

BOOK OF STORIES

In Their Own Words



2020



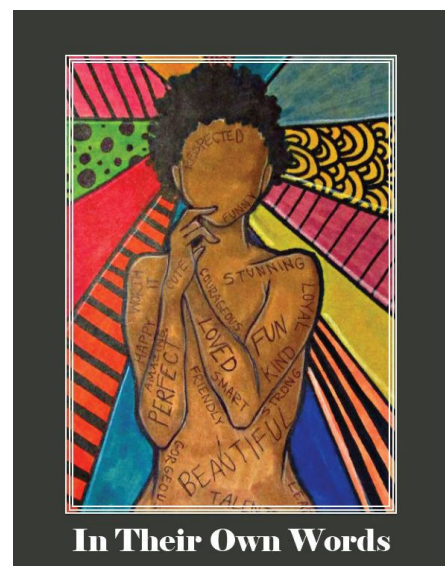
artwork by Meriel Bacon



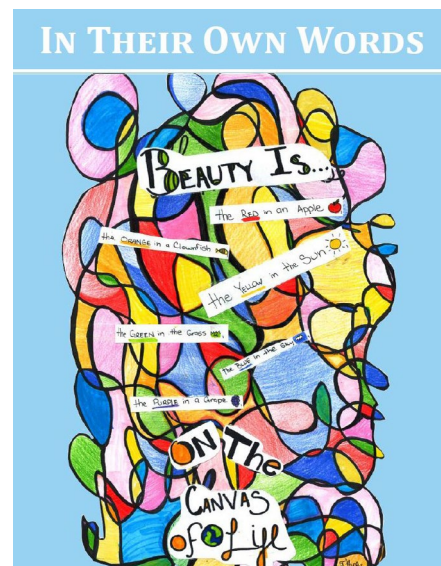
This special 30th Anniversary Edition of “In Their Own Words” is a collection of newcomer youth award-winning essays that speak notably to the personal immigrant and refugee journeys of 31 scholarship award winners in this 30th year of services. The aura that surrounds this great read is generated by the power of voice of talented and aspirational young men and women who are the future of the next economy and whatever these youth achieve in the future is the greatest gift of life. Each story shares a unique experience, has a special nuance and reminds the reader that adversities will always walk beside us in life, but dreams are worth pursuing. These inspirational stories are defined, by courage, perseverance, passion and resilience. As you read “In Their Own Words” it is apparent that The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth inspire youth, and in the words of Maya Angelou “not merely to survive, but to thrive” through equitable and engaging programs and services and through a simple philosophy. “We are who we are because of who we were and where we come from and we should be proud of ourselves.”

Thank you to all award donors for recognizing these exceptional individuals and for your service to humanity.

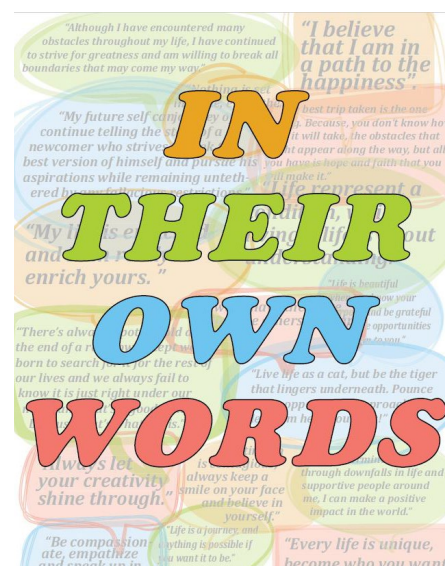
Umashanie Reddy, Chief Executive Officer



2017



2018



2019

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Aditya Deelwal

Forest Lawn High School, Gr. 12
New Beginnings Scholarship

Have you ever wondered what it is like to not be able express yourself and let the adversities in your life be an evil force that holds you back? A lot of people have negative experiences which could influence building someone's identity and personality however, these experiences can change someone. Where people can get inspired and inspire to make changes in society therefore the power voice is very crucial. I think that the most distinct ideas that could impact someone's life are being resilient and having a power of voice.

First and foremost, I believe that being resilient is definitely a choice that requires a lot of will power when someone is met with adversities. I have been through resilience in my life by coming to a totally different country and overcoming my challenges such as finishing school, trying to fit in the culture, making new relationships, meeting new people and many more issues that anyone migrating from one place to another feel. I think that resiliencies also tie in with hope where someone can hope to have a better future then the current state of a person who is probably suffering in life. I think that in my life I have been through this big transition in life where I had to leave behind a very comfortable and well-set life. This put me through difficulties like fitting in and not being able to feel at home this mental stress and toll led me to have bad grades in school. But I was resilient enough to bounce back and find success.

Secondly, I think that power voice is a very important thing that people should consider and not take it for granted. Having a power of voice can make big changes in someone's life. I think that it means to be strong, knowledgeable, valiant, and brave in order to express yourself effectively and make people listen to what a person has to say. Power of voice can inspire empower, make bailiff, make someone aware and most of all give them hope to be more resilient through their adversities. Power of voice can help people showcase their true self to other people and can help them get out their inner isolation with solidarity and support from others to support the individual to persevere through their difficulties.

So, I think that changes can occur in people's life for the best and for the worst but being resilient and speaking up for yourself can make patients enough to go through them.

Afaf Al-Yahek

James Fowler High School, Gr. 12
Calgary Board of Education Scholarship

Life is a journey that must be travelled no matter how bad the roads and conditions are. This is what I was sure of when I first stepped outside of my small, warm village. To this day, a distinctive smell of the green fields lingers in my heart. I knew then that by leaving our homeland, it will be impossible to return there again and our life will no longer be the same as it was.

I am one of thousands of girls who have a similar story and have experienced the same awful experiences of war. My name is Afaf Al Yahek and I am 18 years old and in grade 12 at James Fowler High School. I have been living in Canada for almost three years, but I'm originally from Syria. In some provinces in my country, such as where I came from, women are considered useless and are marginalized in society. Their place is supposed to be in the kitchen. Luckily for me, my father is very open minded and a lover of learning. He encourages me and my siblings to complete our studies and always do our best. Because of his motivation, nothing will stop me from achieving my goals.

My family has eight members and being the oldest child is not always easy as I have many responsibilities and always want to do something worthwhile and helpful for my family. So, I decided to complete my studies after I had lost hope and was completely desperate to achieve my dream and make my parents proud of me.

My journey began when my father finally called us to pack up and get ready to travel to Damascus, Syria's capital city. At that time my sister and I were living away from our parents and siblings and we really didn't understand why they were in Damascus. A few weeks later however, we managed to book a flight ticket to Damascus. After the plane landed, I looked for my dad among the crowd. I had missed him so much that I was about to hug a stranger because he looked like Dad. Finally we met and then went to the place where my parents lived. It was a small room and a shared kitchen with poor conditions. I didn't really care whether it was fancy or poor, all I wanted was to see my family, and all of us united under one roof. Suddenly, I had the most shocking moment of my life when I saw my 12 year-old brother. I barely recognized him. The last time I saw him he had long thick hair and exotic, angelic eyes with bewitching eyelashes. Now all I saw was a bald head and dull skin ripped by the IV needles and chemotherapy.

When I learned that my little brother was fighting with leukemia, a deadly type of cancer, I started looking for a way to help him overcome his pain. So, despite all the love I carried for education and school, I decided to leave school and move to Lebanon to find a job so I could assist my family with all the treatment expenses. Later on, the rest of my family followed us to Lebanon. While my sister and I kept working hard, my father would take my brother every 15 days for his treatment. Everything my family and I went through was so much to handle. Meanwhile we were witnessing many Syrian families giving in to their sad, inhumane circumstances. We had managed to get ourselves together and to keep fighting for life and for our future. My family was able to overcome all those tragedies by having faith and hope for a better tomorrow.

Coming to Canada was a huge step towards that future. Having a safe home and time to reflect and begin to move on was just what we needed at the time. Having a fresh start is not as easy as it sounds as every experience comes with its own challenges. My biggest challenge as a newcomer

was learning English. Even though I had no English and was put in the ESL classes, things started to get better for me. I managed to move into the mainstream in less than two years after receiving the Standard ELL student award. Mastering English was my major goal, because it is the basis for everything from normal conversations to high academic achievement and it is my showing I am a proud new Canadian.

I put all my attention on mastering English and took every opportunity available in my school to achieve that goal. That is when I joined the Mentorship program which was a very positive turning point in my new life. I got to explore what our community is like, our school opportunities that were out there. I joined the program on a weekly basis and enjoyed learning while improving my English. Before I knew it, I was able to communicate fluently and I became a peer-mentor. I was excited to play a role in the life of the new Canadians arriving at my school and community. We have a lot of new Syrian youth in our school and with my fellow peer-mentors we were delighted to be part of their journey. We supported them by explaining how the school and the education system works and also by practicing their new language. I met a lot of people, made many friends through this program and found the confidence in my voice. Also, I was able to showcase my talent in painting at the Power of Voice conference. I found out about other programs that I could join to improve my skills such as the YMCA, Youth Advisory Council and CIWA Youth Forum. Through these programs I was exposed to different places and opportunities and was able to give back to my community through volunteering in different fields such as the Operation Christmas Child and Women In Need Association.

Another cause that I enjoy devoting my time to is the environment. This passion began when I was in junior high school and a group of us decided to start a composting and recycling campaign to help reduce pollution caused by waste. I believe that we all should care about the environment since it plays an important role in the healthy living of human beings. I learned that little actions can make a great impact on our world.

