger and couldn’t quite get a job for clothes or the next Madden game, they were quick to get them for me. The support they gave me made me feel safe and took a lot of my worries away. They also taught me how to humble myself by always pointing out the mistakes I made, even when at times felt great. I remember promising myself that I was going to pay them back by being successful and living by all the lessons they taught me.

Growing up the way did I could have easily gotten pulled into the corrupt world around me. I think that my hunger to want to be something in life stopped me from pursuing the wrong path. Some of my older friends are in jail because of the choices they made. I knew that they had their ways of being ignorant but I hung with them because at the end of the day they wanted the something that I did; to be successful. When they got in trouble with the police I had to tell myself that although they kept good vibes around me that that wasn’t the type of friends
I needed in my life. Even though I don’t hang with them as much as I did we still communicate every now and then.

Although I was raised by just my mother I never did find it that hard. I think it was because of how tight my bond was to her and my siblings. My mother and father were never married, but they separated from each other when I was 3 years old. I still talk to my dad every now and then, but I rarely ever see him. My mother has given me so much love and support that I feel as if she is my dad too. I am proud of my mom for not giving up and raising 4 kids on her own. I feel that it is my job to take care of her now that her days of raising me are pretty much over.

Overall I am very satisfied with my life and how it has made me into the person I am today. Every obstacle that I have ran into has had a purpose and a significant meaning. Through all of the lessons I know that I’m still learning. A day in my shoes would be one to remember.
I don’t like to be asked about my life. I have nothing to complain about. Most people who write a narrative tell a sob story. That’s not my story. My story is simple. I go to Estacado High school, then volleyball practice, home, and my job on the weekends. My life is predictable. In fact, my life is boring. The people who support me in all I do are my coaches, my momma and my friends. They’re always there whenever I need them, no matter what it is.

One day when I am the athletic trainer for the Oklahoma City thunder I will be able to support those who supported me. To get there my day must be predictable; I must wake up, go to school every day and study while taking Cornell notes. I must learn to be a successful student. I also must learn how to work hard in all the sports I play such as volleyball, basketball, and softball. I must be a team player, a leader and a positive influence on others if I want to be successful. I must work at being a good employee by working to get enough money to get where I want to go. To be good at my job I must be nice to all of my customers and care about their lives. At home to be a good daughter I have to go straight home and do the dishes and sometimes even watch my little brother and little sister. So, yes, my life may be predictable, but I know that I will become a successful young woman.

My sister is one of my inspirations to me. She had a hard childhood, and it really affected me in my life. She impacted my life whenever we were little. My mom and her dad got married. My sister and her two other brothers were living with their mother then. Well, one day they got taken by CPS. They had no one to take care of them; their own dad didn’t even want them. So my mom was so nice and took all three kids in to her household. We all were around the same age. I was four, she was five and her youngest brother was three and her oldest brother was 9. They didn’t have any type of home training at all. So, when her older brother Isiah got a little older he started to have a smart mouth. He had been being disrespectful to everyone, so they kicked him out of the house, and he had to go stay with his mother. Isiah was about 16 when he left. When he left someone had to step up and be the oldest in the house. So guess who had to be the one to do it. Moi, yes I had to be the one to watch over all the kids when the parents were gone. That was already enough responsibility. Now we had to add one more member to family.

My mom had another child, and she wasn’t the one to tell us. We all were in the kitchen one day and my momma was yelling, tripping and having a mood swing. We didn’t know what was going on. My stepdad came in the kitchen saying “ya’ll know we having a little girl.” Now I treat my little brother and sister like they’re my own kids.
Unchain the Lock to My Silence

I am a victim of silence
Who cherished every moment as a little girl
Then depression hit.
At the corner of the eye
Is death.
It is not noticed clearly
Until you feel it.
It hid the key to my body.
Silence offered social anxiety.
It’s been hard
To communicate with others.
I am trying to overcome the anxiety
And unchain the lock
To my silence.
A Day in My Shoes

As an AVID student I know all the challenges I face ahead in my life, but I also know I can accomplish them as well.

My life started at St. Mary’s Hospital in Garden City, Kansas. I lived in Kansas until I moved to Denver City, Texas in the third grade. So, basically as a child I was raised in a small West Texas town called Denver City, mostly known for their oil industry and for many jobs in the oil industry. Growing up in a West Texas town there’s nothing to do but go to school and wait for Friday night to go to the varsity football game to relax and chill with friends and family.

In Junior High School everything changed because I really had to take school seriously because counselors used to scare us about GPA’s, class rankings and many other things that are important in school. In eighth grade I got the worst news ever: my parent’s told me we were moving to Lubbock, Texas. I was really mad because I was going to have to make new friends and live in a bigger city instead of a small town where everybody knows everybody. When we moved to Lubbock, Texas it was the summer between Eighth grade and Freshman year of High School. I had so much fun that summer because I met so many people who were in my grade entering the same High School as I was.
My Fight with English Words

Growing up the only language I spoke was Spanish. I didn’t know how to speak English, I only spoke to my mom and stayed by her side because she was the only one who understood me. Through my everyday life, growing up my two brothers and sister, which are all older than me, didn’t really interact with me as much because my mom only taught me Spanish, and they couldn’t understand me.

It wasn’t until I was held back in the second grade that I finally learned English, because it was around the time the TAKS test and then the STAAR test was required to pass to go to the next grade. Repeating the second grade helped me learn English, and I realized not knowing English at all when I was younger lead me to struggles that I now have in high school.

I strongly dislike reading in my classes because some English words are difficult for me to comprehend. Also, writing can be another weakness I have that I struggle with in the English vocabulary world. It wasn’t easy growing up with a struggle like this because this struggle has endured throughout my life.

Trying to explain my struggle to others has been difficult. They don’t understand. Especially my high school friends like Z and J my two closest friends, they understand get my fight with English words. Ever since I met them my freshman year they have always laughed and made jokes about me being held back and for being the oldest out of everyone in our class. It took me a while to finally explain to them, and for them to realize it was never a joke. It is now mine and Z’s junior year and J’s senior year, and when people start to say something negative about me getting held back or something about my age they defend me and my struggle. They explain the skirmish for me because they think I’ve been through so much I don’t need to explain it to those who are negative.

I’ve had much more difficulties than most with my speaking, reading, and writing, but I know others have been in a situation similar to mine. There are many of us with this struggle but to those who have been taught English first. It’s not a joke.
LOVE

Love is...
Wait, what is it?
Growing up love was temporary.
Love never lasted.
My parents once loved each other,
The once happy couple was no longer happy:
  money,
  support,
  trust,
  stress.
My mom went through the most.
love
love is...
unknown.
It’s like my attitude is very hard to please, it has its moments. It always surprises me. It’s like a switch. I feel this way when I wake up and it lasts all day.

My attitude sometimes triggers how my day is going to be. Well beside that point or whatever that is, I am just like any other girl who has an attitude. I hold grudges, and I mean I can hold them for a while. It takes a lot for me to forgive, but I might just forget what you did and never talk to you again. I have a cousin whose birthday is in July and you know what they say “everybody in July holds grudges.” My mom says my attitude “acts” when I don’t get my way. For example, say we’re at the mall and I see these shirts that look just like t-shirt dresses. Well, she said no, so I was very upset. That brings me to another reason is to get a job. I had a job but I didn’t quite like it and the reason I didn’t like it was because the managers were a little mean and very pushy. I start on Wednesday in July and was doing everything on my own the next day. The reason I knew what to do was because I watched everyone and looked where they were going. They gave me the work shirt and introduced me to the co-workers. Some of the co-workers we’re nice enough to help me, but they couldn’t just stop doing their job just to show me every bit and piece of every little thing. Anyways, an attitude is just some type of expression, and I think that’s the only expression I have to show off.

I am a hard worker. I am dedicated to whatever I do or set my heart on doing. My intelligence is outstanding. Being an overcomer on a lot of things is the big BOOM. Most people don’t think you can do it, but you have that one person who pushes you and deals with your bad temper. Well the point of my story is even though every little thing makes me mad, my attitude is what makes me fight harder to get me in a higher and better level. Don’t let little things make you mad because that side tracks you and you don’t want that to happen when you have an attitude of a goldmine. Let that attitude be the reason everybody says, “yes she go hard for this and that,” or “can’t nobody stop her because her attitude has a specific taste and the name of that taste is DETERMINATION!”

I will not let anybody put me down or let my attitude become a reason for me to give up. My keyword to use for everyone who needs it as comfort or encouragement is PUSH. P is for perseverance, U is unique, S is for strive, and H is for humble.
Finding the Key to My Motivation

Sometimes you think that the world is a big, scary place. Sometimes you think that you can’t do something. And sometimes you just don’t even think at all. Well, I have thought all of these things. But at the end of the day, these things don’t matter because these are my size 9 ½ shoes to fill and I’m the only one who can fit them.

Home is where the heart is and my life at home is super hectic. I am the youngest of five kids and also the only one who is still in the public school system. My four siblings are all adults with their own adult lives. For most of my life though, I was an only child. It was a dark and depressing time for me. Being alone gave me a lot of time to think about life and how I was going to go about it. So, being that lonely child sitting in the kitchen (my favorite place in the world), I just looked up at the ceiling contemplating. Then it happened. College bursts through my mind like a C4 exploding at war. I was determined to work harder, do my best, and get accepted into the most prestigious college or university. My mom had a 4.0 GPA when she was in college, so surely I could do it, right? But with all that time to think, the volcano of doubt erupted. What if I’m not smart enough for college? What if it’s too hard? What if the professors and students don’t like me? What if, what if, what if? STOP! I have to remember that I have an amazing family and a mother who did it more than once. So I say to myself, “You can do it. You can do it. YOU CAN DO IT!” But then there’s still that one obstacle.

High school is frustrating. You have to keep your grades high, have stellar attendance, have a certain number of electives, and yadi yadi yada. It seems like the school always want you to do what they want, but at the end of the day you find out that you have a say in what you do.

My freshmen year was crazy. I was in classes I didn’t like, and I was not motivated to do anything. It may have been my first year of high school, but I still didn’t like it. Our counselors would come into our Pre-AP English classes and talk to us about the Recommended Plan and the Distinguished Plan. I wanted to do the Distinguished Plan, but I didn’t meet the criteria for the Distinguished Plan. I was sort of pumped at this point, but there was still no genuine motivation. Then sophomore year came. I was still unsure of what I wanted to do or why I was even doing it. I went through sophomore year just for completion, STILL no real motivation yet. But now I am in my junior year, and the motivation is finally there. I’m taking AVID and a Dual Credit class this year, and it is really motivating. What I needed was to hear multiple people besides my parents say, “You can do it,” “You got this.” I’m very hard on myself, so hearing people say such positive things really made me feel like somebody was on my side. I’m not alone anymore, which was a vital part to finding my motivation.

In the end, I learned that having the motivation and the power to believe in yourself takes a team. So saying this, I would like to thank Mrs. Blazier, Kasaundra, Jaclyn, and my parents who have always told me, “You can do whatever you want. Just make sure you put your mind to it and never give up.” Now, I have an idea of where I want to go and what I want to be. I just needed that push. Now I am finally MOTIVATED. Now for me to go take off these shoes and go relax because after all, I finally earned it and I deserve it too.
My name is _, and I go by “_” My coach has everybody calling me that. I attend school at Estacado High School, I am a junior! Class of 2017!! I don’t play sports, but I am the manager for the girls’ basketball team. I enjoy helping out my coach with whatever she needs. I am hardly ever home. I go to school Monday through Friday from 8:15 to at least 5:30pm and on the weekends I am always with my best friend. If I am not with my best friend or with my mom I am at my grandparents’ house.

