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Nuestros Sueños

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Nuestros Sueños

Nancy L. Roman

I am the youngest of five children. Ever since I can remember education has always been important to my parents. I remember when my siblings were sick and they told my parents, thinking they would get to stay home. My parents told them, “As long as you can walk you can still go to school.” I still apply this to my college life because it’s what I learned.

I remember asking my parents a little bit about their migration to the United States and I remember them telling me that they both were very young, my mom was 15 and my dad was 14 years old. My parents didn’t come to the U.S. together, as they didn’t know each other then, but they met here. My mom was able to go to school until 8th grade and my dad was able to go up to la secundaria, better known as middle school. I also remember them telling me that they didn’t get much education because they had to stop going to school so they could get a job in order to help their family financially.

My dad always tells me, “Ever since I could walk I started working.” My parents weren’t able to get as far in their education as they wished they had. So they always instilled the importance of education in us, it would be the one thing that would help us not worry about our future. They wanted us to have a career that would give us the benefits that they never had access to. For example, they want us to get a career that pays very well and that gives full benefits, whether it is dental and/or medical or both. They just wanted us to be set for life and not worry about struggling to make ends meet. They saw education as the first stepping stone to get to the career that would give us everything we need.

My siblings and I graduated from high school, but they all decided to work, go to school, or do both. Both my sisters stopped going to

community college, my oldest brother kept working because he didn't want to continue his education, and my other brother went to community college on and off for about a year or two. Additionally, my oldest sister got married at such a young age and was a stay at home wife, but decided to go back to school to try and help her husband with the bills. My other sister only works because she couldn't figure out what she wanted to major in, which left work as her only choice. My brother, the second youngest in the family, has been on and off with school because he constantly switches his major to do things that pay well rather than what he wants to do; he also worked during this time and stopped going to school for a while because he liked the idea of having money in his pocket.

I believe that these circumstances are what lead to them being in the positions they are in. Watching my siblings struggle with their futures motivated me to pursue a higher education and attend a college because I knew it was up to me to be the one that made something of myself. I'm not saying that they didn't make anything of themselves I'm just trying to imply that they still struggle financially, so I knew I had to be different. Now, two of my oldest siblings just work, my other sister went back to community college and became a preschool teacher for a church, and my other brother is still going to school and working. I am the only one in my family who left to go to a four-year university that was far away from home.

School is very important not only to myself, but to my family; it means a better future for them and me. School also means knowledge; with knowledge comes wisdom and learning about yourself and others. I will be able to be a role model for my niece and nephews by becoming successful in school and my future career. I will be teaching my niece and nephews that you can't let your present define your current situation. School helps you choose what you want to do in life by exploring the different careers your college offers. It also helps you decide what you are and aren't interested in. Through higher education and a great career I will be able to help my family financially or make them proud of what I do and who I will become. Growing up I promised myself a couple of things in order to be different.

I promised myself to graduate high school with a GPA that would help me get into some great colleges. I worked hard throughout my high school career and did a lot of extracurricular activities. I then promised myself to work hard enough in high school to get into a four-year university and hopefully graduate in four years. My parents advised me to just go to school and only focus on that, so I decided to just be a full-time student at the moment, because I'd rather not have anything interfere with my studies.

I remember going to México, for the summer before my freshman year of college, and met my grandma for the first time. I remember pulling up in the cab in front of her small little shack. I remember my parents were talking with her and I started crying. My parents asked me why I was crying and I said it was because of my grandma's little shack. I know my grandma loves her little shack, but I realized that I take so much for granted. I saw how small her home was and that it was built with anything they could find. I didn't know how she could live there or how she was comfortable in her home because of all the bugs, the dirt floor, no windows, etc.

I realized that it was due to her financial struggles in life that she couldn't afford to build a home like the ones in the U.S. I promised myself then that I would make my grandma's little shack a little better. I also promised myself that I would inspire my niece and nephews to become whoever they want to be and to always follow their dreams as cliché as that sounds. When they were born I helped my mom take care of them because my sisters and their husbands would work often. They became like my own kids. I try to achieve these promises by always following my heart/dreams and by stepping out of my comfort zone. It was hard leaving them when I came to college.

After meeting so many people on my trip to México, that are family or are considered family, they told me to try my hardest and to work hard. Some of them also told me that my family is counting on me to be successful. I am fulfilling their dreams of pursuing a higher education so that I can get a high paying job. Whenever I go home and my parents are talking to my family

from México they hand me the phone so I can talk to them. The first thing they always ask me is how school is going. I say, "It's going well and it is very stressful." They then proceed to tell me a little bit about their life and how they wish they had been able to pursue higher education. They remind me they weren't able to because they had to help their family by getting a job when they were younger. After that they tell me to work hard and not give up. I know that I am not pursuing higher education just for me.

During high school I realized that I had lost most of my native language, Spanish. I promised myself then to try and take some classes to relearn my language and not forget who I was in the beginning. I took some courses in high school, which helped in that moment, but I still struggle with it, whether it is reading, writing, or the spoken word itself. I lost who I was due to not knowing Spanish well enough anymore. I still keep this promise to myself, which lead me to registering for a Spanish class in college that I will be taking next semester. I think relearning Spanish is so important to me because it is my way of feeling like I'm part of the Mexican culture.

I have assimilated so much that I don't know where the American side and Mexican side start or end. I think my education has contributed to me losing my Spanish because I was taught English at such young age that it made me forget most of my Spanish. Growing up I learned that in order for me to survive I would need to know English. This was ingrained in me because in order for me to fit in and be "American" I had to adapt.

In high school, I remember my teacher having us do a quick write about what our dream was; what we saw in our future. I remember writing about doing well in high school so I could attend a four-year university, which would lead to a sustainable lifestyle. However, coming to college and taking my *Ethnic Studies 480: Growing Up Chicana Latino* I realized that my dreams aren't necessarily mine. I am not only fulfilling my dreams, but the dreams of my family who never had the opportunity to finish their educational path. My family is relying on me to achieve this dream, only then will I be able to give back to them.

One of my goals in this dream that I have set for myself is to change and impact the world. I think that is why I love my major, Critical, Race, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (CRGS), because this is what will help me take action in the world. The things I learn help me teach others, or at least listen to what I have to say. I don't know what I am going to do with my major, but I can't wait to see where it leads me. I promised myself to always learn and try new things. I try to keep this promise to myself by taking courses that I would find interesting or that I want to learn more about. I try to do outside research about these topics as well.

Sometimes it is a lot of pressure, because I feel like I can't enjoy other things since I am a full time student. From time to time I feel like I lose myself and forget why school is so important to me or why I am here, but then I remember that I am fulfilling not only my dreams, but the dreams of my family of achieving a better future, one that requires me to be financially stable. I am getting a college education not only for me; I am doing this for my family as well. I am succeeding for all of us.