My passion and ambition are limitless and I constantly like to learn new things to benefit myself, then the world. Ever since my brother was diagnosed with Leukemia, I've wanted to become a pharmacist and find a way to ease my brother's pain. During high school, I found that science, specifically chemistry, is my passion and where I belong. After graduation, I would like to take an undergraduate program in general science, then apply to the University of Alberta for a pharmaceutical degree. I am aware that medical school can be expensive, therefore this scholarship will not only help me get a step closer to achieve my goal, but it will also give hope for sick kids like my brother.

I am very grateful to have an opportunity to apply for this scholarship. It would go a long way towards helping me achieve my long-term dreams that I have been working so hard on.

After all the challenges and difficulties, I have overcome, I am now looking forward and hope to make a difference in the lives of others.

Amina Alfalah

Believing in Dreams

James Fowler High School, Gr. 12
CBFY Board of Directors Scholarship



You have to believe that your goals are achievable. When you believe that, your mind looks for ways to make them happen. When I first heard this quote, I knew that it really applies to me. I knew that one day my dreams would come true if I worked hard on them and I am determined to achieve them. I am one of thousands of girls who have survived war. It is hard to believe that I am alive and continue studying which is one of my goals.

My name is Amina Alfalah. I was born in one of the oldest cities in the world, the city of Jasmine, Damascus, Syria on January 1st, 2002. My wonderful family consists of seven people, my parents, my four siblings, and me. I am from a very educated family. My father is an agriculture engineer and my mother is an accountant and they believe education is the path for a successful and bright future.

In 2011, the war started to approach our city. It was a horrible time in my life. We lived in fear and under awful conditions all the time and both my parents lost their jobs. After facing all of these adversities, my parents decided to move to Jordan because it was safer. Living in a new country was very difficult but because both Syria and Jordan share a lot of similarities such as the language, culture and religion it was a bit easier but we still faced difficulties there. The first day we moved we slept on a rough, cold floor wearing all the clothes we had on. After one year, our lives started to get better. My father found a job in a company as a manager and my siblings and I got into a school. However, when we had the opportunity to come to Canada, we did not reject it because our life in Jordan was not secured. There was no guarantee that the government would keep Syrians on their lands and there were regular threats that we will be sent back to the danger in Syria.

The chance to come to Canada was unbelievable! It was the chance to make my dreams and wishes come true. My life has totally changed the moment we were in Canada. When I think of the first year here, it was like being born again. I had to start from zero because I did not have a single idea about the culture, people, language or the country.

Everything was new to me. I had to go into LEAD class where newcomers learn English and about Canadian culture. For a year, every day I went home feeling hopeless and depressed. I cried every day because I thought there was no way I could learn English. Also, the students in my school made fun of my English when I spoke to them. The worst time was when my physical education teacher told us to work with a partner because I had no friends in the class and I did not know how to communicate nor understand what my partner said.

At the end of the school year, a mentorship counsellor came to my school to invite newcomers to join the Mentorship program during the summer. It was one of my favorite times since I came to Canada. I met newcomers just like me who also struggled with English. We had a good time learning

about the school system which I had no idea about, played fun games and went to Heritage Park I felt I was not the only one who was struggling. There are thousands of newcomers who also did not feel they belonged to the school or the city.

By the time I went to High school, my life was getting better and my English was slowly improving. In the LEAD class I took note of everything my teacher said to improve my writing and listening skills and I read a lot of short stories and books which were helpful. I was so happy to know that there was a Mentorship program at our school. I joined the after-school Mentorship program. When I was in grade 11, I became a mentor in the program and the following summer, I volunteered in the mentorship program to give back to the community and help the newcomers who faced the same obstacles I had. I joined almost every volunteer opportunity such as Women in Need, Operation Christmas Child and Youth Conference. Those opportunists were what helped me improve myself and believe in myself more.

Now I am a citizen of this community that was foreign to me not so long ago. I am contributing to its activities and movements. I am a member and I do belong here. I also joined the Youth Advisory Council which is a leadership program at The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth. I had the privilege to meet other amazing youth in my community and work along with on a lot of causes that played a huge role in other youth lives. I was a lead on committees that planned activities and events such as the Youth Conference. I was encouraged to participate in every activity in my new community. I joined extracurricular programs in my school such as YMCA, and Youth Forum Program in CIWA.

I also had the opportunity to be on a robotic team for two years and competed in Edmonton with other teams in the First Tech Challenge. We won 6th place the first year and the 8th place the second year among 34 teams. We also won the best presentation award when we presented our team. We were invited for an interview on CityTV to talk about the first refugee team in Alberta to join the robotics team. To improve the team, we needed fundraising in order to buy equipment and pay for a hotel to sleep when we had to go to Edmonton. I was involved in fundraising by collecting bottles to recycle them in bottle depot. All those experiences shaped me up to be this active member in my new home, and I was happier than ever.

Reflecting back on my vulnerable self as a newcomer youth who escaped death in a brutal war, and the strong confident person I had become, leaves nothing for me but to be thankful for all the opportunities and people who changed my life and fate.

While I was in grade 5, I stayed with my cousin who was studying dentistry at Damascus University. She taught me a lot about oral health and why it's important. As a young girl, I wanted to be like her. I wanted to have a dream and achieve it. The dream faded with times of war and survival. When my family escaped the war and went to Jordan, we couldn't afford to go to the dentist since we didn't have dental insurance. My mother suffered tooth pain for too long but she could not go to the dentist because it was very expensive. She suffered until we came to Canada and then she was able to get treatment. Since then, my dream had come back to me and I realized that I have to work hard to study dentistry to achieve my dream and to be there for those who cannot afford to go to the dentist, and also to prove to the world and my peers that life is all about ups and downs, but that doesn't mean you cannot chase your hopes and dreams.

Being a refugee girl, I have had to overcome a lot of adversity to live safely and I have learned to take responsibility for my own learning. Currently, I'm a grade 12 returning student at James Fowler High School. This year I have applied to the University of Calgary and Mount Royal University and work towards a Bachelor of Science. I have decided that after I finish four years of Biological Science to continue and achieve my dream and apply to a dental school. Since the Mentorship program had a major impact on my life as a vulnerable youth and supported me being this resilient young woman, I have hopes that it will also be there for me when I am planning my future.

Winning this scholarship would help me and truly make a major difference in my life and give a motivation to me and youth like me who might feel hopeless at a certain point in their journey.

Awet Gebru

Father Lacombe High School, Gr. 11
CBFY Scholarship

Never Give Up, Have Hope and Trust in Yourself



When, people are given opportunities, we have to take advantage of what we are given and use it to succeed. My name is Awet Ghebru, I am 17 years old and I was born in Eritrea. I am the eldest in a family of 5 and so from a young age I was taught to always take care of my siblings. This has helped me become the kind of person that cares for others.

When I was young, Eritrea was ruled by a dictator and so everyone around me lived in a life of fear and struggled everyday to make ends meet. I remember one time when we were at home relaxing, we heard a yell from my neighbour's house. We looked outside and saw soldiers coming out holding our neighbour and accusing him of starting a rebellion and threatening to kill the president. He of course denied the accusations but once you are accused you can never do anything as what they say is the final rule. This was the final straw for my parents as they were afraid that one day they might get arrested and that me and my siblings would be left alone. So, they decided to move us to South Africa.

When we first moved to South Africa, my parents could only speak Tigrinya. They can only say a couple of phrases in English such as hello and bye, but with their accents it was kind of difficult to understand them. When I started school, I picked up the culture and language quickly so I tried to teach my parents. It was challenging but after a couple of months they could put phrases together and within a couple of years they could speak the language fluently, this resulted in them applying for better jobs as they could communicate properly. My main inspiration would definitely be my parents. Because they always put me and my siblings first and did everything in their power to keep us safe and happy, even if it means moving us to a foreign country. My parents left their friends and extended family, they left their country and basically their lives in order for us to feel safe. Even to this day they continuously sacrifice themselves in order for us to succeed. I believe that is one

the selfless acts a parent can do for their children. Witnessing the sacrifices my parents made for me and siblings inspired me to always help others. Because you never know what they are going through and if I could help ease the burdens they carry by either greeting them or helping them carry something then it is the least I could do. When I still went to school in South Africa I would see a lot of other Eritrean children and I always spoke to them in Tigrinya. If they didn't know the language I would teach them and introduce them to my friends and other people so they wouldn't feel isolated and lonely.

Early 2019, my parents moved us to Canada and I felt many different emotions. I was happy that my parents could see their relatives in real life rather than just speaking through the phone or Skyping. I was also sad as I had made lifelong friends and had to say goodbye to them. At the beginning it was hard for me to adjust, I knew how to speak English as I was taught in South Africa but I had a thick accent so I was afraid people couldn't understand me so I kept quiet. This made others think I was shy and/or liked being by myself and so they did not approach me. I was isolated from the rest of my classmates for a while before another Eritrean kid came up to me one day and asked me to come play soccer with him and his friends. From that day on I became close friends with them which I am forever grateful for. What my friend has done made me want to help people more. From other Eritrean students in my high school I found out about The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth. I joined the Mentorship program for about two years. In the span of two years with the program, it has helped me meet new people, go visit new places such as museums, public libraries, and many more. This program has helped me gain more confidence in myself, it helped me overcome my fears of talking to people. I became a Peer Mentor, a Peer Mentor always puts others in front of themselves, a Peer Mentor knows that he always has to think outside the box in order to succeed.