BOOM! My life started April 4, 1999 at Covenant Hospital in Lubbock Texas. I was born to my mother. I have no father! He is just a sperm donor. I call my dad a sperm donor because he abandoned our family. Here’s how it happened. One day we were sitting on the couch, and all of a sudden I hear shouting by the front door. As I glanced over I saw my “Sperm Donor” shoving my mother outside. All me and my brother could do was just sit and watch with our teary eyes. He decided to leave our family for the club life. I was only six years old when he left. I remember that day like it was yesterday. My mom and “sperm donor” had gotten into an argument about my “sperm donor’s” drinking problems. He decided he wasn’t going to stop his drinking, so my mom told him to just leave and so he did no ifs, ands, or buts about the situation. You would think he would try to fight for his family and try to apologize for his actions, but no he didn’t. He squirmed out of the golden brown front door and has yet to find that golden egg. I felt emptiness in my heart for a while. Today, I feel nothing for the man.

I have three sisters and one older brother. They are all in school still. I hardly get along with any of them. Ever since we were little I have always been the sibling who doesn’t get invited to play with the cool dolls, or the sibling who doesn’t get invited to play outside. Even to this day I still don’t get invited to anything or included in any plans. I really do try my best to talk and interact with my siblings but to me it seems like they take my kindness for weakness, and that’s not okay.

After high school I plan on going to college in Edinburg TX to become a Physical Therapist or a PE teacher. The college I want to attend is called University of Texas Pan America. The reason I choose to go to UTPA is because it’s in Edinburg TX and that is where most of my family lives, and I want to be closer to them. Also I will not have to live in a dorm because my grandpa has an extra house that I could live in, and it’s a few blocks away from the college. The challenges I face in my life are trying to be nicer to people and to stop being so controlling. I can overcome these challenges by trying to understand people better and to give them a chance to step up before I have to step up.
Working toward My Goals

I’ve learned determination.
I’ve learned all the skills I need to be successful.
I’ll have ups and downs,
but I will always work toward my goals.
Now all I have to do is put all
of my skills together
to accomplish my dreams.
A Day in My Shoes

School...work...sleep. That’s my everyday schedule! As a teenager, you’d think that I live a fun life, hang with my friends and go shopping on the weekends, but I DON’T! Instead I mostly work and attend school. When I turned 16 on May 30th, the summer of 2015, I was trying to look for a job immediately. I spent my whole summer vacation looking for a job, and I must say, it’s not that easy. There were plenty of jobs that turned me down simply because I am 16, “useless” and inexperienced. I tried to work at Chick-fil-a, Cici’s Pizza, Taco Villa and even a call center but of course they turned me down.

However, that didn’t keep me from looking for more jobs, my faith kept me going even though I felt like giving up. My mother works at Stripes as a cashier, which also means she doesn’t make a lot to provide for my two little sisters and me. My mother pretty much told me that if I don’t get a job before or during school, then I will not be getting new clothes for school. My mother couldn’t buy me and my two little sisters nice things because she didn’t make enough money at her job. So, getting a job would change a lot of things. If I don’t get a job, my little sisters wouldn’t get new school clothes that actually fit. My mother tries to do the best she can to raise and provide for me and my little sisters, but it is very hard for her. Even though my big brother has two kids of his own, he still manages to help my mother out… only when she lets him.

Sunday when I got out of church, my aunt took me to Golden Chick because they were hiring. When we got there, a lady with a beautiful smile greeted me as soon as I walked in. When I approached her, I asked for an application immediately. When she gave the application to me, I sat down and filled it out. When I completed it, I gave it to the lady with the beautiful smile and left. Two days later, I received a phone call from Golden Chick and they asked me to come in to fill out some paper work, so I can start working. I was so excited. It was like all my prayers had been answered! On August 2nd I started working at Golden Chick as a cashier. Now every time I get paid, I take my little sisters shopping to get them clothes and help my mother out with things. I know my mother is very proud of me.
Silence

I am a victim of silence.

It all started several years ago.

How?

Well, you have to know my past.

A woman and man deeply loved each other and decided to get married.

They had a little girl who cherished every moment with them, until they separated.

The little girl was me, and the woman and man was my mom and dad. They never got a divorce, but they continued to be separated. I went from spending time with them to spending days in two separate homes. After several years, my dad decided to take me into his care. I was a “daddy’s girl,” so this was fine with me. I enjoyed staying with my family, even though I only saw my mom on weekends. As I got older, however, I began to notice that my mom was heartbroken, but she wore a smile so I would not notice.

Years passed by. (I bet you are wondering, “When is she going to talk about her silence?”) Well, it all started five years ago when I was ten. On February 14, 2011, I lost a piece of my heart, someone I loved. We were making plans for my birthday, until I received a tragic phone call from my relative. I thought it was going to be good news until I found out it was about my dad. He died of suicide. Many people knew; it was featured on the news. I knew my dad would not try to hurt anyone or himself because he loved me so much, even to the point it would hurt him.

As the days passed by, I was not able to have a celebration for my birthday. After the funeral, I decided to go to school the Monday following the day of the funeral. When I returned to school, everyone knew the news, but I was not ready to relive the loss of my dad. I went through a deep depression for two years after the incident, which hurt me the most. It hid the key to my body: I did not want to eat, and I could barely sleep without light or television.

I thought my dad would come at night. My grandma found out about my depression and signed me up for counseling. It helped me start making healthy choices. I went back to school and graduated from elementary to junior high. When I went to school, I was silent, but I would still be polite and say “hello” or answer a question. As time went by, my only language was silence during school hours. Silence offered a respite from social anxiety, so I took it. Since the offer has been given, it's been hard to communicate with others.

Now, as a student in high school, I am trying to overcome this social anxiety and break free, by unlocking my body from the past. I have been seeing a doctor who has prescribed medications to relieve the effects of social anxiety. I also plan to complete another counseling session.

This is a day in my shoes, from past to present.

Thank you for reading my story, my words.
A Day in My Shoes: Strength, Faith, Courage, & God

It’s 7:00 A.M and I’m beginning to wake up to Acapella Good Morning, the most infuriating alarm ever. I begin to open my eyes and escape from my bed with the desire to continue sleeping. Boom, Boom, Boom. My mom knocks on my door, “_, are you awake?”

I begin to drag myself to the lavatory, exhausted from the night before. I do brush my teeth and wash my face, while I’m also gazing through my closet trying to decide on my appearance for the day. After I’m completely finished, that’s when my mom takes me and my sister to school. There are always so many thoughts going through my head while I’m in the car on my way to school every morning.

I have so many goals set for myself in the future because I never want to become a complete failure. I’m always striving to do the best that I can at everything I do, whether I’m naturally good at it or learning something new. I believe that’s why I chose AVID because it not only motivates me to work harder, but the class also teaches me self-motivation. That’s why I’ve set so many standards and goals for myself, whether it’s not accepting anything below a B in my classes or starting on the varsity basketball team my sophomore year. Those thoughts accelerate through my mind daily, but I understand that only individual determination will keep me superior in reaching my goals and standards.

For the past few years now, I’ve had thoughts and visions of college because college has always been instilled in me since I was a toddler. I was born and raised in Lubbock, Texas, so Texas Tech University has been the main college that teachers and adults have talked about because it’s close to home. I’ve listened because I thought it was the best thing I could do when it came to my education, but the older I’ve gotten and the more I’ve matured, I’ve learned that I live in a large country and there are so many more things that I can learn and experience. That’s why I’ve waited to make my decision on where I want to attend college, and there are so many tremendous schools out there. Baylor and LSU have been two major universities I’ve focused on getting accepted to for about a year now. They are wonderful in tradition, and they both are very careful with who they accept.

I’ve faced so many challenges in my life, whether it was physically or mentally. I’ve been through so much that defines me as of now. I believe the way my parents dealt with situations while I was in their presence helped me and educated me the most. They’ve instilled so much knowledge and heart in me, from my experience of being hit by a car as a kid or losing the city championship game in 7th grade, or dealing with my severe injury that lasted for months (although it seemed as if it lasted an eternity). There were oh, so many great times, and also so many down times, but I know as long as I deal with things the way I’ve been taught for years, nothing can ever destroy me.
A Day in My Shoes: A Change for the Better

A person’s story is always different than the next one. People’s views on life involve colors, sounds, images, and thoughts that don’t occur in other people’s lives. My story was affected by events, labels, and people.

“What do you want to be?” and “Where do you want to go?” are questions students are constantly asked. When directed toward me, my answer is never the same. My mind erases every single thought in my brain, and I’m left with a blank space.

School has always come naturally easy to me. I enjoyed attending school and was mesmerized by learning new subjects every day. Growing up, my parents would constantly push me to be the best at academics. Seeing as how they never reached their peak of success with the education that they had hoped to receive, they held me to a high standard of excellence. My mother was one of the “troubled” students and dropped out her senior year. My father, however, graduated and received a degree from a community college.

They began to mold me into a 4.0 GPA student ever since I was able to fluently recite my ABC’s. I was never able to have free time to kick around a ball, since my leisure was consumed with reading. I would always watch documentaries with my dad instead of the usual Disney Channel. These actions heightened my desire to be the top of my class. I became very competitive with my school work and academic competitions. During tests, my goal wasn’t to pass; it was to obtain a grade higher than others. Other students resented me because of this. I was considered a “nerd” and labeled as such. During middle school, I struggled with the constant desire to peel this label off my back. Sometimes I acted up and would associate with students who were viewed as future dropouts. School, to me, was viewed as a hierarchy rather than a place of learning.

Toward the end of 8th grade, I came to realization that it shouldn’t matter what others deem as my lot in life. School was meant for me to gather new experiences and continue my education at a higher level, so that I wouldn’t struggle in life. I decided not to dwell on the thought of others aiming for less. Transitioning into high school, I became friends with people of greater value and goals similar to mine. I enlisted in more programs in and out of school and drove myself to achieving a number four in class rank. Today, I am part of the EHS Varsity Cheer squad, and I am working toward a 4.0 G.P. A. or above. Being classified as a nerd no longer offends me; now I wear it as a name of honor.

Recently I suffered through the passing of my oldest brother. He was my role model in life. I always looked up to him and tried my best to follow in his footsteps. He had a determined and hardworking personality. Anything he wanted or believed in was always expressed in his own way. His achievements were what stood out to me the most. My brother passed at the age of 21, yet he gained so much in his short years. At the age of 19, he graduated, started his own family, worked a job that paid $11 per hour, earned his own car, and owned his own house. He basically did it all in that time span. The day he was found dead will always remain in my head, September 15, 2015. I was getting ready to sleep when my little brother delivered the news. My mind went through so many emotions. I was mad, hurt, and overall, shocked. I couldn’t think
that earlier that day we were fighting over nonsense. I regretted everything—from not spending enough time with him to never saying, “I love you.” We always joked around with each other and were basically seen as the “black sheep” of the family. We were always judged at family dinners and picked on at birthday parties. It didn’t affect me because I wasn’t the only one; my brother was there as well. I left with the thought that if he’s not here anymore, then what does that mean for me?

At his funeral, I saw the beginning and ending date of his life separated by a hyphen. I realized that the “hyphen” represented his era: his memories, moments, and every little thing that was said or done by him. I didn’t want my hyphen to be something that was just viewed on a headstone. I wanted to leave an impact on others and have them remember what I did.

Now when asked the questions, “What do you want to be, and where do you want to go?” I can explain my desire to achieve my goals. I have learned that no matter what I do, I will work my hardest to be a success story for my family, and most of all, for myself.
A Day in My Shoes

Growing up, I always thought life was going to be easy, and college was going to be handed to me. Once I had got into middle school, I was already focusing on my grades, but later on in middle school, I began to make new friends. I began to get close to them and forget all about my education. I started getting into trouble, failing school, and stopped worrying about school. The people I “hanged with” didn’t care about school; they cared about impressing boys!

