

Pure darkness drowned me as my heart raced and the walls moved in on me, suffocating me. Suddenly, I saw a bright yellow-orange color, warm and inviting, approaching me as my anxiety calmed. But just as suddenly, the yellow color turned into a snake head, now slithering toward me. The snake bared its fangs, digging them into the flesh of my ankle as I gasped awake. It was all a dream, but the truth was a living nightmare. I was sleeping in a room that was not mine, on a stranger's bed. Without waking my parents, I carefully got up and walked to the kitchen, still breathing deeply from the shock of my dream. As I entered the kitchen, my friend and her family were already awake, and they turned to me with sad eyes.

I was seven when I lost the belief that everything would be alright. It was the age when I became aware of the world's cruelty. That became the year that was spent with my parent's suffering and pain. Although they tried their best to hide their financial problems, I knew that the money was not sufficient. My dad's income is estimated at just under 60,000 and, for a family of three, that is not enough. Now as a young adult, I know that money *can* actually be the solution to life's problems.

At age eight, my family was evicted from our apartment because we owed five months of rent. The pain was not the fact that we were homeless, it was the suffering my parents had to experience. My mother and I were home when the landlord came to evict us. He changed the locks, giving the key to the superintendent. With nowhere to go, we walked to the park.

"Nothing is wrong," my mother told me. "Go play." But when I faced her, I saw her weep. It broke my heart. She called my dad, but all I heard were sobs. In that moment, we were homeless, carrying only what we had on. We returned to our apartment, begging the superintendent to let us go inside for just five minutes. He agreed and we entered the environment I was in every day, but I now felt like a stranger. I got my Barbie rolling backpack and stuffed as many clothes as I could find, but realized my mother was in the kitchen trying to get all of her medicine because she is diabetic. I emptied half of my bag and grabbed the Mickey Mouse bag next to it and ran to my parents' room, shoving in any clothing of theirs I could find. When told we had to exit the apartment, I looked back at my bedroom and said goodbye, not knowing if I would return. We lived at our friend's house for a week until we were loaned the money to pay the rent. We continued to struggle for months to come. I constantly have this dream where I am being suffocated by all the economic problems that surround me. It's hard to think of this situation, but it helps me fight for every day that comes.

Since my family faced such troubling times, I have matured. I've realized that when I grow up, I will financially support my parents- no matter what. Our financial problems united us as a family. We follow the three musketeers motto "all for one and one for all." If one is in pain, we are all in pain. Any accomplishments one of us completes, all of us rejoice in the success. My parents have not allowed me to work, they wanted me to focus on my studies to obtain a higher education. Going to college will demonstrate to my parents that their effort did not go to waste. Nothing will stop me.