Power of voice means a lot to me, living in a dictatorship country and witnessing the suppression of others and their voices. Power of Voice to me means that everyone is able to talk freely without being judged. I knew the privileges that came from having a voice as it is not something that is possessed by everyone around the world. In this world many people are shy and afraid to stand up high and be able to talk freely. We are all afraid of something. Fear of being judged, afraid of what others will think of us, say about us or make fun of us. We are afraid to talk for ourselves, we are afraid to say what's on our mind due to what others might think. Scared to see what other people's reactions, actions, thoughts towards us. Being a peer mentor has helped me overcome all those fears, it has taught me to be proud of who I am, what I believe and why I am in this world. Due to my parents sacrificing for me, it has helped me to become a better human being that I am today. I think that if you live in a society where you can use your voice, then you should. We should not let others restrain our right of free speech. I was only able to help others due to my parents teaching and witnessing their sacrifices they made. Me and my family struggled in South Africa due to racial abuse in the country. We survived many xenophobic attacks, my parents struggled to get to work in one piece due to the racial attacks. All the racial abuse and xenophobia has taught me to watch out for myself and the people around me. That is why I am who I am. I love to help people in every way that I can to give back. That is also the reason why I joined The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth. In the foundation, we focus on helping newcomers to adjust and getting settled living in Canada.

Growing up in Africa, it teaches you to be responsible, caring, kind, confident and positive. I believe that inspiration and power of voice are linked together and you cannot have one without

the other. We should all stop being shy and afraid of how others will react to us. We should be proud of who we are and why we are here. We should all help one another to succeed not bring each other down.

Aya Jabawi

James Fowler High School, Gr. 12
The KJR Consulting Scholarship

Obstacles lead to a successful and strong future



Dark, cold and uncertain like a ship in the middle of the ocean trying to survive the waves and the winds, I felt the day life changed and led us to an unknown path. My faith was that Life is full of enriching experiences both negative and positive. Although we will all undoubtedly go through challenges in our lifetime these obstacles provide us with the opportunity to further develop our character and learn how to manage any repercussions we might deal with.

This is Aya Jabawi, 18 years old and from the oldest land in the world Syria. I am from a family of two parents, five girls and one boy. We had all the basic needs in our life. The land was my bed, the sky was my blanket, the moon was my light and the sound of wind was my sleeping music. Since childhood

I thought women had only one place, home and the kitchen. Women are not allowed to work or even travel. I found it wrong and unfair. However, I was not able to share my thoughts with others because I didn't want to be draw attention to myself or my thoughts. At the age of eleven I looked like a child in everyone's eye yet I was not a child in my own eye. What I had experienced at that age, was not simple for the child in me. It changed me and opened my eyes on life. I was 11 years old when the war started in Syria. I still remember every detail vividly. The fear and the uncertainty in my family's eyes. By the human instinct in us, we tried to escape, but that was not as easy as it sounds. Bombs were falling on us while we were running away. I remember we all collapsed on the ground due to the strength of the explosion. We tried many times until we managed to escape to Jordan. We lived in a refugee camp for three months, as if things were not tragic enough, my sister got sick so we had to move out of the refugee camp to have access to medical care. We lived there for four years. During the first year I was not able to attend school right away. I had to work really hard with my parents in order to get money to live in the city.

Like so many Syrians seeking hope and trying to survive, we applied to the UN to move to Canada, and after all the hardships I overcame, the day had come and we were relocated to Canada. I landed in Canada 2017, 01, 01 and everything felt so surreal. My biggest challenge was the language and the culture. School was not easy at all. Luckily, I was introduced to the Mentorship program at James Fowler HS. The program had a lot of other Syrian youth, and our main focus was to learn and practice the language while learning about our new community and culture. I took that as a challenge and worked so hard to learn the language and move out of LEAD class. In the second year things got better and I felt a bit more adjusted to my new home, but life seemed to keep

surprising us with random challenges and events. One day my parents were at the hospital and we did not know why. That night my dad came home at 2 o'clock in the morning. I woke up to my father crying, and I went to the living room and I saw him crying and trying to be quiet. I asked him what happened. I was completely confused and scared as my mom was not at home. My dad asked me to handle what he was about to tell me as a mature woman. I asked him if there was something wrong going on with my little brother, and the answer was yes. He told me they found out that Ahmad was diagnosed with one of the most aggressive and rare forms of cancer Rhabdoid tumor predisposition syndrome (RTPS). I had no words to say so I refused to believe even though that was the truth. On November 27th 2018 my brother entered the hospital and my parents spent most of their time at the hospital, so I was the responsible one for taking care of my siblings. Thus, my school started to get harder, and I struggled with my school because of all the responsibilities I was supposed to handle at home. I became the responsible parent at home. I would cook, clean, wash the clothes and help my siblings with their homework. I would be up so early in order to prepare their lunches for school and to make sure everyone was ready to go to school. Although some days I would think it was unfair for me to go through all of this adversity at a very young age, I have demonstrated perseverance and patience. I had faith and I believed in a better tomorrow.

I strongly believed that I had enough confidence and perseverance to overcome this obstacle. Life was not any kinder. My brother could not win his battle with cancer. He passed away. When my mom shouted the news crying, and my first reaction was that I started laughing for a second, then I started crying and I ran to his room and I saw him sleeping like an angel and hugging his favorite fruit, a banana and his favourite blanket. I felt his hand and it was so cold. November 23rd, 2019 was the last day I saw him.

That was the moment when my goal has become to work in the medical field and learn more about cancer and explore ways to cure it. I have been through a lot and I made it, I can achieve that goal too. My other goal is to prove to everyone that girls can do anything and they have enough effort and power to achieve their dreams and also build a strong and a peaceful community. I started working hard in my school and I got three awards, one in integrity, best student in LEAD class and in determination. I started going to attend the Mentorship program and take every volunteering and learning opportunity. I also volunteered with CIWA at the community association, Children's festival. I did a fundraising at my school with My ELL teachers and students. And became active in my school and community. I would support newcomer families and students in translation and understanding the Canadian society. Activism is not a new thing to me. I was involved in an organization in Jordan, and I played numerous shows in the capital city of Jordan that promoted women's rights and advocated against violence against children and women. My English teacher always believed in me and her words will remain in my head forever. She would say: "you are one of the best students I have ever seen and you have the ability to achieve goals and overcome all kind of challenges even if you were in a new challenging environment. I have a huge passion for writing and poetry. I have written two books, and I would love to publish them one day.

In conclusion, life is not always fair or kind, but those challenges happen, and we can overcome them by having faith in ourselves and hope for a better future. I also believe in justice and fairness. Many students deserve the great chances and opportunities that this great country offers. Such as this scholarship, and I'm one of them. I am applying in order to further my studies in education.

My long-term goal is to work in the medical field. My academic, work and personal experiences have led me to this career goal. I would like to send my thanks through this essay to mentorship program for giving me the opportunity to be a member of their team where I grew and learnt. It was the place where I felt I belong. I learnt how to be an active and effective member of my community. I learnt how voice my opinions and thoughts. I was not the little girl in Syria that feared sharing her thoughts with others. I was respected and loved. I became me. For Ahmad, and every child like Ahmad, I am determined to achieve my goals and one day look at his picture in my office and tell him that I did it for him and his fellow children with cancer.

Thank you for taking the time to read my story. I really appreciate it.

Cirese Joseph Samson

Bishop O'Byrne High School, Gr. 12
Guacho Brazilian Barbeque Scholarship

Your not so typical immigrant



It was not clear to me back then, but I do remember it. She was pushing a cart which consists of three big boxes, almost all covered in duct tape. I didn't understand why she was teary eyed, but she looked at me with the deepest sorrow that I saw through her eyes as I look up at her. She was double my height so all I could do was hug her knees, but then she carried me up and gave me the longest hug that I can still feel up to this day. That was the last time I saw my mother.

Fast forward to my early pre-adolescent years, I spent a lot of time in school. From math contests to school-wide presentations, I was so involved with everything that my school was almost my primary home.

Well, this was what I truly thought. Since my mother left to work as an overseas immigrant worker in Canada, my brother and I were passed around living between relative to relative. So, it was very hard for me to adjust and never truly felt at home anywhere I lived. Instead, I found joy in school where I was appreciated mostly by my teachers and being recognized during the year-end ceremony. I feel complete and accomplished whenever I was able to solve a complex word problem my teacher would put up to the board. I even remember self-volunteering to lead a review class before my exam, that is without being asked by anyone.

Through focusing on school, I was able to cope up with the idea of living far away from my mother. My mom would always remind me that our papers would be approved soon and that I will be able to live with her in Canada. This was the inspiration I carry everyday. I worked hard for my grades because I knew that through doing good in school, I will be able to get a good education and a good career. I knew my mother is not happy with our situation and her living conditions in Canada was not the best for her. This prompted me to pursue success in able to help my mother and provide her

with the most comfortable lifestyle she deserves. I knew that we were not financially stable, it even got to the point where I wasn't able to take my final exam because I haven't paid my tuition fee yet. I still remember how stressed my mother was calling other relatives from overseas to ask for money while she was losing sleep in Canada.

Through the financial and long distance hardships we experienced, I was able to demonstrate resiliency as instead of letting the negativity and problems, I was able to put my effort into my education instead. The hardships we were experiencing as a family became my inspiration to pursue success and to strive for living a comfortable lifestyle.