I thought to fit in with my friends, I had to act and follow them. I thought if I was different, I wouldn’t fit in. I started getting in trouble over and over again. I became disrespectful and rude. I thought I was tough, and no one could tell me anything.

When I began the eighth grade, I joined AVID. AVID helped me keep my grades up and made sure Texas Tech tutors helping me with my struggles and schoolwork I didn’t know that well! Also, we took field trips to see things that we were learning about. We went to see colleges and visited classes. We even did activities with research to discover new things in life. We worked on Cornell notes every week, and on Friday we would tell the Texas Tech tutors our struggles and schoolwork I didn’t know that well. We played fun games that helped us learn while having fun. I had pride in myself to get into AVID and keep up with my grades, because AVID was there to support me through everything.

When I began high school at Estacado, I was doing awesome in all my classes because I was using my AVID skills from eighth-grade to focus on school. I didn’t have the support that I had in AVID, so I soon lost all focus and all pride. I started making myself believe that I should be close to people again, so I told my close friends everything. I started talking about people because I thought nothing was wrong with me, and I started to act like my friends again. They encouraged me to do bad things again. They had gotten me kicked out of school and I was sent to project for drugs. I chose to be disrespectful and started to struggle again in school. I didn’t care anymore. I started doing even more horrible things than I did in my middle school years.

I finally noticed what was best for me was to stop talking to the friends who got me into trouble. That group was a bad influence! I decided to forget about friends and pay attention in school and get an education to make it off the streets and make it far in life. I can become somebody, so I stuck to myself for the rest of the year. Over the summer I decided to make a new friend, a good role model, someone that’s going to help me in school. She also focused on her education. So this year, starting my sophomore year, AVID again gives me the pride that I am going to succeed in life with the help of my fellow friends and the help AVID provides for me. AVID has helped me through my life struggles!

After these few weeks of school, I have been so confused. I was paying attention in all my classes until I started getting distracted and very annoyed by people that don’t like me. I was thinking that I really didn’t want to do anything again. I am really trying to focus on AVID the most, BUT it’s still not working. I feel as though this group still influences me. They are getting the best of me, all my attention, and most important my education! Even though I know that’s now how it works, I’m trying to leave the negativity alone and focus on my life goals. I know if I
keep letting them get to me and steal all my attention, I’m going to be a NOBODY along with them. But, if I become the bigger person and don’t let them get to me, I’m going to be a SOMEBODY! The world is such a BIG place, and I’m just one little person all on my own. Also, I believe no one is perfect, so I’m not going to make myself be somebody I’m not! I know I am smart. I know I am not always going to be a good role model, but I know I am more capable of my actions than what I am showing now!
Untitled Poem

Teachers tell us what’s wrong and right
that we just have to fight.
Yes, we take all these tests,
but this will determine life.
We are thrown all these words and phrases,
but we can’t let it faze us.
We walk through these passageways,
trying to make it through these five days.
Every day is a new day.
Yesterday is the past.
We wait for big test days hoping we’ll pass.
We all have different obstacles to overcome,
but we can work together
and become one.
I know we can do it
because through Christ
anything can
and shall be DONE.
“Step into my shoes, and walk the life I’m living. If you get as far as I have gotten, just maybe you will see how strong I really am.”

I’m a really good learner, and I’ve always strived to be exemplary in school and through life. My day starts like this: Beep, beep, beep -- my alarm clock goes off as I reach out to turn it off. I think to myself, the day has begun. I feel like a mummy that has arisen from his tomb. I brush my teeth, and suddenly I hear my mom say, “You better hurry up; you don’t want to be late.” I wash my face and walk back to my room to get dressed. I wasn’t really in the mood to eat. “Today, I might just skip breakfast,” I said to myself. As I walk out the door, I give my mom a hug and head to the bus stop. This walk is the time I prepare my mind for the day’s events. I say goodbye to Mother and head to the bus stop. The bus ride is short and bumpy, especially for a kid who is 6’3”. I hit my head on the ceiling a couple of times on the way to school, which is always a reminder that I quickly need to get my own car.

I step foot on the smooth sidewalk and walk toward the entrance as I open the door. I am greeted by many teachers with smiles on their faces. I walk to the cafeteria and sit down with my friends, and we talk about sports and how we think our day is going to go. As the bell rings, I dart for the exit to get to my first period. I stop and talk to some of my friends along the way. I walk up to Mrs. Duran. She has long brown hair and a voice so sweet that even birds couldn’t replicate it. She firmly shakes my hand, and I walk in the room and take a seat. Mrs. Duran makes us review our AVID notes that we took the last two days. AVID is my favorite elective because it will keep me on track for college, where I desperately want to go when I get older. I work on my papers until the bell rings to dismiss us. I shake Mrs. Duran’s hand as we walk through the door.

As the day goes by, I see my English 2 Pre-AP teacher, Mrs. Willen. She has blonde hair and crystal blue eyes like the sky. “Get your journal out and write the bell ringer,” she says. I write down the bell ringer and get ready for the lesson. She teaches us about proper nouns and pronouns, and I find myself daydreaming. The lesson is one that I mastered at a young age. Many times throughout the lesson, I was called upon. I think she did that to see if I was paying attention, which I was not. As the bell rings, I grab my backpack, push my chair in, and head for the door. My brother, Eric, stops me. He is sort of a class clown, so I couldn’t wait to hear what he had to say that was funny. We talk for a bit, and then I leave for class so I won’t be late. As I walk through the door I hear, “Take a seat quickly, so I can take roll. The quicker we do this, the quicker we can go to the assembly.” Mr. Davis is a mid-height guy with a teaching style that makes it seem as if he was born to teach chemistry. I sit down and wait for my name to be called. When he says my name, I say “here” and continue to converse with my friends. Mr. Davis finishes roll, and we line up and walk to the assembly. The assembly was long. We listened to speakers, pledges, and watched people getting certificates. We leave the assembly at nearly the end of the school day. When the bell rings, I leave and walk to Mrs. Hunter’s classroom. She said that she wasn’t feeling well, so we worked on a worksheet until it was time to go.
When the bell rang, I fled into the hallway and walked to the gym. I go to my locker, get dressed, and I run to the gym floor. We stretch and line up to hear what Coach Wag has to say. He says, “Work hard; if it was easy everyone would do it.” We break off into groups and start stations--ball handling, jump shots, closeouts, cone, dribbling, and so much more. After we go around twice, he says, “Go to the weight room.” I lift four reps of ten. When I finish, I leave and go to the locker room to change. I call my mom to pick me up, and I wait in the locker room for the bell to ring. When the bell rings, I walk outside and get in the car.

On the way home, we stop by Sonic. I order a hamburger, fries, and a drink. When I get home, I take a shower and then eat my food. When I get done eating, I challenge my brother to a game in 2k. Of course I beat him. I lie down and finish up some homework from my classes. When I finish, I get ready to go to sleep, and I get ready for the next day.
Untitled Poem

Abnormal routines make you great.
Silently wishing doesn’t take you far enough to become successful.
Softly scoping looney actions can set you further away
From the bad, in order to achieve your dream.
A Day in My Shoes: Temporary Love

What does love mean? Many can recite a certain definition of love, but not me. Some say love is the best feeling in the world, but growing up I never really knew the true meaning of love. I see what everybody calls love every day: couples holding hands in the street, families at the park, over-dramatic romantic movies, and even a love for objects. What does love really mean though?

Growing up in my family, love, to me, basically signified temporary. Anything that I thought was true love never lasted. My parents divorced when I was eight-years old. It was weird. I was young and had no clue what was going on. From then on, life was difficult. I had to make sure I gave both parents the same attention: choosing which family barbecue to attend, celebrating two birthdays, two Christmas holidays, two of everything. It may not sound bad, but it was super stressful. My dad was always busy with other people, so my brother and I desperately strived to gain his attention by doing anything to stand out. Meanwhile, my mom was always working to keep my brother, sister, and me happy. She kept food on the table, a roof over our heads, clothes on our body, and shoes on our feet.

When my mom met my dad, life was simple and easy. However, as time went on, the once happy couple was no longer happy. Their love was temporary. I knew my mom was heartbroken. I could tell—she was trying to hide her pain behind her smile.

My mom’s struggles with love these past years have affected me in many ways. I have major trust issues. I usually don’t believe anything positive people say to me. For example, if a guy were to tell me I was beautiful, would I believe him? No, I wouldn’t. My day said those words to my mom countless times. I’m really critical. As I evaluate guys, I ask myself: Does he flirt with every girl? How many girls has he talked to? Does he act mature? Does he even like me?

Also, I’m told I’m really stubborn, which is possibly true. All this uncertainty, these insecurities originate from watching and listening to my mom’s experiences with my dad.

More years passed, and now, not only are my parents no longer together, but the people I thought would never leave each other, my grandparents, decided to get a divorce. This was even more difficult than my parents split because I always looked to them as the model of what love truly symbolized.

Today, the real meaning of love still appears to be unknown. Some people mistake authentic love for those temporary feelings we see in the movies or in the lives of couples that may not stay married forever. Without these temporary glimpses of feelings, I have witnessed throughout my life, I would have never seen the dedication and sacrifices my mom has given. I would have never noticed the hard work and strength my grandpa puts in every day.

While writing this, I have figured out that not all love is the same. Many have a very unique definition of love. I now know my definition of love encompasses my grandpa and mom. They embody MY true meaning of love. What’s yours?
A Change in the Making

Want to take a journey in my shoes? Make sure they’re laced up and double knotted!

Each day, I wake up with determination to work hard to impact my siblings. I wake up, brush my teeth, wash my face and get dressed. I have purpose. I am the starting varsity quarterback, and I have to show my siblings that effort in me. When I grow up, I want to be a professional athlete. I’ve been playing sports since I was little, and I won’t stop competing. I know I have to motivate my siblings and set a positive example for them.

I get to school at approximately 8 o’clock. First, I have Ms. Duran’s class, AVID. I’ve been in AVID once before in the 8th grade, and I really enjoyed it, so I decided to take it this year too. I love the activities, and I love that we are being prepared for college at this level.

Second, I have Ms. Maddox’s nutrition class. I had Ms. Maddox last year, and she was a pretty awesome teacher, so I decided to participate in another one of her classes this year. I am thrilled to learn about the benefits nutrition has to offer, especially because I am an athlete.

Third, I have Mr. Gerhart’s World History. I’m honestly not a huge fan of history, but there are some interesting things to learn about, such as the Gold Rush and previous wars. It’s important to know about events of the past in order to have knowledge of the world and be a better citizen.

I have A Lunch. A Lunch is pretty lit; it’s a mixture of juniors, sophomores and freshmen. I give my grandma a hug each day. She works in the pizza line. I then go to the nacho line and get my food, sit down with my friends and eat, laugh, and talk about football and how we are preparing to be state champs.

Fifth period I have Ms. Ru’s Spanish 2 class. I really like her class. It’s fun, active and I like speaking a little Español. Ms. Ru is a very cool, nice, awesome teacher, and that’s the main reason I like her class. I like the way she handles her class.

Seventh period, I have Mrs. Hanssen’s Algebra 2 class. Ever since middle school, Algebra has always been a difficult subject for me. Last year, Geometry was hard, but I passed with help from Mrs. Victor. I have always struggled in Algebra, but I always pull through, pass, and learn from my struggles.

Then, late afternoon arrives. This is the time of day where if my shoes are already tied, I consider moving to a double-knot, triple-knot, or maybe even a double-digit knot!

Eighth period I have CA (competitive athletics) -- football. As a young varsity quarterback, I have a ton of responsibilities. We practice hard all week to get a win on Fridays. I am very focused, prepared, and determined. I demonstrate what I’ve been learning and practicing all week to lead my team to victory. I want to make my coaches and family proud. A day in my shoes is not as difficult as others, but it’s quite challenging. My family and friends look up to me to work hard at my desire to improve my life. Coaches want me to be a more dedicated and disciplined player instead of getting distracted by the little things in life. I know it will be a long and difficult task, but I know I am capable of pursuing and achieving my dreams. My shoes are laced up tight and ready to take me down the long road to success.
A Day in My Shoes: An American Statistic?

