



# My Saving Grace

By Alexia Peraza

**M**y life consists of people using drugs and entering or exiting my life. I have seen drugs rip families apart or help to make a new one for better or worse. Being a high school senior has given me years to reflect on my parents' choices and learn to thrive from their mistakes.

Growing up my family was the American Dream—my mother is from the United States and my father moved to the United States at a young age. My father was brought to the United States illegally in hopes of a better life than in Mexico. My parents met in high school and became "high school sweethearts". They had my older brother and got married within the first few years of their relationship. I don't believe they finished high school but instead my father went straight to the workforce while she raised my brother. Then in more time having two more children my younger brother and I. Once my younger brother started going to preschool my mother wanted to get her GED and further her education for her children. Not only did she get her GED, she got her Associates degree while raising three children.

My parents decided to try and get my father United States citizenship. But my father had a drug possession from when he was in high school. So, my father was deported and that left my mother to pick up the pieces of our broken family. She now had to provide for three children, when before she was a stay at home mom. My mother was desperate to have a man in her life again. That's when my mother started to drift off and was not the person who once raised us. She started to use drugs as an unhealthy way to cope with the loss of her partner. Raising three children didn't help either. She neglected her motherly duties and we were forced to raise ourselves. My older brother was a 6th grader at the time and took a father figure role for my other brother and I. My mother stopped working and solely focused on her use of drugs.

One day when I was in 6th grade I finally told someone about my homelife. We were starving and our house was not habitable. We would go to school smelling like drugs. I told my friend on the bus that my house flooded. My bus driver overheard and let the school

know. This sparked a CPS investigation which lasted most of my first year in middle school. With counselor check ups almost every day during my math and English classes, I became a grade level behind in my math and English classes. In April of 2012 the state placed us in my grandmother's home and that's where I have been ever since.

Having this experience with drugs forever changed my world. I have strong opinions about drug use—a strong anti-drug stance besides for medical use. Drugs typically start out as a fun thing or something new to try, but with many people they become addicted and that is what happened with my mother. My father was in high school when he started doing drugs and got caught. Drugs shouldn't be used for fun. Most drugs are still illegal because we know they cause so much damage. My parents and I no longer have relationships because of their drug usage. My future children will not have that kind of relationship with their grandparents. I hope no one has to go through my situation, I am glad my grandparents became my saving grace.

I grew up not wanting to follow in my mother's footsteps and decided I would create my own path. Learning from my parents' mistakes has helped me grow and realize my worth. I am attending Central Washington University in the fall and I plan to become a teacher. I look forward to graduating and continuing my education. My younger brother will be entering high school next year and I hope that I am a good role model for him so that he can also create his own path. 🙏

## ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Alexia Peraza is a recent high school graduate from Washington. *Alert Magazine* congratulates her for winning the Alert Scholarship and we encourage her in the pursuit of her academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.