After 10 years of waiting, my brother and I were finally approved for permanent residence in Canada. It was a momentous occasion for my family, as we were finally reunited years after. However, this was when I faced another challenge in my life. I never thought that the lifestyle here could be so different. It is weird to see that I was almost the person in the movies I watched before. Moving to Canada as a newcomer, I faced a lot of hardships. I felt like a lost girl in a westernized country. The huge language barrier I was faced with hindered me from communicating to people. I would always sit at the back of the class, as the only person who didn't have a seatmate. My classmates would laugh at me everytime I mispronounce or misuse a word while speaking. This led me to stress and depression as I would cry in my bed every night. I didn't feel accepted and I didn't think I belonged to the school community I was from. More importantly, I felt like I had no voice because no one was listening. Going through this experience made me realize that importance of power of voice. Power of voice is one's ability to influence and express who we truly are. Through our voice, we are able to tell our own stories and problems. I believe that the voiceless people have the power to influence people and express themselves more than they perceive. I will even argue that the voiceless people are the ones who should be heard because they often tell the most valuable lessons. The power of one's voice should be to address one's hardship and to tell how one has overcome it. With this, it is important to promote positivity and voicing out injustices in our society. As immigrants, we represent the minority in western society, it is easy for us to be left out without our opinions being addressed. I believe that as immigrants we should have the power to voice out our beliefs and values. Minorities such as immigrants and women should be voiced out. The power of voice in my opinion is the ability to empower the voiceless people. My experience and challenges as a newcomer led me to strive for greatness especially in my education.

Through very helpful programs that CBFY gives to newcomers, I was able to change from a voiceless person to someone who promotes inclusivity and diversity in my school. The Mentorship Program had taught me to love my culture and to be proud of the uniqueness of this. More importantly, the mentorship program has taught me to have a voice in the community. I believe that once you hear your own voice, you start to feel the power in that.

Claire Martinez

Poem Essay

Henry Wise Wood High School, Gr. 12
Resiliency Scholarship

Started to wonder when's the next turn
All these signs do not speak home.
Will I be lost? Should I be concerned?
Am I a tourist in a place called Rome?

Time started to pass
Then there I see, you.
Will I come near? Will I complete a task?
Could it be too good to be true?

Another lost soul that seemed to found
sanctuary
You act like you know your way.
You answer my questions like a fairy
You helped me get through the day.

Evening. Morning came. And so did anxiety,
Afraid to seek the unknown
And be lost within the society.
Call you, and your voice, feels like home.

Same setting, different me.
I could go around without a map in hand.
With your voice, you helped me see
All these attractions are a wonderland.

Walking around without the usual stress,
It feels unusual. But it seems right
To have my own process
And have my thoughts unite.

A lost soul wandering around
Clueless where to go next
Yet only wants to be found
Should I approach, yet what will I expect?

Tables have turned and now I am the local;
My turn to help a tourist.
My turn to have empathy for an individual
With a heart that is the purest.

You seem shy, perhaps a barrier?
Clueless how to approach? To speak?
I could start so all will be happier
And to be the one to make your week.

A curve formed on your face
It warms the heart to see you.
Another me in a different place
Helping back to get through.



The poem is seen from a tourist's perspective wherein everything is new. It is a comparison to my experience in moving to a new country, completely clueless of what to do and how things are. It is like a feeling of going around without a map nor an itinerary, the feeling of being lost, unsure on what and where to go next and not being able to trust anyone.

Then a tourist saw this local and decided to ask for help; it is also like how the program, the Mentorship Program, helped me to adjust in a new country by starting with helping me to adjust in school. It's because of the people I met there—counselors, peer mentors, because of the power held by their voice, it gave me the confidence that I could do start in a new place and make it and that they'll be there to give any help that they could.

Next, the tourist started to manage to explore the city without being afraid of getting lost since there is someone that could help and got to appreciate the wonders the city has to give. It shows how I manage to get through starting school since I know that I could contact someone from the mentorship program for help or to have reassurance that I could do it and because of this I got to appreciate the school's resources like clubs and having to meet new friends.

Lastly, the tourist now turned local saw a tourist that seemed lost and because of the local having to know the same feeling, the local decided to be the one to approach first the tourist and a smile was given back. This is how I feel as a peer mentor. I got inspired from the counsellors and peer mentors that helped me before with what they can and using what I learned from them and my personal experiences, I use this to help others back, like newcomers, and hearing a thank you from them warms my heart that I got to give back.

Coming to a new place and feeling like a tourist made me feel really anxious due to the unknown circumstances that I will face and because of these feelings it made me feel low wherein I don't feel excited about going to new places or even meeting someone new and this also affected how I cope up with the new environment. However, because of the help and guidance I received from CBFY, I was able to bring out my extrovert side once again and got to open up on what I feel and that I need help. Because of this, it inspired me to help others by not forcing them to open up to me but have them know that I'm there to answer questions or give help in any way that I could and let them be aware that no judgement will be coming from me.

David Bankole

Henry Wise Wood High School, Gr. 11
The RBC Foundation Scholarship



My family inspires me however, I would say the most significant is through the hard work that my parents did to bring me to Canada. My father and mother's hard work of gaining enough financial support to bring our entire family overseas, was interpreted to me as an inspiration for hard work for all I do.

I also get inspiration through works of art. I depicted soccer because it inspired me through the backstories of the players that I see. Specifically, a soccer player named Kylian Mbappé, his story inspired me cause through hard work and determination, He became the second teenager to score in a World Cup Final which was an unthinkable feat at the young age of 19.

I've added a diploma which is a symbol to education and the teachers who have inspired me to strive for success. In 6th grade my teacher Mr. Kohler due to his empathy and kindness, I've taken inspiration to be like him in his mannerism and behaviour because I hadn't seen anyone

with characteristics like his. Finally, I portrayed a mountains cape to represent the environment, inspiration for this came through environmentalists I look up to, who make efforts for change like David Suzuki.



Dymple Dalumpienes

Lady in Flux

Father Lacombe High School, Gr. 12
Calgary Catholic School District Scholarship

My name is Dymple Grace Dalumpienes. I was born and lived for fifteen years in a lovely country named Philippines. My family lived in a tiny island called Marinduque. Surrounded by ocean and exposed to the sun, my childhood was fun. As someone who lived in a green and a peaceful environment, I never got to experience playing in the street like my siblings and cousins do. But that changes whenever I spend my summer vacation in my grandmother's house located in a much smaller island. Instead of playing in the street, I learned how to climb trees. I was young and I was happy. Very happy.

I could not remember clearly when did my father went abroad. Before I knew it, I stopped feeling his presence and warmth beside me when I am asleep. I remember not asking too many questions



about his absence and tried not to be a bother to my mother and my older siblings. I was a quite kid. My favorite toys were jigsaw puzzles and Scrabble. This shows how timid I was. My toy preferences have a reason and that is because it does not require too much physical movements. I was weak. I was born dead and my parents and the doctors had to wait an hour or so only to find out I have a congenital heart disease. Smirking is not something a newborn baby would usually do but I was told that I did. A nurse noticed that I have a dimple. I was named after what the nurse saw but my dad changed the spelling and added 'Grace' as my second name.

During my junior high school years, that was when I felt I was alive. I felt it. I felt happiness, sadness, proudness, regrets, pain and love and many other emotions I never knew I would experience. It serves to me as an assurance. As a student suffering from a heart disease, it is hard to not question life. It was a rocky ride. I only have my mom with me, and my siblings and I were separate by the ocean. Good colleges were in the city. Problems kept on occurring. Change is constant, I know that, but why does my father have to go through it? Or my family rather. Canada has changed my dad to an extent where I had to see my mom suffer quietly. She was not alone. I was there. I was with her. I, too, was suffering. My mom's skin is beautiful. It was soft. It was warm. It makes me feel secured when I am close to her and I want her to feel the same when she is with me. Night after night, I could not and would not sleep comfortably. Worries has become my bed and sadness was my blanket. Occasionally, I get a bit of a sleep but eventually it would be disrupted by loud and shouting voices. I developed a slight stutter when I was shouted at while voicing out my opinion. Scared and anxious, I kept on moving forward. Our past experiences in life shapes who we are today. It keeps us grounded. Even pain has become precious to me. It serves as my driving force to push forward because that is the only direction we should be going.

Year 2017, my family and I experienced a moment of flux. Coming to Canada was not in my plan. It never was. Everything was new. So new that I felt like was a newborn baby. I was floating in a void of nothingness. I was dumped in a room with the absence of light. I was blind for a very a long time, but I was aware my eyes were open. I could walk but I struggled to know where to go. My sense of direction was taken away when I stepped in an unknown country. I had to start anew, learn informations I have never heard of before and apply them in my life at the same time. Everything was going too fast and I could not keep up. Mentorship Summer Program was an amazing tool and a steppingstone for me. I met new people that helped me understand Canada's school system and many other more. Compared to my former school, it was entirely different. Still scared and anxious, I started my senior high school. The first school year was easier than I expected. I have attained friendships that are still going strong in the present. Social studies and Art were the classes that grabbed my personal interest. During the second year, everything started to crumble slowly. It started with my sleeping schedule followed by my eating patterns and choice of food intake then my behaviour and approach towards studying. Everyday was the same. I wake up, go to school, go back home, sleep and repeat. I lost sight of what I wanted in life. I was not even sure what I wanted that time. I was a walking nothingness. I would go to school just because I need to not because I want to. If life was playing games with me, I lost and was lost at the same time. Purpose is something I had trouble finding. What if there was none in the first place? A repetition of something

would eventually lose its meaning. Everyday, I wake up, wake up, wake up, wake up, wake up, then one day I forgot why. I was not suicidal. I was rather empty and lost. Results of this are failed classes, lack of motivation and fluctuating mood. I hid these and tried to appear that nothing was wrong. I wanted to just lock myself up and not let anyone in. This moment of weakness lasted until the first semester of grade 12. A crucial time. I was so done, that is what I thought. Recently. I just started Art 30 in the second semester and slowly regained the motivation that went missing these past months. I consider myself recovering day by day. Everything started to feel lighter than before. Determined and inspired, I started searching up post secondary schools that would fit in my personal interests. Alberta University of the Arts offers programs that I would very much love to be a part of. Thinking back, I started taking interest in art when I was in third grade. I asked my dad to draw my project. While watching, I thought, "I want to do this in the future." I saw myself enjoying this someday and here I am. Not only I enjoy it, I also feel others enjoying themselves while looking at the artworks that I made, specially my family. I was introduced to something I would eventually love doing at a young age. I consider my father as my first love and first heartbreak. I have moved on and want to keep on moving forward. I know there are others who are deserving to receive the support funded by The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth but I, too, am deserving. The help that would given could not possibly go to waste for a person who has ambitions.