Am I an American statistic? I am a Hispanic female. I don’t know who my father is. My mother and I don’t speak like a mother and daughter should. The person I run to when I feel like I have done something wrong is Granny. Does that make me an American statistic? For a long time, I questioned why my father wasn’t around. I would sit in confusion. I would drown myself in a pool full of thoughts and assumptions.

Why do I seem to be living alone? Why do people choose to doubt me because of my past? I have fought a lot, failed all of my classes, and would never attend school, but I can change my future. After being judged and always being told by family members that I trust the most who to be like and what I should be doing, I’ve learned to block myself away from others. Avoiding anything new has really put me in a bad position.

Not doing well academically in middle school makes me strive harder, so when I have to stop what I’m doing and let someone else take over, it’s hard. I have never had someone encourage me to keep striving forward, to not stop, to try harder, even at my lowest.

As I got older, I became more determined and open minded. I want to have the last say in what my future. My granny would always tell me, “If there’s a will, there’s a way.” She would tell me, “If you think you can do it, then you better believe you can.” She told me one day I was going be a doctor, and that I was going to be set for my future. I was not going to struggle or have to depend on someone to take care of me. She said I was never going to have to see an empty pantry or wonder if I would be able to make payments for that month.

That’s when I realized I was tired of being this gloomy person, and I was tired of feeling sorry for myself. I was going to get nowhere, if I did not change everything. I decided to start by forgiving my father. I know that he was never there for me, but if I don’t let go of the past, I will never make it in the future. Even though my mother and I argue about the littlest things like not cleaning the house or disrespecting her in some sort of way, I want her to be proud of me.

I am really excited I got into this new AVID class. Now I have a family that can encourage me and can help me with all my school academics. I feel that this class is going to be the light of the year.

I know it’s not going to be easy, and it’s not going to get easier in college, but I know I am strong enough and smart enough to fight my way. I’m going to show everyone that I can do it. I know I may have doubted myself before, but just now I found who I am, and I’m not letting go. I’m going to become the doctor I want to be, and I will remember “if there’s a will, there’s a way.”

My American statistic will be the statistic of one who started from the valley and rose to the top of the mountain.
A Day in My Shoes: Hard-Knock Life

When I cross I-27, I look at the houses, the accessibility, the fact that they have four colleges on that side of town and over here there’s nothing...

As a child growing up, life was never easy especially growing up in a low-income household with parents who didn’t go to college. Both of my parents work hard to support five kids. At home, you could say I am the “mother figure” when my mom’s not around. My mom only has her high school diploma, so she picks up long shifts at our local grocery store. She usually works 10-13 hours a day, so the only time I really get to see her is when she takes me and picks me up from school. My dad only has a third-grade level education from Ruel Elementary in El Salvador. He had to drop out to help support my grandmother and his six siblings to survive during the war in Central America. My dad knows very little English, so I have to translate for him every day.

Seeing them struggle on a day to day basis with worries over how to pay bills and how someone is getting home is NEVER fun. Now that it’s been this way for so long, my parents are starting to let it get to them. They tell me every day how they don’t want me to be like them, how they hate that I have to see them struggle the way they do. It seems as though I don’t have a normal life like the rest of my friends. My schedule is always school, cheer practice, picking up the kids from day care, going home, cooking, feeding everybody, getting the kids ready for the next day, getting myself ready as well, and then putting everybody to sleep. Try being a 16-year old dealing with five kids! Trust me; it is not easy.

The only activity I get to do by myself is cheer. I love to cheer! Cheering has always been my go-to activity ever since I was in eighth grade. I feel like it’s the only way out. When I cheer, I can let out all my anger and frustration by yelling for the players every Friday night.

“Go big blue and black!”

Both my parents and I believe my education is very important, especially college. I want to go to school and study business, so I can open up my own salon for the less fortunate. My salon will be for the girls who can’t afford to get their hair and makeup done. I want to give back to my community and be a great role model for future generations. The realization of not having everything as I was growing up makes me want to help others not have to go through what I’ve been through.
A Day in My Shoes: Coping with Death

Imagine losing your dad. How would you feel?

Well take a walk in my shoes, for just a day. I lost my dad when I was seven years old. I was still young and didn’t understand what they meant when they told me my dad was gone and never coming back. It didn’t take long, however, for me to finally understood what they meant by he was never coming back. A couple of weeks after his funeral, we had Donuts with Dad at school. I called my Dad’s phone multiple times. I got not one answer. That’s when reality sunk in. As I grew older, it hit home. I was mad at the world, and I made bad decisions.

I blamed his death for everything. Once I realized that what I was doing was wrong, it broke my heart. I apologized for my actions and corrected them right away. Dealing with his death at home was hard because I saw my siblings go places with their dad on special days. I wanted to ask to join them, but I knew it wouldn’t be the same.

Imagine seeing your dad’s murderer out and living free! How would you react?

Well my dad’s murderer is out. When I first got the news, I was angry. I thought to myself-- how can being locked away for seven years make for up my dad being gone forever? I went to church one Sunday and asked for prayer because I didn’t know how to deal with it. The lady told me if I didn’t find peace, I would hurt forever. I eventually found peace.

Dealing with my dad’s death now has a positive impact on me. It makes me want to push harder to make my dreams come true for both of us. Having my dad above watching me as I make great moves in life is a phenomenal feeling. Even though he is not here physically, he is always in my heart. Just when I thought it couldn’t get any better, God showed me how much better it really could get.
Before you take these steps in my shoes, tighten them up and get ready for a journey--a tough and awesome ride. It may not be something you’ll like doing on a normal day, but for me it is a must.

I began the day with a healthy breakfast to jump start my day. First period is an elective, AVID (Advanced Via Individuals Determination), for which I’m writing this essay. This is a college readiness class that should keep me on track to graduate high school and get into college. I’ve taken this class since my 6th grade year, so I’m excited. We get to visit college campuses and get hands-on experience of college. Another good thing is the fact that Texas Tech students and graduates come help us out with work. I am excited for what this class has to offer and what I can offer to my peers, school, and future.

Second period is an English 2 class with Mrs. Willen. It is a challenging class, but I’m going to successfully get through it. We watch movie clips and identify what was ironic about the clips and the theme of the movie. To be very honest, this is not my favorite class, but I know if I work hard, the lessons learned will help me tremendously throughout my life.

Third period is another elective, Health Education, a class I’m forced to take. We watch videos on kids getting bullied and how to prevent it. On my campus bullying is not a big problem, but I am willing to step in to help a classmate in need if necessary. We also talk about our hobbies and express our feelings through games, posters, and journals.

Fourth period is Algebra 2 and that class is fun. Mrs. Keeton is an amazing teacher. She allows us to learn math while having fun. We play games and work in groups to make sure we correctly get the work done. Most teachers tell us to put our phones away, but she allows us to turn in our phone to our cubbyhole for extra credit. Although at first I didn’t want to turn it in, I quickly learned that when I do turn it in, I am not easily distracted and I stay on task.

Lunch is like a break period. I get to see friends and eat and walk around without being told to sit down. This is the time that I bond with my peers as we mostly talk about our social events and sometimes about class.

Fifth period is back to class in Spanish 2. I’m not as strong in this subject, but as long as I participate, I’ll get through it. Ms. Ru is cool and lets us work together on things we don’t understand. Sixth period I have Mr. Davis for chemistry. I’m not a big fan of his class. All he does is lecture. I don’t think I will ever use chemistry in my real life, so why do we have to take it? Seventh period is the last class before the rough part of the journey. World Geography with Mrs. Hunter is stressful. All we do is read and test, read and test.

The previous seven classes combined are not as challenging or exciting as CA. My basketball coaches are Coach Wag, Coach Thomas and Coach K. We start the practice off good with a nice and easy stretch. It’s all basketball and the jump program. When all the drills are over, we hit the track (which I’m not a fan of). We split up in teams and run a mile. Then we get a fifteen break, and we jog to the hills. While we’re at the hills, we sprint over twice and sprint along the side. It’s not over yet! We still have to go through the weightlifting program. The
stations are: box jumps, squats, bench-press and power clean; we do all those ten times each. All of the training and work improves stamina, ball handling and mental toughness.

Now that the “Journey” is over please, take off my shoes. I hope your feet don’t stink!

LOL
A Day in My Shoes: Single Parent

Growing up in a household with a single parent makes life difficult. Going to school and being a student athlete brings me a lot of stress. After eight hours of school followed by a three-hour basketball practice, I have to return home to help my mother take care of my two sisters and baby brother. This includes cleaning up the apartment, helping in the kitchen, and sometimes even helping my younger sister with homework.

My mother is a coach at Dunbar Prep Academy, which means some nights I take care of my siblings by myself. That’s just the least of my worries. I still have to do at least two pages of homework each night. One of my core classes is an AP class, which means it’s just like a college course. Some nights I have to write multiple essays and study over materials that I have to remember for the upcoming quizzes. Although I face many hardships, I still manage to get my work done and receive good grades, which in the long run will help me achieve my goals.
Judgement and Depression

I had a smile on my face each day, but that doesn't mean I was happy. I smiled because it would all be over soon. This world is full of sins judging people by everything. We don't need to be defined. We have no title. I'm tired of being judged. Look, I'm not emo, goth, punk, or scene. My style is my style. Just because I love rock doesn't mean I'm any of them. I'm just myself. I don't belong in a category. Neither does anybody else.

Life of Depression may not seem hard to others, but as soon as you get depressed, there's hardly a chance to not be depressed anymore. I've been depressed ever since my parents got divorced when I was ten years of age. I'd taken medicine, but they were not helping at all. The doctors raised up my dose from fifty mg's to a hundred mg's. I've been taking my new medicine since April of this year. Last year in eighth grade I went to a mental hospital called "River Crest Mental Institute." To be honest, I wish I was still there right now than here at home. The week and a half I spent there was heaven. They made me change into clothes like what surgeons wear, but we had to wear those hospital socks when I got there. After that we had to skype a doctor and fill out paperwork to admit me. My roommate was very crazy. I met her the first day I got there because we both arrived the same night. We were both in the waiting room, waiting to get metal detected like how they do at airports. They had to do that to make sure we had no metal on us. They took the string from our shorts, jackets, shoes because they didn't want us to try harm ourselves there.

I love mental hospitals. You're there with people who have problems in life and you can actually relate to them. We had therapy group each morning. The kids that were there helped more than the doctors. The doctors had no clue what we were going through unless they went through it as a little kid. Mostly all the doctors had no clue what we were talking about. They don't understand suicidal people. Suicidal people may be crazy but that's who we are. You can't change us, like how my parents sent me to the mental hospitals and all those other kids’ parents. They have no clue what we go through each and every day. They aren't us. Stop trying to change us. We want to be us. The only place where we can act ourselves is at mental hospitals, or just have some friends that we hang with that are like us. Parents, stop trying to make us you. We don't want to be you. We want to be ourselves.

I'm not very sociable. It's a challenge for me to try to talk and relate to others that are way different than me. I've gone through a lot at home that nobody knows about, except my closest friends. They know what I have to deal with at home because they mostly go through the same thing as me. I struggle to overcome these things by trying to talk it out like a mature young adult, but I'm not perfect and I tend to want to be right. If they aren't right, it turns into a huge altercation. I've been hurt physically, mentally, and verbally. I'm not a big fan of that so I put my music on full blast and start walking away.

