

Stepping Stones towards a Successful Future

By Sarah Marie P. Mamaril

I have always had assignments where I am to tell my whole life story, but this is the first time where I actually have to relate my life to the history that was happening around me during specific times in my life. This will be a great first for me, so I will begin my story with the moment of my existence on this Earth...

I was born on February 10, 1983 in Yokosuka, Japan. My father was in the military, so my family (my mother, older sister, and father) lived there. We had relatives around Japan on my mother's side and good friends that also had a military member in their family. We lived in Japan until I was about 3 or 4 years old, then we moved to the Philippines, and lived there until I was almost 5 years old. After that, we moved to California first to 29 Palms, then to San Diego, California. My life totally changed at the age of 5 when my mother and father got a divorce. I believe it forced me to delve deeper into my skill of understanding the world, because I was put into a situation that I did not understand. I had a pretty normal and happy childhood (no complaints there). I got to see my father on the weekends, and he and I have a close relationship to this day. I am very close with all of my family members, but the person who gives me the most inspiration is my mother.

“Education is the stepping stone towards a successful future,” is what my mother ingrained in my mind since I was young. Out of all the things she has said to me, this

statement stood out the most whenever I thought about what I was going to do with my life in the future. The older I grew, the more intricate the education system got, and applying for college was one of the most stressful experiences of my life only because I knew I wanted to go to college that badly. Now that I am in college, I slowly learned that knowledge, creativity, and life experience are all “stepping [stones] towards a successful future.” I believe that one cannot further develop without the other. Therefore, my life experience in college has helped to expand my knowledge and creativity and vice versa. I owe a lot of my understanding of the world to my mother. She makes me want to strive higher than what I believe myself to be capable of.

When the terrorist attack of September 11 happened, I was stunned. I never knew that the world I lived in could endure such a massacre. That event made me more appreciative of the world around me. At that point in time, I was in my first year of college at UCLA. I had just moved into the dorms and was excited for the new school year. I had a fiery attitude and a passion to do well, but the attack made me question what exactly I wanted to do with my life. The thought was always in the back of my mind, and then something else changed life. During my second year, my mother was unfairly terminated from her job. I thought things were going to be fine, because we (my mother, sister, and I) had been through a lot as a family of three, but my world was shaken when my mother attempted suicide. She had taken over 200 sleeping pills thinking that she had no more purpose in my sister's and my life because we were already finished with or were still in college. At this point in time, I was interested in the majors Sociology and Asian American Studies. I loved learning about people and observing

them, but I never knew that I would have no choice in studying my own situation and observing the very person that gave meaning to me gaining knowledge in the first place.

Through time, however, my mother has gotten better with the support from her daughters. It is situations like these that make experiencing life as a college student important. As a UCLA Academic Advancement Program/PLUS (Program Leading Undergraduate Success) Peer Counselor, I speak with students from different backgrounds experiencing college for the first time or continuing to experience it. With every session, I learn a lot about my student and about myself. I like guiding, teaching, and leading students in the right direction, and that is why I aspire to work in Education becoming a professor, high school counselor, or administrator for the education system. I want to go far beyond my undergraduate degree and go to graduate school contributing to education, ethnic studies, and sociology.