Edom Ytbarek

Father Lacombe High School, Gr. 12
The KJR Consulting Scholarship



I am inspired to do henna because I like doing it and trying different designs. My henna inspiration started when I was in Sudan seeing people doing it, when my mom did it on herself, and then I took a henna class for 2 months which helped me get better. When I was young during the time that I had henna I felt happy and super cool. I share my love of henna by doing henna on others when they have weddings or parties. The experiences of the past shape your identity; my identity is shaped by the 3 places that I lived. I put a cross on my henna design which represents the most traditional clothes in Eritrea where I was born. Sudan was the place that I learnt how to do henna and the first time that I saw it.

Canada is multicultural, all cultures are accepted and I am welcome to do henna on my Canadian cousin's hand. My identity helped shape the community by getting people interested in my culture, and by doing henna people want to know more about it and learn how to do henna, and learn about other cultures. I am one person who does henna, but when others see it, it gets more popular, which then inspires me to keep doing it.



Eno Ashory

My Journey

Nelson Mandela High School, Gr. 11
Jivanya Reddy Scholarship



I was born in the winter of 2002 to a loving Muslim family in Afghanistan. I have a big family with 3 brothers and 2 sisters.

My country has been in war for several years, with a lot of racism, bullying, and fights between the people based on this, religion and thanks to a deeply corrupted political system. Because of this my father decided to send my 3rd brother to Germany; he went there illegally but was able to spend about 6 years living there away from us. I missed him a lot, as my family and I have always been really close.

My oldest brother married a nice lady who lives here in Canada, so his wife sponsored him to come here as a permanent resident. As soon as he got here and saw how good life could be, he found a job and asked my family to move away somewhere safe. My country's situation was becoming increasingly violent, so my family and I went to Tajikistan as refugees.

While we wanted to move I was in 8th grade so I did not have a choice except leaving my childhood memories, my best friends, the house I grew up in, and life as I knew it. Moving to Tajikistan was not easy. My dad had owned a business which he sold before we moved, my brother had been studying his master's degree at the time and had to halt this as well.

We lived in Tajikistan for a total of 3 years; as refugees in this country we could not work so my eldest brother living in Canada had to help us financially. This was tough for him as well since he had just started his life in Canada with his new wife and it was hard to support both families.

While in Tajikistan I could not go to school because the teachings were in Russian language; I had always enjoyed going to school and loved receiving an education, and had set as a goal to one day move to Canada like my brother did so I focused on learning English. I took small courses when I could and also a bit of French. The teachers were not too great but it helped get me a bit of knowledge in this language as well.

The time in Tajikistan was marked by deep struggle. Mainly because me and my family being refugees experienced a lot of racism and hate from the locals. We couldn't walk in the streets at night, and the government was corrupt as well. We had to bribe police and legal systems to get our home rented, often being threatened with them taking away our legal documents for extortion. The local police would take our legal documents and ask for large sums of money to give them back to us. The cost of rent for apartments was really high for a refugee to afford, especially with a family of 6. When it came to trade and renting they used to ask for USD as currency. Needless to say, it was a lot to take in.

Although it was not easy, I was able to make 2 close friends and we always found a way to hang out and find joy in life. This is the small part of that story that was memorable and fun.

Knowing all of these struggles, my brother in Canada did everything he could to sponsor our immigration to this country. He needed 5 people to co-sign the request documents for us, pull in a large sum of money that guaranteed our stability when we landed, and raise funds for our flights. This was the best thing that could happen to us.

We are very grateful that the Government of Canada was able to receive us in the country and gives us time to pay the loans that we needed to get us here. Since my parents are illiterate they are unable to find employment that allows them to make enough income to pay the loans, so it will become my personal responsibility to pay this money back.

I have always been passionate about education and have dreamt of continuing my studies, hoping to have a good impact in society. The reality is that this is no longer in my hands to decide and the priority is and will be to help my parents pay their loans so I can focus on my education after. Sometimes I wish things were different, and I had normal teenager problems. For now my problems seem bigger than myself and it's hard to keep an optimistic outlook.

Mentorship program helped me go through these hard situations. When I registered for school I heard about Mentorship Summer Program; I had no idea how it would be but I decided to join and WOW! I loved it! I made a lot of friends and got to go to places I would not have been able to go to on my own. I met a lot of nice people and it made the transition to Canada a lot easier.

I had a great experience in the summer program and my Counsellor Liu told me there was program at my new school too. She invited me to join and I continued to go during the year. I was given an opportunity to become a Peer Mentor and give support to younger newcomers at the Junior High School. At first I didn't think I would be a good fit for it because I was so new to Canada, but I was given a chance and a challenge to support others who also needed help and I took it. I have been

working on strengthening my leadership skills and continue to make good new friends.

I have too many things I could say about the program and not enough words to express what it means to me; to be able to help others, to be cared for, to keep learning and exploring the city, even if I don't receive a scholarship this experience has been amazing and I look forward to continuing participating for as long as I can.

There are many pieces of my family's past puzzle that I don't know about; about my ancestors' struggles and achievements, or about how much my family truly suffered in Afghanistan at the hands of the Taliban and Tajikistan being hated just for being themselves. I also don't know which pieces will come in the future; all I know is in this moment I am grateful for my life, to have my family on my side, and to be able to continue my education.

I hope this is not as far as it goes, as I truly believe in the power of education and that I have potential to achieve great things if giving a chance to do so. Leaving two corrupt countries has gotten me one step closer to it; I hope to continue walking this path in freedom. As Franklyn D. Roosevelt said, "Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely; the real safeguard of democracy therefore, is education.

Ernesto Gibessa

Father Lacombe High School, Gr. 12
Habitus Collective Scholarship



For me, my biggest source of inspiration are my parents. My parents had me at a young age and they didn't really have money at the time so they had a few financial problems. When I was two years old my father left everything and everyone he knew in Ethiopia and moved to South Africa in the hopes of finding a better job so that he'd be able to provide for my mother and me. A few years later my mother moved to South Africa, and I started living with my aunt. I was two years old when my dad left and almost seven when my mom joined him.

I can't imagine how difficult it must have been to leave me behind. My parents would always call and send me money and basically anything I asked them for, and once they settled

down they had me move to South Africa too. By then I had a brother and my parents had their own grocery store. A few years after I had one more brother and a little sister.

My parents also had been working extremely hard and managed to open three more grocery stores at different locations. We were doing really well financially; however, South Africa wasn't a very safe country. There would always be crime, and although we had money, safety was not guaranteed. Even though they would have to start over, and they would not have their businesses anymore, my parents decided to leave everything behind and move to Canada where my siblings and I would be safe and have better opportunities. They sacrificed everything they had so that we would have a

better future. That is why my parents are my biggest inspiration, they sacrificed everything so that I would have a better future. I want them to know that I'll always work hard so that their sacrifices won't be for nothing, and I am determined to make them proud and know that it was worth it.

One of the reasons I want to go to SAIT to take business is so that one day I will be able to start my own business like my father did and be able to work with him and let him continue to follow his dream of owning his own business. I've learned from my parents that no matter how much struggle I go through, I never give up on my dreams, and I should just keep going and work even harder.

When I arrived in Canada everything was just so different and new from what I was used to in South Africa. The weather was so cold, and within two weeks of my arrival, it had already started to snow and it was hard to get around. I didn't know anybody outside of my family so I got a bit lonely for some time. I honestly didn't like the fact that I had to move and leave all my friends and everything behind, but I know it was all worth it and moving here was something I needed to do in order to get the opportunities I have now.

One of the most important things to me right now is making sure I stay focused and determined when it comes to my education. I have wasted two years of my life by moving. Before I moved to South Africa, I was in the middle of grade six in Ethiopia. When I arrived, I had to wait until the school year was over and start grade six all over again. After about seven years, I was in grade 11 and right when I was about to complete grade 11, we moved to Canada. The school system was so different here so I was put in grade 12 but given grade 10 courses. At this time, I just wanted to give up and be done with school, but I had to be resilient and keep going because I didn't want all the sacrifices my parents made to go to waste. I had to keep pushing, I had to keep going so that I could reach my goal. Right now, in almost two years, I have been able to complete all the courses I need to graduate, and I have been accepted at SAIT to study accounting in the fall.

Being resilient and staying motivated has helped me get this far and keep going instead of complaining. I'm so glad I didn't give up, because right now I'm closer than I ever have been to reaching my goal. Every day I'm getting closer and closer. And my parents see how well I'm doing and when they look at my report, they can see and be sure I'm not wasting my life. I'm not wasting the opportunities they worked so hard and sacrificed so much to provide for me. I have been working hard and never gave up even though it has been a long road, and hopefully I will be able to successfully reach all my dreams and goals.

Gifechi Dikeukwu

Bishop O'Byrne High School, Gr. 11
Tech To U Scholarship



The individual whom I think has been a big influence in my life and is my biggest inspiration today would be Kianna Naomi. Kianna Naomi has played a big role in discovering the person I am today and she is the epitome of the type of person I strive to become. Kianna is a social media influencer and a health, beauty and lifestyle YouTuber. I grew up watching her since the 8th grade and I still do to this day. As an African girl, growing up I had nearly no African women role models to look up to, hence why Kianna Naomi is so important to me. Most people might find it peculiar that I chose to write about a YouTuber for the question and not someone I know personally.