The main purpose of this essay is about telling pretty much what I go through each and every day. I mostly identify myself as the person everybody blames things on. They never take my side of the story. They say everything's my fault. I'm basically a weirdo that always gets put down for my mistakes. With all of life's changes and people being so quick to characterize me
for what I have and don’t have makes it so hard to get through life’s obstacles. Now these days you have to have perfect hair, perfect eyebrows, and a perfect body for crying out loud.

For example, just because I’m a girl doesn’t mean I have to be “Ladylike.” I just like to be me, and me is dressing like a boy. I don’t care what y’all think. This is my life, not y’all’s. When my parents tell me what to do constantly, I just listen to “Second Chance” by Shinedown. I need my second chance. Like what the song says and what I’ve tried to tell my parents — this is my life, not theirs. If they keep making decisions for me, how am I ever going to learn from my mistakes? How am I ever going to learn to be grown when they don’t even give me a chance? I hated Acadia because I had to stay with the little kids. They were so annoying but some of them were quite mature. Then, the second time I went to the mental hospital was this year in April. It was called “River Crest Mental Hospital.” It was the best time of my life. I absolutely loved it in there. That’s where I first saw “Big Hero Six.” It was fun because my friends and I grabbed two chairs. One for our feet and legs and the other for us to sit in.

Sometimes people put me in a category with all the emo, scene, goth, punk people. I’m ok with that because they understand me more than anyone ever has. Y’all might think they are a bad influence, but they’re not at all. They tell you what is really going to happen in your life. They prepare me for the future. Now I really wanna go and pursue my future, and just give it a shot. If I don’t get it it’s ok because there’s a lot of other options out there.
I'm either too serious,
or too careless,
too loud or
too quiet,
too selfish or,
too caring.
Judge day by day,
Yet these people
don't know a thing
about me.
Too smart or,
too dumb,
too skinny or,
too fat.
What they see
isn't the real
me: to them I am
the misfit,
so they laugh.

They only see
the outside,
so I'm beginning
to believe that
I will be forever
misunderstood.

Too awkward,
too lame,
too depressed,
too obsessed.

I got it!
I'm too much!
Just stop it already!
I understand!
But you also have
to realize that
I am not a
soulless creature.
I also have
feelings.
Here...
Let me tell you
a story. A story
about my life.

Once upon a time...
Life’s Constant Battles

Not having my dad around used to cause me pain.

But after time and time again, there was

More faith lost than gained.

I had hoped that my dad would come around,

And maybe my life would change.

In school, I’m Terrified to speak.

I have much to say, but I remain quiet.

What if I say something wrong and the others laugh at me?

I am afraid to speak.
Getting to Know Me

If you step into my shoes and walk the life I’m living, and get as far as I am, just maybe you will see how strong I really am. Well let’s see about me! What makes me strong is: I’m still here after a major car wreck that we almost died from. I’m in the 9th grade at Estacado High School, I’m fourteen, and my name is _. My favorite color is pink, my favorite hobby is shopping, and my favorite food is nachos. My best friend is _, and my favorite cousin is _. I dance for CBD [Chosen by Destiny] dance team, I’m in gymnastics, I play sports, and I run track. My favorite things to do are run and play games with my family and friends.

A challenge I have is making it through high school to be able to succeed and go to whatever college I choose. I have encountered so many defeats that I have been defeated. I encounter the defeats and show who I am by rising out of the defeat to become a better person. I don’t like to be judged because, as far as I know, I haven’t let you borrow my shoes to walk in. I love playing games, watching movies, going places, hanging out, and pranking my friends and family. Even though I love scaring other people, I’m scared of going outside in the dark after watching scary movies. The main thing I’m scared of is death. I know that is true for other people, also. We all die, so I know the goal isn’t to live forever, but it’s to create something that will.

I think that my reputation will live long. I believe that you have to surround yourself with the dreamers, the doers, the believers, and thinkers; but, most of all, surround yourself with those who see greatness within you even when you don’t see it yourself. “Being awesome” means having the strength to hold on and the courage to let go. We may never meet some amazing people in life, because society will write them off as flirts for showing kindness or as arrogant and conceited because they showed sincere concern. We’ll live our entire lives this way without making their assumptions accurate.

Instead of trying to understand them, we found it easier to listen to what people say. We sometimes let people get the best of us, destroy us, and change our opinions on what we believe is true. Only you know what is right for yourself. You have the power, you make the choices, and you learn. Each experience we go through in life is a lesson to be learned. So when I make a mistake don’t judge me, because everyone makes mistakes and we are not perfect. This is what it feels like to walk a day in my shoes.
Most people get to come home to their mom and dad every day, although there are others who aren’t fortunate to have both parents around all the time. I am one of the ones who do wish they could have both parents around 24/7.

My situation is difficult because my parents are currently awaiting a divorce. My father lives 316 miles away in Fort Worth, TX while I live in Lubbock, TX. Having to deal with their divorce is difficult for me, so I don’t know exactly how to feel whether it be mad or sad. Although my parents have been apart before, they have not separated for this long and made it official that they will never be together again.

There are many reasons why not having my dad around is hard, mainly because I don’t get as many opportunities to see him. Due to his busy work schedule, I only get to see him once a month, showing him many of my small accomplishments, such as a report card and other small achievements. Also, I am not able to come home after a long day of school and just see him, hug him, and get to tell him that I love him. I am currently going to start playing softball, and my dad is not able to attend most of my games and help me practice. Although I am able to call my father, he is not always available to have a long conversation due to work. Even though I have one of my brothers, sister and my mother around, it just isn’t the same. They help me with many of my problems, but there is a special bond between my father and I. Since I am the first born girl, I guess you can say I am a daddy’s girl. I see many people who are fortunate to have both parents around and take advantage of the marvelous opportunity they have. I just wish they could understand that not having both of your parent’s presence is very hard, so they should appreciate them being together. I know many people say it is not a big deal, but it is for me because I am so used to always having my dad there for me when I needed him the most. Although he is still alive and only four hours away, it has a great effect on how I deal with certain situations, such as my grandparents who passed away this past year.

My mother is probably the most hardworking woman I know. Although she has three other kids to look after, she also has to be at work to support us kids since my dad was the main provider. I watch my brother and sister while she is at work. We have so many bills to pay, but child support just isn’t cutting it. Therefore, we aren’t always to get what we would like right then and there, but my mother always makes sure we have what we need, for which I am very grateful. Although my dad is 316 miles away, my family and I are able to pull through the very tough situation whether it is financially or simply not having my father around.
Doctor

Just call me Dr. Yes, I know I’m a few years away from having that distinction, but one day I will be an Obstetrician.

My life is like the Mario Brothers game in which I have to jump obstacles to save the princess. Just as in the game, my success depends on my actions and choices.

I thought I would never see myself in a dress because I was used to seeing myself in pants and a shirt or some pants and some shoes but that all changed the day I went to my 8th grade banquet. The moment I put my dress on, I immediately fell in love. If you had been at the banquet, you probably would have been jealous of me because I looked so good. After that night, I went to buy myself more dresses to wear.

I have 5 brothers, 1 sister, 1 sister-in-law, 1 niece, 1 nephew and 2 friends, Z and L, which I am very close to. They say once you get to high school you and your friends will spread apart, slowly but surely. Well, it hasn’t happened to me yet. I mean, my friends and I get into arguments and we get mad at each other for a couple of days, but they are still my friends - no matter what.

I can be having a good day but all of a sudden my mood swings and I will get mad for no reason at all. I am a very goofy person and I usually bring laughter and joy to people around me. I make people laugh all the time. If you get to know me, I am a cool person because no matter what you tell me I’m not going go and tell someone else. That’s just not me because my loyalty is set up way too well.

I want to go to college and learn how to deliver babies. I know if I want to do that, my grades have to be good and I have to have a very good attitude toward school. I have my mind-set on going to college for the next 4 to 5 years. When I go to college I’m not going out or anything, because I know if I get used to getting drunk and going out every night I won’t be successful. I’m not going to get used to acting like that because that’s not what I want to do. I want to be successful.
A Day in My Shoes

A day in my shoes is like a day in wonderland; you never know what to expect. It’s like a complicated maze with different turns and circles. School isn’t as complicated as my life but, there are a few twists and turns. I’m a freshman so it’s challenging for me to fit in with the other groups. I’m the type of person who cares about what people think or say about me, but that’s going to change. I go to school as a totally different person just to fit in – that’s going to change, too.

High school is a challenge for me. I thought I was going to have freedom, fun, and be able to do many more things. I thought I would also get to leave school but, I was wrong. High school is more than that. It has lots of homework, harder classes, and more responsibilities. Although high school is challenging, I love challenges because they push me to do better. However, at home, it’s totally different. I have challenges, but they are challenges I’m not ready to face yet.

Living life is a challenge and people are barely making it. People are losing their lives every day. It’s kind of difficult living life in this generation. My family goes through things, too, but, we seem to get through them. Even when I may have a struggle, I don’t show it because people are already getting laughed at and talked about. I don’t want to be next. It’s pretty hard to live with a spoiled little brother who gets everything he wants, but I choose not to ask for much because I know we are barely making it. I just don’t bother to ask.

My responsibilities are always first. In order for me to do what I want to do, I have to make sure important things are done first. Before I do anything, I first make sure my chores are done. I clean the kitchen, restrooms, and my room. My family is supportive. They try their hardest to make it to each event that I participate in, but sometimes I don’t invite them because I’m afraid to mess up in front of them.

One of the things I love to do is play basketball. I’ve been playing since the 5th grade. It’s a dream of mine to make it big. If that doesn’t work, my backup plan is to be a lawyer just because I love to argue and get my point across. I would love to go to Florida State or North Texas (although I will always be a Red Raider). My family will be there for me no matter what I do. My life isn’t perfect, but I love what I have. They always find ways to make things happen for me. My Nanny (my grandma) and my Papa show me so much love. I love everything about myself and my family. I don’t ever want anything to change.
A Day in My Shoes

My day is pretty complicated because it’s not only stressful but challenging as well. I really like a challenge because I always do more than I can handle. I like being busy and working hard even though I’m very lazy. Education is very important for me, and I want to take advantage of it because my parents never had it. Living with immigrant parents has its ups and downs. Every day I live in fear. I wish I didn’t have to worry that my parents could be deported without me knowing. On the bright side, life has really taught me to be humble and grateful for everything that God has blessed me with.

Living with an alcoholic parent and a pregnant sister can be really stressful. Having family problems at home and acting like everything’s okay in public is very tiring. I like who I am at school because I don’t have to pretend to be someone I’m not. The biggest reason why I can be myself is because of music. I can’t explain my passion for music, it’s so inspiring and beautiful and band is literally my whole life! The only things I’m proud of achieving are band related …. It’s the only thing I’m actually good at. Music has just really inspired me, and I’m planning to go to Texas Tech University for human development and anatomy. I also want to get my doctoral degree in music. Making myself, God, and my parents proud is the only thing that matters.

My parents are both immigrants from Mexico. My dad has been deported two times since we’ve been in Texas. Because of this, my life is a constant struggle. There are many things my family and parents can’t do because they’re not legal citizen. I’ve also learned that anything can happen, so don’t be ungrateful for the things you have. That’s why I love school and choose not to make any bad choices. Experiencing my dad getting in trouble with the law has made me realize that I don’t want that for myself.

I became a shy person because my experience with my dad was humbling. Being shy can be bad because I don’t really have friends, and I have trust issues. However, there are some good things about being shy. For example, I am very independent. I have learned to accept that it is okay to be lonely. Sometimes friends can be a distraction from the real things that matter to me. Sometimes people have used me. I have learned to accept this, and I’ll be alright.

