

What Home Means to Me

When a typical student thinks about the word “home,” many ideas come to mind. Some think of a sturdy house with a luscious yard and picket fence, who come home to loving parents who are involved, and the occasional annoying sibling. When I think of home, only flashbacks of my rough childhood come to mind. Growing up in section 8 under the care of a single mom, I didn’t have an average life. Public housing is influenced with drugs, alcohol, abuse, and neglect. Sadly, many are ignorant of this and chose to ignore our poverty. Police were frequently at my house and it was hard to understand. Is this what every other kid experienced? I later found out that St. Louis County didn’t remove children from physically abusive parents. So as young kids, my sibling and I learned to cope. And after living the first 9 years of my life sharing a bed with my 16 year old sibling, we were kicked out. My mother moved us into a hotel room for a year and I no longer had a home.

Many people will say “home is where my family is,” but for me, this wasn’t always true. I couldn’t find a peaceful, loving environment in a hotel room. Better put, the place I slept was filled with violence and confusion. After our year in the hotel, we continued to move two more times within a span of 4 years between apartments and schools. Fast forward, and I was living in a roach infested apartment with just my mom. I slept in the bedroom and she slept on the couch, and life went on like this for years. During my freshman year, our home-life was still tense, but definitely improving. My summer was beautiful; I made unforgettable memories with friends and my mom took me on vacation. I was finally healing. That also became the summer my mom took her life.

Nothing shakes the soul more than losing someone dear to you. I was in shock for the first six months afterwards, and the events that unfolded felt like a dream that I had no control of. I was set up to live with my father who I hadn't seen in 11 years. After meeting his family and visiting his home, it felt utterly wrong. I was not apart of this stranger's life and I had to accept he had never truly wanted to be apart of mine. My school then identified me as homeless.

My family clashed with my next decision. A wonderful mother and friend opened up her home to me with a spare bedroom. She had also experienced loss and sorrow. The other options for me were to live on a couch, an hour away, or with strangers, so I do not regret my choice. This kind woman has taken care of me for more than two years now, and I call her my guardian.

Since then we have moved houses, and we've continued to struggle, but I haven't been happier. She hasn't replaced my mom, but she still took me in as her own and cared for me without hesitation. I had never experienced life the way I do now. I am given advice, constructive criticism, and continuous support. I never would've been able to travel to Boston last summer to accept an award if it wasn't for her. I wouldn't have had stability, family dinners, or my own space. I am so grateful to be alive with wonderful friends and family. Now, I am that someone with a sturdy house and fenced yard. My home is where a piece of my soul lives. I come back to her everyday uplifted. I finally feel at home.