My reason for choosing Kianna is that she has become such a huge role model in my life and an important figure I look up too

and strive to be. Kianna has taught me many things.

She has taught me how to love and embrace my culture, which was something I struggled with for a very long time.

She has taught me how to believe in myself and be more confident with my actions. I feel like Kianna has definitely become such a big role model in my life, not only because we share many similarities but also because she is very brave and courageous.

She inspires me every day to wake up and be a better me than yesterday. She assures me that its okay to feel stressed, tired, lonely and upset because, in the end, it makes you a stronger individual. She reminds me every day to push and keep working towards my goals. I think Kianna is my biggest inspiration at the moment because she is such a genuine and kind individual. I may not know her personally but I feel very connected to her.

She is like the older cool sister I never had. Kianna values freedom of speech and freedom of expression, which are two of the things I value the most. We both believe that no individual should ever be forced into doing something they were comfortable doing and to always speak up if we encounter such acts. We believe that everyone should be treated equally and with respect because in the end we are all humans and bleed the same blood. Kianna is an empowering young black lady and someday at her age, I wish to be viewed the same.

She has really helped me bring out aspects of me I never knew I had and she has also introduced me to numerous new sides of myself. Kianna is a very giving and loving person who values her friends and families more than anything, she inspires me to give back to my community as much as I can and help others when able to.

She motivates me to step out of my comfort zone and try new things and because of her, I have tried many new things such as numerous sports, dancing classes, school clubs and even applying for jobs. She is definitely my role model and I am very thankful that I found her YouTube channel at such a young age because without her I think it would have taken me a very long time to become the proud, confident, free and determined person I am today.

Being Nigerian and an International baccalaureate student, there are definitely times of distress and hardships I've encountered. There have been many situations where I find myself giving up and becoming hopeless and start to lose a lot of self-confidence. For example, being Nigerian and growing up in a developed country such as Canada, there is a lot of pressure put on us children to succeed and become an important figure in life. At times it gets very hard and frustrating to live up to these expectations but as life went on and I grew older, I came to realize that these pressures and expectations have shaped the person I am today. I learned that through times where we might be in tough and hard situations, to always look on the positive side and to always think of things brightly. I stopped imagining the worse and instead set up goals that I could work up toward and toward becoming a better version of myself.

My reliance without a doubt bettered throughout the years. I overcame the ups and downs and worked hard toward achieving my goals and passions. I began to nurture a more positive view of myself and developed my confidence in trusting my instincts and my capabilities. Taking higher-level classes in school has been challenging and exhausting. I have learned that although I may not be perfect at everything, I can still try my utmost best to excel in it. They are a lot of things I wish I could have done differently and they are a lot of things I wished I would have told my younger self in the past. Some of these things include staying true to myself and being 100% me.

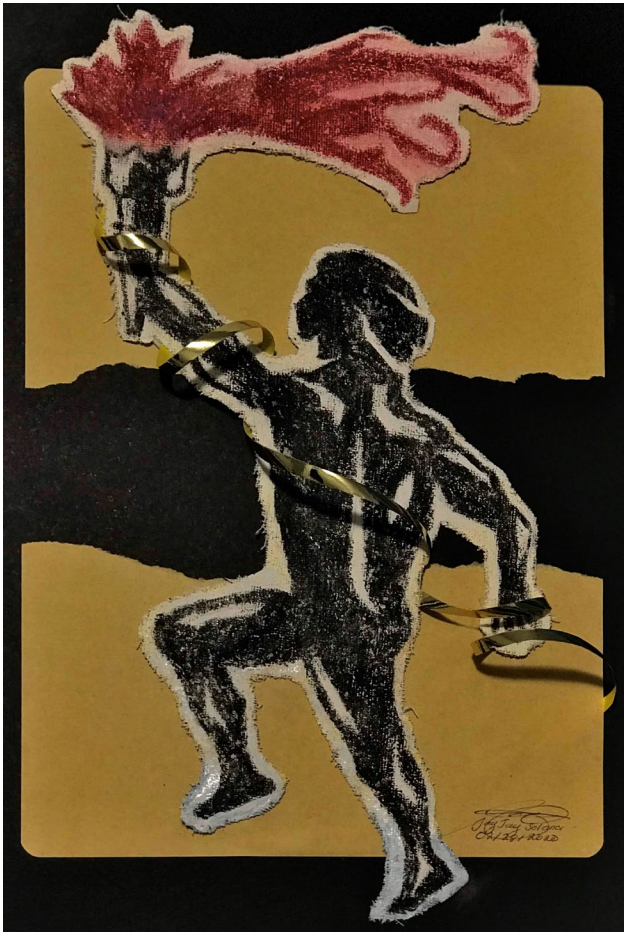
Being an IB student and the oldest of 7, I have definitely learned the hard way that it is okay to fail. I used to want everything to be perfect and right but I soon realized that failure was just an obstacle and that life goes on. I occasionally tell myself not to dwell on the little things, but to focus on the bigger and brighter picture and that it's okay to take your time and that you do not have to be the best at everything you do. As I grew older I came to the realization that even if you come in second, third or last place that doesn't make you a failure, instead it opens up more room for improvement.

Hard work and a focused-mindset are really the keys to succeeding in life and being fulfilled, although they may be ups and downs, they will always be a way to get back up if you truly set your mind to it.

Jay Solana

New Canadian's Torch Relay

Bishop O'Byrne High School, Gr. 12
Sally and Lucy Morcom Scholarship



According to Vidar Eilertson, an Olympic torch relay is “a symbol of peace, friendship, tolerance, and hope.” I reflected upon his statement and echoed his sentiment towards immigrants and refugees in Canada. In an Olympiad celebration, Olympians are celebrated for working tirelessly and dedicating their efforts towards something rewarding. Not only do they compete for sport, but they fight for the great honour to represent their respective countries and families.

New Canadians, similarly, must play a sport that works towards establishing a rewarding life in Canada. Upon succeeding, they must look back from where they came from, honour those that helped them prosper, and relay the torch of hope, harbouring friendship and tolerance towards those in need on a global scale.

My mother, similarly, saw a future here in Canada and, upon reaching the victory lane, relayed the torch to me. She is an Olympian who vigorously worked hard to establish a better life for her family. I hope to celebrate new Canadians, Olympians, like her, who have endured the sport of life and relay the

torch of hope to those in need. In my poster, the silhouette figure symbolizes all new Canadians who relay the Canadian dream.

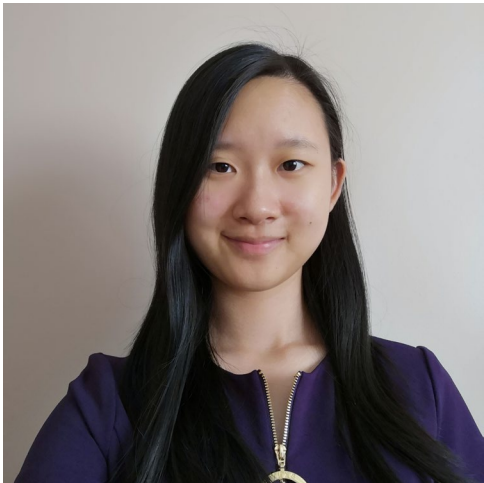
The golden ribbon symbolizes the many golden opportunities in Canada. Lastly, the torch with maple leaf-shaped flame symbolizes what Mr. Eilertson mentioned in his statement, which all new Canadians must reflect on their life and relays here in Canada.



Jiaying Yu

Resilience and the Power of Voice

John G. Diefenbaker High School, Gr. 11
The RBC Foundation Scholarship



The human voice is a dangerously powerful tool. Words can hurt, but it can also heal the soul. The voice can be divided into two separate pieces. One piece is the outer voice, which is the voice other people can hear. The outer voice matches our outer character, which is the side that an individual showcase to the world. It can also be what we receive from other people. The other piece of the human voice is the inner voice. This voice is often forgotten because it's obscured by the outer voice. The inner voice is significant because it only impacts the individual; it's the voice that other people can't hear, no matter how loud it may be. Sometimes, the outer voice and the inner voice of individuals differ when faced with challenges, and that's where people, including me, struggle when faced with obstacles.

As I mentioned before, I have entered many singing competitions and performances. Ironically, I am a timid and reserved person. My inner voice is always anxious and worried about messing up, yet on the outside, I need to act and sing confidently and calmly. Oftentimes, my inner voice wins, and I was unable to showcase what I am truly capable of. One day, I read somewhere that nervousness comes from unpreparedness, which can be traced back to the lack of confidence. In hopes to reduce my nervousness, I began to take singing lessons. Strangely, it was somewhat effective. I was slowly believing that I will perform wonderfully and make myself memorable. In my recent competition, which was the Lions Club Talent Show, I was able to clearly convey the emotions of the song without feeling nervous and out of place. Unfortunately, I didn't score as well as I hoped, but I was able to conquer the biggest struggle in my singing journey. Because I have overcome my stage fright, I am more than excited for my upcoming performances and competitions. Additionally, I am aware that in order for me to gain confidence, I need to start from the inside. Only when my inner voice no longer speaks poorly about myself, will my outer voice be able to speak confidently without feeling uncertain.

I moved to Canada from China when I was in grade 3. This was an age of confusion, where we are trying to understand the world and trying to understand ourselves. Moving to Canada was a big change for me, especially because I barely knew any English when I came. Due to the language barrier, I wasn't able to make any friends. My parents and I also left our family and friends back in China; therefore, we didn't have any support in this foreign land. The sense of loneliness and unease expressed by the inner voice, along with the inability to communicate from the outer voice, was one of the biggest struggles my family and I had to overcome. As time progressed, my English improved, therefore I was able to overcome the language barrier that I faced. I have also been trying to interact with more people and making more friends. We haven't gone back to China to visit our family members yet, but it is something I am really looking forward to. From this experience, I learned that I need to enhance my own abilities in order to overcome struggles. Additionally, I

realized that learning a new language is difficult, but it led me to more opportunities and close friendships.