Being myself is all that really matters. I can’t wait until the day that all my dreams and goals will be achieved. I thank God every day for everything that He’s blessed me with. I hope He continues to do so. Also, being humble and confident in your work really helps in the future. I have many insecurities and opinions about myself, but I won’t let that stop me. I am too good to let negative kids judge me on my appearance, thoughts, and opinions because one day I will achieve all my goals and dreams. I don’t have any friends, but I don’t need anyone but my family and God … and that’s a promise.
A Story of my Life

School makes my day seem long. School is the first thing I think about when I wake up in the morning. I have to wake up at 6 a.m. because my mama has to go to work at 7 a.m., therefore, my sister and I have to wake up early. When I first get out of bed, I brush my teeth and braces, wash my face, put on my clothes and shoes, apply lotion and perfume, and do my hair - then I am ready for my school day.

When I get to school, I have ten minutes of free time until school starts at 8:15 a.m. My first class is biology and I struggle a little bit because I didn’t understand science in middle school and that makes it somewhat confusing. I will probably start extra tutoring so I can do better in my biology class. I need to learn how to study more efficiently so that I can better understand what I read. After biology, I have seven more classes to go: theater arts, AVID, reading and writing, world history, business, P.E., and algebra. World history is the easiest class for me because the teacher makes it very understandable. Algebra is my toughest class because I’ve always struggled with math.

After a long day of school, I get something to eat when I first get home, then watch a little bit of TV before I have to do my chores. I have to clean the kitchen, take out the trash, and clean my room. I don’t like doing chores because it’s just too much cleaning, and I’m kind of lazy. Although I don’t like doing chores, I clean up so the house won’t be dirty. I started doing chores at a young age, around the time I was 7 or 8 years old. Once my sister and I started getting older, we acquired more and more responsibilities. For example, we cooked, cleaned, and did stuff around the house for my mama. My mama is a single parent because my daddy is in jail. There are 7 children altogether - I have 4 sisters and 2 brothers. We are a blended family because all of us have the same father but different mothers. Two of my sisters share a mom, another sister and I have the same mom, my last sister has a different mom, and my 2 brothers have the same mom.

My relationships with my siblings are great! I see my sisters more than my brothers because we go to the same school. I barely see my brothers because they live with their mom in Houston. One of my brothers comes and visits my sisters and I but my other brother is antisocial toward us. For example, if we see him, we say hello and converse, but other than that, he doesn’t come visit us. We basically have to go visit him if we want to see him. It’s a very one-sided relationship.

Although my school days can be long and somewhat hectic, I can still tell you that I personally have a good rewarding life. My life is busy, and I definitely have struggles and responsibilities, but I wouldn’t trade them for a different life. My personal story may not be like everyone else’s, but it’s my story.
How Was School Today

Being in my shoes is like being eaten by a shark. I wake up after not getting enough sleep because I don’t want to get up when my momma wakes me up for school. I didn’t get enough sleep either because I spent the night on my phone or I did my chores late or because I was doing my homework. I have to find clothes for school, fight for the shower, the bathroom mirror, and then turn around and rush to catch the bus. Mornings are rough for me. Now that I’m in high school it’s like “Wow! Work, work, work!”

When I get to school that’s when I get to be me again. I get to see my best friend and when we’re together – “Oh, my gosh” - we are wild. I have other friends whom make me laugh but not like my best friend. The only thing I don’t like about school is all the school work that gets thrown in my face or sent home for homework. I hate school work, but I have no choice. I want to graduate high school in order to go to college and become a therapist or a nurse.

School work is something I have to do in order to be successful. When school is out, in my head I’m so happy and tired. When I go to volleyball practice, I don’t hate volleyball, I just hate staying after school for anything “period” but practice makes me better. When that’s over I go home and have to deal with my sisters and brother complain about everything. My momma asks me how school was which isn’t a problem. Then we eat some good food for dinner.

When I’m in college I’m going to change my ways. I have to learn how to get up for school on time and be prepared by having everything ready for school. Have my homework done so I don’t have to worry about it late at night. I need to keep up with my books because I don’t keep up with things very well besides my phone. I’m always fussing with my sister about losing my things. I’m usually the one losing things and blaming my sisters because of something I should have kept up with.

In college, I need to take things seriously because I’m very goofy. I laugh a lot - I don’t know why but I do. In college I’m going to need to change that because I’m pretty sure the professor isn’t going to play around with me because I won’t be in high school anymore. I’m going to need to keep my grades high because I hate having failing grades in my classes. It just isn’t like me. My momma would hate to hear that I’m failing and my grandma would be very disappointed.
A Day in My Shoes

You’ll never be brave, if you don’t hurt. You’ll never learn, if you don’t make mistakes. You’ll never be successful, if you don’t encounter failure. I had to learn that on my own when I first encountered my bullying experience in the second grade. Waking up thinking that everything is going to be just fine, but in reality you just have to live life day by day.

Imagine going to school fearing and knowing someone is going to talk about you because of a skin disease that you were born with, something completely out of your control. I didn’t choose to have eczema. Why do people judge other people simply because of the way that they look? Everyone should just take off their masks and realize that we are all people, just with different stories. My bullying experience was rough for me because I had to embrace my imperfections and allow it to motivate me, rather than allow it to affect me.

I have always held in all my anger and I still sometimes do it, which troubles me. Everyone would ask me if I’m ok, but on the inside I’m crumbling away piece by piece, day by day. I became cold hearted and speechless. I never really wanted to talk to anyone. I was scared to let go of my anger because I was scared of what I might do to someone. I was scared of my own strengths. I tend to be more relaxed, but leery toward other people because of what I have been through. Therefore, I have to keep going because I have one hope, one dream, and one desire to be successful.

My family, especially my Grandma, motivates me to want to do something with my life, instead of sitting around and hoping that someone will come through with a silver spoon and put it in my mouth and baby me through life. At the end of the day, life is a game with no reset button on it, so you should live your life with grace and peacefulness, not with hatred and remorse. Growing up and not being able to see either one of your Grandpas can be kind of rough on a kid. Every day this thought sits in the back of my mind: “Cherish your family because that’s all you have. Once they’re gone, there is no turning back.” I always think how differently my life would be if I had had the opportunity to meet my Grandpas. However, I can’t sit back and let that hold me back from seeing the brighter things that will come before me in the future. My Dad always reminds me of this quote: “The sun always shines on the other side of the storm no matter what you went through in the storm. The sun is always bright and sunny on the other side, so go out there and look your fears dead in the eye and say “No, not today, not tomorrow will I ever let you stop me from moving forward. I will fight for what I want to be in life. You will not stop me.”
“Stepping on to the field _ _.”

Playing in the NFL has been a life-long dream. With family and friends cheering me on, I would like to play football and become the greatest of all time. Each day I relate my life to the football field, constantly watching every move I make.

Focusing on school and staying out of trouble is a goal in my life. My mom is always talking about me going to college and having a better future. I would like to attend Texas Tech because I would be a first generation student. I have five brothers and three sisters; none of which attended college.

I am motivated to finish college to help my mother because she has a hard time providing for us due to her health problems. Each day I get up and watch my mom in pain - struggling to do the best she can. When her arthritis flares up she can’t maintain a job and all bills have to be paid by my dad. Living in a two-bedroom apartment is cramped and a struggle so being able to move my mom into a bigger house would be a relief for everybody. Sleeping on the floor is painful inside and out. I hate knowing that my parents can’t do better.

I don’t have a role model, so I would like be a role model that others can look up to. My brothers are not successful and have been incarcerated a few times, so they are certainly not someone I want as a role model.

I would like to change the community because people look down on the eastside of Lubbock. The community, school board, and society in general criticize the way we talk and act. Our actions make them think we are dumb. If society would stop talking about us and make a program to keep kids focused on staying in school and making better career choices - we would stay out of trouble. With more kids achieving higher standards, people’s opinion about the community can be changed. Taking kids to visit college campuses can show them the college lifestyle and encourage them to be a role model. Becoming a role model to others can help them stay out of trouble and focus on a better life.

Going to college can be a big obstacle to overcome for some people because college is so expensive. There are also a lot of distractions in college, but by staying focused and keeping your head straight - you can accomplish anything. I want to be an engineer because as an engineer you build and make things.

Every day brings new obstacles my way that I sometimes cannot overcome and there are many people who want to sabotage my life and keep me away from my life goal. I will not stop until I have completed my life long goal and made my family proud. Having my name called on draft night and scoring my first touchdown marks the beginning of the long journey of my life.

I have arrived!
My Hero

My mom is my hero because she works so hard to take care of us. My mom is a single parent who works two jobs and is trying to go back to school. I am a 15-year-old girl who struggles, but not badly. If I put my mind to it and push myself, I can graduate from college. I just can’t give up – I have to do it for my family and for my future. She works two jobs, so she can provide clothes and put food on the table. Even when she doesn’t have much money, she manages to always provide for us.

I feel stressed because I want to be able to help my mom more, but I have to help her with my little sister. I also help my mom do the laundry and clean the entire house. Every once in a while my older sister can help me with things when she has time; my older sister can only help me maybe once a week because sometimes her job calls her in to work. My family is a busy family. Therefore, I try to do things on my own. I want to be independent, just like the women in my family.

I also have to babysit my sister’s three little kids because she has to work a night job to provide for her kids. My sister’s three kids are one, two, and six years old. In her busy schedule, she literally has to make time to take her six-year-old to school. My sister sometimes doesn’t even get to see her oldest daughter participate in school functions, like when she graduated from kindergarten. When I have to babysit the kids, they are mostly good. They usually just eat, play, and go to bed.

My mom finished high school, but when she was planning to go to college, she found out she was pregnant with me. She then had to go to work instead to get what she needed to take care of me. In the beginning it started off rough, but it got better within the two years after I was born. Then once things were going good, she got pregnant with my younger sister, A. Then she felt suck trying to go back to school and work at the same time without any trouble. She has always worked so hard and I am proud of my mom for being strong and not giving up.

I don’t want to ask my grandma for help because she has to take care of her own dad and work, too. My grandma is 67 years old and still works, although she is supposed to be retired from work. Her husband will retire in a couple of years, but they both are still working hard to achieve their goals. If they can achieve their goals and work hard, I can, too. I can work hard enough to go to college and become a doctor – and be great at it.

My step mom also works two jobs, day and night, to feed ten people in her house. On the weekends when my younger sister and I go to her house, it’s two more people to take care of, too. She’s not really at home much because she works, but we know she is doing it to support us, get us what we want, and what we need. She works from 8:00 in the morning to 6:00 in the afternoon, comes home to eat, and take a nap. Then she goes to her second job until 12:00 in the morning, so sometimes she gets rested but not all the time. That is why when you want to do something, work hard to achieve it. Push and it will happen.
A Day in My Shoes: Experiencing Struggles

Most of life experiences have been either lessons or consequences. I learn by what I do, and I make my own decisions instead of depending on other people. What I do now will determine my future. I’ve experienced a lot with the mess, drama, and the confusion with both families. I never knew what to believe because both my families were saying something different. It was really hard for me to endure my situation, especially when I didn’t have anybody to talk to.

I was so confused when I continued to hear something different from both my foster and birth family. My mama wasn’t there for me, and all my life I had to make a decision whether I wanted to be successful or to be a failure. I knew that what my mom was doing had nothing to do with my future and what I wanted for myself. My birth mom chose to do things that made her look bad and separated me, my brothers, and sisters from her and the rest of the family.

So, we got help. Child Protective Services (CPS) came into my life, and it completely changed everything. I was adopted by a family I didn’t even know and that was really hard for me because I was scared every night. I never knew what to think. As I grew a better relationship with my foster family, I began to see and realize reality. Nobody was really there at the time except my grandad, and my brothers and sisters. I was always so put down by what my mom was doing and how my life was, that I stopped being myself. I changed in many ways.

My foster family became too much for me to handle, so I did some things. I ran away just to get away from my surroundings and my problems. That wasn’t a good idea. I then allowed CPS to come back in my life after being adopted, and I didn’t like it one bit. One day I thought to myself “I have to change my ways, or this is going to get worse.” I felt like I didn’t have anybody and I always felt as if I were alone. So I changed by getting away from everybody and everything that was negatively impacting me.

