

Personal Statement

There are many stories about first-generation students overcoming adversity and the struggles of being a part of an immigrant family and chasing the American dream, but I think my story is a little bit different. Growing up, my father worked two jobs to put a roof over our heads along with providing the means to support my mother in her dreams of becoming a licensed esthetician, with only minimal to conversational English skills. Not only did my father overcome many language and social barriers, but his biggest and most admirable challenge was his persistence to provide for our family while being disabled.

In the late 1980s in Saigon, Vietnam, my father was unfortunately one of the many children who suffered the outbreak of polio disease in the city. This deadly pandemic took the lives of many friends and family as the polio vaccine was scarce and expensive. Luckily, my father was one of the few who was able to receive a vaccine a few years later, but time had already taken its place. Although my father's life was saved, unfortunately, the disease had already paralyzed his left arm and he was permanently disabled with his right arm being very weak.

Even with his disability, it never stopped him from wanting a better life for my mother and me as he continued to work countless hours to provide for us. As a child, I would often find myself comparing my relationship with my parents, especially my father, differently to other families. At a young age, I realized that I needed to grow up quickly to learn how to take care of myself while my parents were working and develop skills a young child would not normally need to have. Understanding the difficulties of my father's disability and the struggles of my mother having to take on the responsibilities of being both the maternal and paternal figure, I knew that I needed to relieve some of the burdens that my family carried.

I remember waking up early before elementary school to cook breakfast and lunch for my parents before their next work shift and doing my family's laundry after getting off the bus from school. I had to spend extra time learning English to keep up with the other students in my class, to not fall behind on my grades, while teaching my parents English

and being their main translator for most of my upbringing. There is one important core memory from my childhood of my mother coming home from her citizenship exam and seeing a passing score as she cried tears of joy with me in her arms because we spent months together practicing her English skills and our hard work had finally paid off. I will never forget that special moment I shared with her.

While my adversity as a first-generation student is comparable to others in similar cultures and backgrounds, my parents' circumstances strongly motivated me to help achieve their American dream. Through my father's disability with his unwavering resolution and my mother's tenacity to provide for our family, I knew as a child that I had to overcome my challenges to help them achieve their American dream just as badly as they wanted the American dream for me. Although I did not have a typical childhood, my upbringing is special because I grew to understand that the burdens my parents faced have provided me with many opportunities today. My story motivates me to continue striving until I become a success in the healthcare industry and finally live out the American dream for my whole family.