Another time when I had to be resilient, was when I am faced with failures. In school, the biggest failure I encounter is non-ideal marks. As an IB student, an ideal mark would be above 90%, but anything below 80% is considered a failure for the IB community. In history, my first exam mark was below 60%. Imagine how devastated I was! Also, students around me received more than 90%, so the sense of failure from my inner voice consumed me completely and I wanted to give up. After school, my mom told me one thing I would always remember, “if you are always trying to back away from obstacles, then you’ll never overcome them and succeed”. It seemed to have initiated a spark and changed my inner voice to speak positively. The next day, I went and talked with my teacher about where I can improve. The pressure from my classmates to get good grades also gave me the motivation to progress. For my second exam, I got around 70%, and the following exam, I got around 75%. Because I was able to acknowledge my failures and found ways to improve, I was able to perform better. Next time when I encounter failures, I would greet it with open arms, and identify where else can I improve on to succeed. Additionally, I noticed that because I ensured my inner voice aligned with what I am doing and only allowed positive messages, which kept me determined and motivated, I was able to overcome my struggle.

During the summer of 2019, I volunteered as a teacher advisor for a Chinese school. My job there was to help the teacher and teach grade 1s how to speak, write and read Chinese. However, I know for a fact that I am not good with children. My inner voice was complaining, yet my outer voice was saying sure, no problem. Because I was responsible for the class, I attempted everything with the kids, from reading together to inactive games, they simply aren’t willing to listen and cooperate with me. After a week, I couldn’t handle it anymore and I know the kids aren’t benefiting either. I voiced my concerns to the teacher. We agreed to switch roles between the two classes. Thankfully, everything worked out in the end. Now, I am fully aware of the importance of cooperation. Since it was a work environment, I should have asked the teacher for help sooner than later. Also, I should have respected the strong wishes of my inner voice, since if I am discouraged or discontent, things would only end poorly. From this experience, I am more aware of the importance of commitment, especially if it was the responsibilities that I signed up for.

Most of my struggles are from the conflict between the outer and inner voices. But when the outer voice and the inner voice are aligned, the struggles can easily be overcome. My stage fright originated from the anxiety of the inner voice. The support from my teacher helped me feel more confident inside and helped me to overcome my struggle. By learning and understanding a new language, not only was I able to overcome the language barrier and make new friends, but it also made me realize I need to strengthen myself and my skills. I was also really negative towards myself, even though I don’t show it externally. Yet, by changing the tone of my inner voice to be encouraging, I was able to improve and perform better. In conclusion, I need to respect the wishes of both my inner voice and outer voice, because ultimately, they make up who I am as a person.

Jessica Varghese

The Immigrants Daughter

John G. Diefenbaker High School, Gr. 11
The RBC Foundation Scholarship

Dirt and grime cake my arms
With the shackles tightly biding my wrists
Calluses forming on my fingers
As I lay motionless
Cracked tiles and forbidding stone walls
Confining clammy space
This dungeon of misery
I remain captive
In the hands of the devil
That has placed the ideas
Of self-doubt and insecurity
Who ripped the thinning cord I was hanging onto
So, I have fallen
Into the abyss
And hit rock bottom so hard
I have broken all my bones
And lost all my hopes
But then I see my father’s eyes
And his arms who hoist me up
From the deep dark hole
I stumbled into
But then I see my mother’s smile
That brought light to the blackness
And she carried me gently
Until we reached the other side
Where there was so much light
That we drowned in it
We lit the torch to navigate
With the fire my father brought
And the sacrifices my mother gave
When they left everything
Back home
To seek a better life
Establishing themselves in a new country
With side effects-of discrimination
hardship and fear
Of lonely longing

To go back to the motherland
But they persisted sleepless nights
three mundane jobs
On minimum wage working hard questioning
existence
But they persisted
Living in a leaking basement
No one for support but themselves
Fending for their own
But they survived
Now they are here
Fueling my fire
To work hard
Just like them
So, when I fall into another dungeon of misery
I break the shackles that imprison me
With a fire lit by flames of inspiration
And I work hard with the thought of
My mother and My father
Burning as bright as a bonfire
In the back of my mind
This fire then courses
Rapidly through my veins
Pumping through my heart
The ringing of my pulse
Echoing in my ears
As I stand up to speak
With my voice
Breaking down brick walls
That once barricaded my hopes
But no more
I use my voice
My mighty weapon
Which my foes tremble
My enemies quake
And I rise up from the ashes
Reborn as a blood-red phoenix

That stretch its wings in the ember filled sky
Smoke billowing outward
As I emerge
From the ruins I rise up
Opening my mouth to make a shrilling scream
And I cry
To change the injustices brought
To express my desires
And inner thoughts
And I cry
To change the world with nothing but the power of my voice

The immigrant's daughter, is a poem I wrote that links the concept of "Who inspires me" with the idea of "Power of Voice."



My poem initially starts off with the use of imagery and a metaphor, as I paint an image of myself confined in a dungeon. This dungeon represents the tribulations I have in my life, which I really emphasize with lines like "this dungeon of misery// I remain captive// in the hands of the devil," and "hit rock bottom so hard // I have broken all my bones //And lost all my hopes." I then transition to the idea of what inspires me to rise up from my struggles; my parents. This also links to the idea of "who inspires you, and what do you do with it."

Giving a brief glimpse of my parents' hardship, I illustrate how I gain inspiration from my parents' determination to establish themselves as new immigrants in the next portion of the poem.

The use of fire is another metaphor and symbolism in which I use to represent my strong desire to make a difference in the world with the inspiration I get from my parents.

The phoenix rising from the ashes represents me getting up every time I fall, and the thought of my parents, "Burning as bright as a bonfire //In the back of my mind," also plays into this theme. Ultimately, I transition to the main use of my inspiration; standing up for what I believe in by using my voice.

Juan Lamus

Bishop O'Byrne High School, Gr. 12
Resch-Chuah Family Scholarship



Resilience is the mental ability to overcome or recover from adversities and difficulties in life. Having a crisis is one of the worst experiences a human being can ever have. When someone enters a crisis and has to face problems, resilience is one of the things that must be taken on those occasions.

Sometimes we face situations in which we find ourselves lacking in resources, or we have a great barrier that does not allow us to reach our goal, because resilience is the ability to know how to deal with these problems, it is a measure of how much you want something and how much you are willing, and able, to overcome obstacles to get it.

Throughout my life I do not consider myself a person who has had everything easy. Everything that I have had in this life has been achieved with much effort, work, and dedication. Not even the fact that I am here has been something that resulted from magic, I am here for all the effort made by my parents who always do everything possible to give me a good quality of life. I am very grateful to them because I have really seen all the effort and sacrifice they made to get here. As of 2010, my parents began the process of Canada migration, a process that required a lot of money, dedication and time. My parents still made the decision that migrating to Canada was going to be a good option for the whole family. So they started the process and everything was going great until in 2013, Colombia entered the oil crisis and my parents lost their jobs. It was a very hard blow for the family because the fact that my parents had lost their jobs plus the economic situation that Colombia was going through at the time, practically put us on the ropes.

I have always said that I am proud to have been born in Colombia and that it is a very beautiful country, unfortunately, politicians instead of doing good politics and helping people, what they do is generate even more corruption. Clearly, this does not help any person and less my family who was going through a crisis at that time. However, my parents never gave up on the idea of migrating to Canada, they were very clear that this was their main objective and for nothing in the world they were not going to continue with the process. So they continued, they tried to find work but it was very difficult, not because their studies were not enough to get a well-paid job but because Colombia was in a crisis so bad that not only my parents but many people were unemployed, and they remained unemployed for a long time just like my parents. Fortunately, they had savings that we can support for almost two years. We did not live so well but we never lacked anything, apart from all that free time my parents invested in the migration process. My parents lasted without work for two years, only doing paperwork for migration. It was time for your interview to determine if my family could enter according to my parents' academic and university studies. My parents were with all the hope that they were going to accept us, pitifully the woman who shocked my parents made a mistake and qualified them with standards that did not correspond to them. That was a much worse blow, even so my parents did not want to surrender to that and decided to appeal the government of Canada for the error. We decided to look for other alternatives since we thought we had nothing

else to do in Colombia. Apart from that my parents' savings were running out and the situation was even worse. It had been 4 years since my parents started doing the process, because we had not reached the necessary score in the interview (which incidentally qualified us with another type of format that did not correspond to us) we decided with the few savings we had to travel to United States since my father through some friends managed to get a job there. Weeks before embarking on our trip to the United States, we received a letter from the government of Canada saying that, indeed, an error had occurred in our interview and if we met all the requirements that Canada requested. It was an immense joy in times of adversity like the ones we were going through. My parents did all the paperwork to be able to immigrate to Canada and we sent them by mail waiting for the authorization of the medical exams which is one of the final requirements that Canada requests. We went to the United States and lasted a year there. I don't complain because we really lived very well, but still, my parents' desire was still Canada. So, we returned to Colombia and fortunately just when we returned we were authorized from Canada to be able to do the medical exams, the final phase of the migration to Canada. We made them and everything went correctly. After a long time, 8 years waiting for that moment we could reach Canada. Now to give us more of an idea of what we expect, the estimated time in this type of process is 2 to 4 years. We waited 8 years to achieve this goal so great we had.