I found journaling to be comforting. Since I couldn’t talk to anyone about my problems, it was easier to write about them. Some days I’d wish I’d wake up and everything would be better than the day before. As much as I wanted immediate gratification, I knew that all things had a plan and a purpose. My birth mom always told me to take life as it comes, and I have tried to except the things that I know I cannot change. I begin to separate myself from friends who really weren’t who they said they were, so I guess that makes them acquaintances.

I kept pushing myself to always do the next right thing. I have a lot of things I want to accomplish in life, and they will be done. I believe in myself. I believe that I can make a difference and be better and do better than what I saw while growing up, so I will do it. This is just a glimpse of what it looks like to live a day in my shoes. What I have been exposed to, what I have experienced, or even what my family has experienced will not determine who I will become.
A Day in My Life: Going Through It

A day in my life is like the movie, “Ground Hog Day.” Every day is the same. School is an everyday thing for me. Every day, I remember that one thing that changed my live forever. I got home from school on a Friday and it was just any old day. I went to my granny’s house to see her. My two uncles were fighting as I got there. They were arguing over something stupid. At the end one passed away and the other went to jail. My family was able to pull through, somehow. We all handled the situation in different ways. Some of us stayed quiet about it, others spoke their minds. I’m the type of person who takes the other person’s pain and makes it my own.

This reality of the situation hit me all at once. The family became distance with each other; we would go days without seeing each other. We were putting on a strong front, but deep down everyone was hurting. My granny was trying to be strong for all of her kids, but couldn’t hold in. See, people go through pain in different ways. Everybody kept asking me if I was okay, but were they ok? I know I wasn’t. I was hurting; I just lost two uncles at one time. One uncle was the nice one who would give you what you wanted. The other was hard on you, but wanted you to do great in life. They both loved everybody. My family is a mixture of quiet people to the more outspoken ones, just like any other family.

It has been a struggle to get over this tragedy. I repeat the events of that day in my head all the time. We finally realized that it was time to get our stuff together to become a family again. My granny started taking all of us to church every Sunday. My family and I started to get it in our heads that was time to forgive and forget. Even though we have a hole in our hearts, we have started to move forward. This happened for a reason that no one will really understand. I going to move on from this event and be successful and happy.
A Day in My Shoes

This is a day in my shoes. It is freshman year. Every day I wake up and experience something new. Whether it is good, bad, pleasing, or sad, I always have a story to tell that nobody will be able to understand but me.

For a while now, I've been going through a tough time experiencing several family issues. Furthermore, other than with family, I have been going through a lot. For me, it is something that I have difficulty explaining. Now, a love story I'll say, but it isn’t a typical romance story. It is more than that, as it is a story about friendship, destiny, and fate.

I'm different, and I write my own path. Maybe I can't choose my circumstances, but I decide how I will react. Likewise, I don’t choose who I love, but I can choose whether or not I'll open my heart to love. To be honest, I'm just scared to admit it because the last time I opened my heart, it got broken.

Every day I get this strange feeling whenever I go to school, where everybody stares at me and starts talking about me. This makes me feel scared. I don't understand why, but I am. I never really had friends around here. I am out casted because everybody here grew up together. I feel that I’m the lonely boy, the boy who nobody wants to be friends with.

However, even though I am out casted by many students, I always find a way to make a friend. One who understands, one whom I can talk to about anything, and one who doesn’t care that I am an outsider. I only really met one person who made me feel welcomed, a cheerleader surprisingly, since I always thought cheerleaders were rude and stuck up. She showed me that I was wrong because she was different. I felt that she really understood me and listened to me. We connected and we became friends; close friends I’ll say. Honestly I love her, but she is more on the popular side. However, she doesn't care. She is still my friend.

Thus, a day in my shoes is like diving down a highway never knowing what's going to happen. Perhaps something good will happen or maybe not. But no matter what happens, I will always have that one friend to call and depend on. Somebody I hope stays in my life till I don't know. We may have just become friends, but I can trust her. Honestly, I never really trusted anybody. Everybody always turned their backs on me. Even though I will never understand why, I have faith that destiny has put a good friend in my life.
I’ll start with my life at home. I have a good family. They are always by my side, and have always taught me to respect others as I go on in the world. At home, we sometimes have our confrontations, but we all love each other.

Sometimes I have hard times with my dad. Although I disrespect him in bad ways, I don’t mean to. I want to spend more social time with my dad because he is always there for me. I look up to him. He is a hard worker; I want to be just like him. My mom is also encouraging, but she is softer than my dad. She has sacrificed a lot for us. She is a giving person; she puts us and our needs before her own needs. There are no women or moms in the world like her. My little sisters and brothers always argue, but we still love each other. Every morning I get up, and just stay focused on the right track.

I’m always going to stay active in sports because I want a sports scholarship to college. I love basketball – it’s my favorite sport. I try to keep active because I know I’m talented enough to be successful. A lot of people in the world doubt me, but my family keeps me going. If I didn’t have my family, I would have given up a long time ago. In the past, I felt like giving up because in my 8th grade year I didn’t make the basketball team. Previously during a football game, I got tackled hard – really hard. At the time, I felt a little dizzy, but found out later that I had had a concussion. This kept me from playing basketball. I was sad, but I knew I would have a better opportunity in high school so I moved on. Since then, I’ve spent all my time in high school focusing on basketball and my grades.

My grades are complicated. I’ve had trouble trying to keep my grades up. In all of my years of school, this is the most I have ever been focused on my grades. I used to not pay attention – laughing and talking was my thing. I used to not make good grades at all. I would sometimes have grades below a 70 or 75. Now I have a lot of homework, and when I come home my parents always remind me to get it done. Although I managed to pick my grades up and maintain my grade point average, my goal is to make the honor roll one day and not have to worry about failing or passing.

My goals are a challenge, but I also have back up plans if I don’t make it in sports. I want to study sports or maybe act in movies, just as long as I make it to college. I have three major colleges I want to pursue. I want to go to either Auburn University, Texas Christian University, or Texas A&M. Regardless of college choices, I just want to make sure I know what I am doing with my life.
Role Model

At home, it used to be a struggle to show my mom respect. I began to see my poor behavior reflected in my little sister and see her follow in my foot-steps - it was not very pleasant. I know I haven't been the best sister I should have been by giving my mom attitude and being disrespectful, because it made my mom sad and frustrated. I still did it anyway. The way my mom reacted back was by yelling and then I would get mad and just didn't care. The reason I acted that way toward my mom is because I don’t always agree with what she says or does, and it makes me so irritated.

One time, my mom and I had a huge fight. I came home and I just wanted to eat some pizza and watch Empire after a long day of yelling and chaos at school. My mom marched in and started going crazy. She said, “Gorda, didn’t I tell you to have your room and kitchen clean by time I got off of work?” I didn’t pay any attention to her so my mom began walking out the living room. While she was walking out, I thought to myself, “Why didn’t I just do what she asked and all of this conflict would have never happened.” From that thought forward I knew I was being disrespectful and rude to my mom. Seeing my little sister act and say the things I did made me realize to I needed to CHANGE. I don’t want my sister to do what I did and act the way I did.

I plan to continue to change and show more respect toward my mom. I think by doing this, all of our lives will be easier and, hopefully, my sister will try and change just like I am.
“Hard Work Beats Talent When Talent Doesn’t Work HARD”

My dad always told me to work hard to accomplish my dreams and not be in the sun all-day. Because he’s a maintenance man, he doesn’t want me to do what he does. He wants me to have a good career, so I can have a good life and buy my family stuff they need, like a shelter or a car.

My grandpa wanted to have a grandson, but he passed away before I was born. I wanted to see my grandpa. When I was young, I kept asking my dad where my grandpa was. He told me he passed away. I was sad, and I still miss him a lot because he told my dad that he was going to teach his first grandson a lot about life. And that was me, but he passed away. I couldn’t see him, and I miss him a lot. That’s why I’m working hard in school, so I can get a good job, a job that I like. For example, I may become an architect, so I can build buildings, big and cool-designed buildings; or I may play sports like baseball, football, golf, or basketball.

The college I want to go to is UCLA, or Boise state, or Texas, because those are the colleges that some athletes went to, like Russell Westbrook or Kevin Durant. They are my favorite players in the NBA, and J. J. Watt in the NFL, Mike Trout and Bryce Harper in the MLB. I want to make a name out of myself so the world can know I have a dream to be the best athlete there is, better than Michael Jordan, better than Bo Jackson, better than Babe Ruth. If I don’t become an athlete, then I want to be an architect. I want to make money by making big buildings.
From Struggle to Success

A day in my shoes at school is hard for me. Sometimes I don’t even want to go to school because I think I might get picked on—being called by an inappropriate name or threatened. That happened to me in 5th grade, and I don’t want that to happen to me again. When I hang out with my friends, nobody messes with me, but when I’m alone, I get messed with at school. I struggle with homework, with peers, class work, quizzes, and teachers.

School can be a safe place because you have someone there that you can lean on when you are sad, mad, or depressed, like a teacher, principal, and counselors. In 7th grade I was bullied and had to tell my teacher. He started helping me out, but it was a struggle. School is a place to learn new things and try new things, not bully people. My life feels out of place because I’ve been hurt at school. At home, both of my grandfathers passed away, my sisters left the house, and my mom and dad struggle with their job and money. However, I got to keep my head held high, grow up, and become the woman that I want to be in life.

In life, every day is a test. So, whether I pass or fail, I will stay strong and keep pushing through. Despite all the challenges I will face, I know I will never stand alone because first and foremost I have God. And I have my family, teachers, principal, and good friends to see me through. I know high school is a challenge, but going to college is even more of a challenge because this is where you have to show that you have grown up into that responsible young adult your parents have raised you to be. With college no one is there to wake you up for class, or do your homework, or cook and clean for you. This is where I will prove to myself and the world that I am a success.

This is how a day, a week, a month, a year in my shoes is to me. Every day is a struggle just to survive, but I am a survivor. I believe in success, not failure, because failure can take you on wrong paths and won’t help you in life. Failure is not an option. For me success is the key because it can help you in life and get you where you need to be. My goal is to make A’s, graduate from high school, and get a scholarship to college. I believe in myself, and I want the people I care about to know that I can do this, and I will succeed in my life by showing the world that I got this.

Success can lead you the right way toward accomplishing your goals when you are going to college, and I just want everybody to succeed in their life and become whatever they want to be. I think what really has made me succeed in my life is AVID, listening to my parents, being in UFL, and doing NJHS in middle school. I want to succeed by graduating high school, going to college and achieving everything that I want in my life. I know that someday I’m going to take that chance and start walking every day toward success by achieving my goals.
A Day in My Shoes

I am a freshman at Estacado. I play football, track and soccer. I have a lot of siblings, about 17. My grades are good so far because I always make up my work and try to stay on top of my grades, so I can graduate and go to college.

I wake up every morning on school days at 6:00. The reason I wake up so early is because I take a shower before I go to school. So I get up and do what I have to do and leave the house about 7:20.

When I get to school, I go to first period, biology, which is a morning breeze. My best class of the day is Touch Data with Mr. Navorro. He is the coolest teacher out of all of my eight teachers. I usually try to make sure I pass all my classes by always checking my grades on the school website. This first six weeks I had a good grade point average I think. Have to pass to play sports in high school.

My favorite sport is Football and Soccer. I came up to the workouts this summer and got a lot of work in. Early each morning I was in the weight room with my coaches and teammates. I feel like to be the best you have to train to be the best. I will be the best, and that’s the confidence I have in myself. I will grind to be successful no matter what. I want to be at a Division 1 school for academics and sports. I want to be the richest person out of class of 2019 when I come back for our class party. I’ll either have my Super Bowl ring on or I’ll be handing out my business cards. I’ve got goals and may have to sacrifice things to get where I want to be.

This is a day in my shoes, a humble freshman ready to make it big in the world. I will continue to work and be dedicated in the school and in the class by staying on top of my work. I want to be the best I can be.
A Day in my Shoes: Life of Music

I sleep in my recording studio, AKA, my room. It’s really a pleasant thing to wake up to: seeing music with notes littered across sheets of paper or even seeing keys on the keyboards and envisioning a song to play. It’s like the best way to wake up in the morning.

I am not a morning person, to say the least, so I need something that won’t irritate me that much throughout the morning. Luckily for me, my first period is band. Some of the music can be kind of stressful, but just the enjoyment of playing takes away all of the stress.

My main area of interest is percussion instruments. I have always messed around with the drums. Ever since I was four years old, I have been banging on everything I can find in my house. It got to the point where my mom told me she used to always hide my drum sticks!

I also play the piano and the guitar. Learning piano has really been influential, as well as my love of music. I can express whatever I’m feeling in music form. It gives me an outlet for creativity. It’s like a blank canvas ready for me to paint on. However, the guitar is what made the fire even brighter for my inner love for music. The guitar made me realize how vivid music can be. I can truly illustrate my feelings in music.

Music is at the start and end of my day. Nothing really happens throughout the day without music. Even when I’m in interesting classes like my World History AP class, there is always music in my head. I literally can’t go one day without music being on my mind.

When I get home, I walk into my workshop. I call it my workshop because it is where all of my ideas come to me. I can look at any one of my instruments and think of a thousand songs to play. I convey my music in beats and songs. I put my music out to the world on my YouTube channel, Facebook page, and my SoundCloud. I am a music producer and a DJ too.

My music career keeps building and building as my life goes on. I keep adding to my accomplishments in music, and I want to have a place to show all of my work in music. When I grow up, I want my job to show my hard work and to be completely centered on creating music. I want to be a music composer and a music producer in the future, and I want to illustrate what I want other people to feel about life. I want to have people enter a completely different world while listening to music.

Hard work does indeed pay off. I have made it to State Competition with my ensemble and my solo. However, those accomplishments did not come without stress, hard work, and sacrifice. That is how life really is; to achieve accomplishments and become successful you must work hard and make sacrifices. My Life of Music has shown me the way I want my life to be orchestrated--making people happy while also being happy with myself.
It seems everywhere I go someone knows me. I'm always expected to be on my best
behavior because someone might be watching. I have a lot of pressure, and it's hard. If I do one
bad thing, it could ruin my parents' reputation. Sometimes the pressure just builds. I want to be
the son that they want me to be, but it's hard. My parents have high expectations for me. I'm
expected to be this perfect child who doesn't make mistakes. They say it's ok for me to make
mistakes, but when I do, there's always some form of punishment. I have no room to be a child
and just live. They're pretty strict, and they don't trust a lot of people, including me. I can't go
anywhere or do anything.

I'm closer to my dad than my mom. My mom and I don't get along all the time because
she mostly has two sides to her personality, overly playful or angry. She constantly yells at me
about everything. She's disappointed in me most days. However, my dad is calm, fun, and easy
to talk to. He doesn't yell all the time. He talks to me in a calm voice that makes me want to do
the things that he wants me to do.

My parents are pretty distant from me. They never really tell me they love me or give
me a hug or act like they care that much. They're always so "busy". My mom's normally busy
playing Candy Crush or watching TV, and my dad is always out of town or on the phone with
someone. He hates when we bother him. I can tell my dad cares more than my mother. He asks
me how my day was and stuff like that. I hate it when he goes out of town

My sister is probably the only person that I really talk to in my house, and even she
doesn't know the real me. My family seems to be drifting apart further and further. We mostly
communicate through yelling and or scolding. We rarely eat together at my house. My dad goes
down stairs in the basement, and my mom goes into her room. They always are somewhere
else, leaving me and my sister in the kitchen to talk about life. When we're not in the kitchen,
we're in our rooms on our phones or something. Therefore, like always, no one is talking to
anyone.

I can't talk to my parents about much. My mom just says to pray and ask God what to do
or she talks about how terrible her life is in comparison to mine. She says these things because
she probably doesn't know what to do either. My dad never really has time to talk, and even if
he did, my problems would seem small to him. I'm just a freshman in high school. What
problems could I possibly have that are actually relevant? I don't really talk to anyone about my
"feelings." I mostly keep everything inside and put a big smile on my face. I act like everything is
great. Oh well, that's just my life.
“Wake up boy,” Dad yelled from the kitchen.

“Ugh, another day of school,” I groan, as I lay in bed.

I can smell the freshly brewed coffee. I can hear my dad stirring Folgers in his Longhorn coffee cup. I look over to my left, and I can hear my little brother snoring in his bed next to me.

“C’mon bro! Get ready for school.” He gets up and slumps over in his angry bird pajamas. As I rise up out of bed to slip my feet in my house shoes, I look down and realize they aren’t where I thought I left them. I look up over at my brother.

“Bro, where’s my house shoes?” Half asleep, he points over to the TV, and there they were sitting on the bedroom floor near the TV. I had completely forgotten that my mom put them there because I had left them in the living room the night before. As I walk over to get my house shoes, the concrete floor is freezing. As soon as I slip my feet into my house shoes, I grab my clothes for the day and head to the shower. I pass my parents’ bedroom; my mom hears me passing and says, “Ya’ll are walking to school today.”

What’s new? That doesn’t bother me because I enjoy walking. I take a shower like usual, then when I’m done I brush my teeth put deodorant on, and as I get dressed in the restroom, my brother is getting ready in our bedroom. He normally gets done before me, so that he can watch Curious George before he leaves the house to catch the bus.

While I’m finishing up my daily routine, I can hear my sister going through her make up as she gets ready for school. I can already tell it’ll be a while before she’s ready. Now that I’m finished I sit and wait for my sister to get done. Then sit with my brother and wait until he leaves. Finally, I go and start walking with my sister.

This is a typical morning in my household. I love my morning because I have both parents waking me up in the morning. This routine makes me feel safe and comfortable. It always makes me feel like I am going to change the world, like I am special in my way, like I am here because I am who I am. My family gives me the confidence to make the world a better place.
The Weapon

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. Hi, let’s take a successful walk in my shoes.

When I was in the 7th grade, I was on the an 5th grade reading level. I wasn’t really worrying about it. My grades were good but not really good. I never did my work. I always liked to hang out with my friends. My mother told me, either have fun during your high school years and suffer in the future by not having a decent job, or work hard for a few years and enjoy the rest of your life. So when 8th grade came, I was focused on my grades. I work hard because I heard if you don’t pass you’re going to be back in the 8th grade. If that happened, I was going to be devastated. I started staying after school, and reading more to get better. Life to me is like art. You have to work hard to keep it simple and still have meaning. I don’t really hangout with my friends anymore. I have to work hard to dream big. Working hard becomes a habit, a serious kind of fun. You get self-satisfaction from pushing to the limit and knowing that all the effort is going to pay off.

Test day was finally here I was ready. I took all 4 hours, thinking like I know I did well. Test results were back. If I didn’t pass I was going to cry like a big BABY! Ms. Beach, my reading teacher, called my name. We went into the hallway, and she looked at me like I didn’t pass. I was about to cry, then she said you passed. I was so happy jumping up and down yelling YES,YES,YES I passed. That made me remember the time I had a basketball game and made a basket on the buzzer beater, and we won.

The second happiest day in my life. Ms. Beach said in order to succeed you must first believe that you can. I told myself to always try my best, even if I fail. I need to keep trying because God sees my passion. Without Ms. Beach’s wonderful help, I don’t think I would have been able to do it. God answers when you least expect it. The way she believed in me made me think that I can do this all over again.
A Day in My Life

I don’t like to be asked about my life. I have nothing to complain about. Most people that write a narrative tell a sob story. That’s not my story. My story is simple. I go to Estacado High School, then I go to volleyball practice, home, and on the weekends, I go to my job. My life is predictable. In fact, my life is boring.

The people who support me in all I do are my coaches, my momma and my friends. They’re always there whenever I need them, no matter what I need. One day, when I am the athletic trainer for the Oklahoma City Thunder, I will be able to support those who supported me. To get there, my day must be predictable: I must wake up, go to school every day and study while taking Cornell notes. I must learn to be a successful student. I also must learn how to work hard in all the sports I play, such as volleyball, basketball, and softball. I must be a team player, a leader and a positive influence on others, if I want to be successful. I must work at being a good employee by working to get enough money to get where I want to go. To be good at my job I must be nice to all my customers and care about their lives. At home, to be a good daughter, I have to go straight home, do the dishes, and sometimes I have to watch my little brother and little sister. So, yes, my life may be predictable, but I know that I will become a successful young woman.

My sister is one of my inspirations. She had a difficult childhood, and it really affected me in my life. She impacted my life when we were young and my mom and her dad got married. My sister and her two other brothers were living with their mother at the time. Well, one day they were picked up by CPS. They had no one to take care of them; their own dad didn’t even want them. My mom was so nice! She took all three kids in to her household. We all were around the same age. I was four, my sister was five, her youngest brother was three, and the oldest brother was nine. They didn’t have any type of home training at all. So when her older brother got a little older, he started to have a smart mouth. He was being disrespectful to everyone, so they kicked him out the house, and he had to go stay with his mother. He was about 16 when he left.

When he left, someone had to step up and be the oldest in the house. So guess who had to be the one to do it? Moi! Yes, I had to be the one to watch over all the kids when the parents were gone. That was already enough responsibility. Now we had to add one more member to our family. My mom had another child, and she wasn’t the one to tell us. We all were in the kitchen one day, and my momma was yelling, tripping and having a mood swing. We
didn’t know what was going on. My stepdad came in the kitchen saying, “Y’all know we are having a little girl!” That explained it!
Math Gives Me a Rush

“Please come see me after school today!”

I immediately wanted to throw up. I knew, even at seven years old, that being asked to see Ms. Bynum after school was bad, really bad.

It started when I was in the second grade. I really had a hard time with math. I did not comprehend math at all. I just did not get the concept of it. I kept wondering -- why am I not getting it like the other kids? I felt like I was the only student having a hard time. On every test that I took in the second grade, I had a really hard time. I had studied through the summer before the third grade. When it was time for the TAKS test in third grade, I was biting my finger nails and I had butterflies in my stomach because I felt as though I couldn’t pass the test. I felt as if passing the test was as hard as traveling to the moon and back!

When the results came in, I was devastated because I didn’t pass my test. I cried almost all night as I held my piglet and made my pillowcase wet with tears. Ms. Bynum told me that I had to go to summer school. I was not pleased with that at all. But I knew I had to go because it would determine whether or not I would advance to the next grade or not. When I got to summer school, I felt that summer school was just for the kids that really did not know anything. I realized, however, that it was there to better me and prepare me for other grades. My second and third grade years explain everything about me; those years help me learn how to push every day to get better at things that I didn’t understand.

Pushing myself harder really challenges me on an everyday basis. I felt that if I didn’t push myself harder, I would never succeed and get into college. If I wanted to reach my goals I would need perseverance. But I was thinking to myself and saying, “My goals are as high as the stars; how can I ever reach them?” A day in my shoes means I have to have courage, if I want to learn. My mom always tells me, “If you want it, go get it! Don’t just sit around waiting for something to come your way!”

I have learned to be ready for all things in high school and to study for big test. Writing this essay supports many of the reasons for going through all of my struggles and being able to overcome these challenges. It was difficult to sit there as a young child and not pass my test. Now, I do understand that things can get very hard at times. But, I know that my hard work has eventually paid off, and if I have God, perseverance, and determination, I know I can make it.
### Contributing AVID Authors and Artists

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<th>11th Grade</th>
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