After all the effort, dedication and work we achieved that goal. Now, as I have shown resilience throughout my life not only me but my whole family has shown resilience and you can check with the story I just told. And above all my parents, who in my opinion are the example of the most resilient people that may have existed. They gave me and my brothers a great example, no matter how bad things look, you always have to have a grain of hope and fight for what you want. If I ever wanted to talk about an example of resilience I would give what my family had and everything we went through to come here. In my opinion, I think that the history of my family to be able to migrate to Canada could inspire more than one family, who perhaps was in the same situation as us and is thinking about whether to leave the process or not. When my family was in this process we met many families, who were in the same situation as us, and many others simply left the process due to the long waiting time. If I had the opportunity to talk to any of these families, I would simply tell you our story and that every effort has its reward.

In conclusion, as much as life seems to be difficult, or as much as one is in a crisis, one must always prevail and be resilient to the adversities one faces. Because each person has their own problems and it is very important that resilience is a factor to consider. At any time during the whole process my parents could simply leave everything, but they chose to be persistent and move on with what they started and today they achieved.

Kristine Altahsh

Saint Mary's High School, Gr. 12
CBFY Administration Team Scholarship

My voice will be audible. I will not be wordless



These words made their way into my drawing after many years of voice confinement. When I was back in Syria I had no freedom of speech nor the freedom to express myself. We were not allowed to express our opinions because the higher powers know that there is a great power to one's words and voice. If someone in Syria presents their opinion about dictatorship in a bad way, the government will prosecute him/her. In this artwork, the red and white colored statements represent the Canadian flag; a subtle symbol to my pride in the country that I call home. Here in Canada, I have the freedom to present myself freely. I am powerful because I can express my voice unapologetically.

The power of voice is important, yet the source of voice is even more essential. The diversity of voices is important as it gives us different viewpoints from unique perspectives. This Artwork is about different people from different cultures who are working together to express their freedom of speech in Canada. Not every country in the world allows freedom of speech. These three women of different backgrounds and races have the ability to use the power of their voice to express their opinion in the way they want. The symbols in the artwork represent the diversity of religions that we have now in Canada and the point of view of citizens on different issues that can be heard. Having freedom in a country such as Canada allows me to fulfill my dreams and last, but not least, express my voice.

Lorena Berguno-Astorga

What's your biggest fear?

St. Francis High School, Gr. 12
Suncor Scholarship

My biggest fear is public speaking
I'm terrified that I will be judged
The same way I was in elementary school
Whenever I spoke I would have to dodge
Dodge their words, their eyes, their calls
Public speaking is something I'm
told to get over as if it's easy,
It's not
Because whenever I'm told to
get up there and speak
All I remember is the scar on my cheek,
The same scar I was given because
all I was is unaccepted
Some people go up there and easily speak
Only because they had friends in
their class who they would seek
For confidence,
Something I didn't have until middle school
But by then it was too late,

My fear had been created and strengthened
I didn't know what to do so I
skipped my presentations
Lowered my marks until I was barely passing
Childhood wasted,
Grasping what happened,
Felt abandoned
Teenage years spent acting,
Inside depressed and stranded
Putting a bandage on a damaged baggage
Baggage whose name was the same as mine
Only, it wasn't me,
She was someone else
With her mind somewhere else
In front of her,
An iron defense
Full of regrets
My other half who wants to forget.



Years have passed, mind slowly but surely healing with time. When I first moved to Canada I was bullied and alienated for years. I'd get calls telling me to die, I have a scar on my cheek from a girl that didn't want to be around me, and cut me with her nail which explains the scar aspect of the poem.

I wasn't fazed at the time until I reached grade 7 after I was forced to move schools when my parents thought it was too much and the school wasn't doing anything to help. That's when I started to understand the situation and became self conscious of everything they'd done and said. It was also when my fear of public speaking started. I didn't want people to talk bad about me in my new school and I started to have panic

attacks especially before presentations, being in a school where I had to speak a language I didn't know made it worse, everyone else already knew French. That's when I hit one of my lowest points. I never asked for help because I was afraid of being judged so I pretended to be a happy person. At that time, I was so traumatized and felt like I couldn't show who I was to the point that I didn't know

who I was. With my mind confused I split myself into someone who puts a facade and someone who was trying to protect me by putting up walls between me and other people. I was trying to heal but I couldn't at that time, I didn't have someone to guide me back then so I decided to help myself.

So, as I started gaining more freedom and being able to go out more freely throughout the years I started getting more into volunteering. It's helped me cope and grow as a person so I started to get more into it. The more time passed, the more I signed myself up for different volunteering opportunities. One of them being mentorship. The relationships I built that year were insane and I loved the healthy environment. It was very therapeutic for me. Sometimes we'd have some deep conversations and we'd share our stories, everyone would talk about some personal stuff and no one judged. I saw how they supported one another and I felt comfortable enough to share and even sometimes cry in front of them, and in those moments, everyone would come in and give hugs. I then decided to become a peer mentor, since I wanted to give people the same experience I had with the program. Slowly I found myself becoming more confident with taking leadership, and in general with myself. These past 2 years especially. Deciding to get more involved has changed my whole attitude in general. I met some people from elementary school again in high school and said I changed a lot, they've never seen me smile so much. I really enjoyed what I was doing and kept signing up for more.

I'm currently part of the youth advisory council and level up now too. They've all helped me mentally and emotionally to move past my experience in school and with people when I first moved to Canada when I was young. It's still a working progress but I've started to feel like a real person who can genuinely be happy.

Mary Franchesca Crisostomo

Problems are Opportunities in Disguise

Father Lacombe High School, Gr. 12
Angie Ostojic Scholarship



Power of voice; power is the ability to influence the behavior of others and voice is expressing your opinion. Each and every one of us has the power to express our opinion in certain things or events. We all have the freedom of speech, the right to share and express our concerns.

I am Mary Franchesca Crisostomo. I was born and raised in the beautiful province of Bulacan, Philippines. I lived a simple life; I was a kid who never got a luxury toy or gadget. I used to play in the streets with my cousins and friends. During my time at elementary school, there were times I was bullied by my classmates. But I did not see it as a reason not to be active in academics or extra-curricular activity. Instead of being down, I

used them as my motivation. I focused myself in studying because my Mom told me that “Education is the only treasure that we can give, and no one can take it away from you. Therefore, give attention to it because not every child has the chance for it.” I always keep in mind that I am lucky because I have the opportunity and privilege to go to school. I pursued to be part of our student government because I want to share my voice.

When I was in Grade 6th I joined the Student Council. At first, I never expected that I would be one of them. I ran because I wanted to do something that would help not only our alma mater, but also to voice out the concerns of my fellow students. I know that in every student there is a story that needs to be told. They just need someone who would stand for them, that would serve as their voice and I wanted to do it for them.

Life in high school is very different from elementary, because you get to be involved in a bigger world. I still want to continue being part of the Student Government. I ran when I was in grade 8th but unfortunately, I failed. I never lost hope because I had my goals not only for myself but for other people. I tried again the following year and luckily, I won this time as the Vice Mayor. My fellow students trusted me to lead them, to serve them and to be their voice. Winning the position has inspired to do what I promised to them. The next year I became the Mayor and in Grade 11th I became the Vice Governor, in each year I serve them I challenge myself that I should do more in the following terms.

I involved myself with these kinds of activities because I knew that not every student had the courage to stand and to speak out for themselves and I want to represent them. I want them to know that there are people who would listen to them. I want to encourage them to stand, be loud and proud, and express their opinion for it is their liberty to do it.

In the summer of 2019, everything changed. I found out that I will not be finishing Grade 12 in my

home country. My little brother and I had to move to Canada with my Father. I was really sad when I heard it, because I had already planned out my future and it won't be happening anymore. In my plan, I would graduate Grade 12 aiming to have the highest mark to get the scholarship I wanted to go to the University that I wanted. I would also finish as the Governor in the Student Council because I had many plans for my fellow students. I wanted my last year as student governor and leave a great legacy in our alma mater, but that's life. We will never know what's waiting for us. It really broke my heart, I gave up all my opportunities. It is just sad that I became a voice to other people, I stood up for them but not for myself. I didn't speak out, I didn't share my concerns about leaving my life in the Philippines. During that time, I really wanted to talk to my parents to see if it is possible to finish my Grade 12 in the Philippines, but I know that it's impossible. I just gave up and followed what they told me.

September 15th, 2019 was the day we arrived in Canada. I know it will be hard for me and my little brother because we used to be together with my mum. I knew from the time we arrived I will be more responsible with my younger brother.

In school, there are people who helped me adjust little by little to my new home. It was really hard, you had to learn new things, cultures and get a chance to socialize with different people with different backgrounds. But thanks to these people who are willing to help, most especially the Mentorship Program. When I joined this program, it helped me a lot to easily alter to my new environment. From the struggles I experienced, it served as my enthusiasm to be a Peer Mentor. I wanted to continue the leadership I had within me, to help the people who had the same situation like me. I know that it is hard, but I want to let them know that there are people who are willing to help them that will listen and help with their concerns.

I used the opportunities I gave up as my inspiration. I just looked on the brighter side; God has better plans for me and there are bigger opportunities waiting for me here in Canada. Sometimes you just need to challenge yourself, to go outside your box. Not all things happen the way we want them. Life is full of surprises; we never know what's waiting for us. Just be brave, be prepared and never be afraid to speak out. Think of each problem as an opportunity in disguise. Problems are just summoned. A challenge for us to learn and grow. We are sons and daughters of God, and he gave us the power to speak and think. We should not let our problems defeat us. Problems always have the seed of solution. Use your downfall as inspiration, during your darkest days always find the light that makes your sunshine.

Meriel Bacon

Expression of the Heart

Father Lacombe High School, Gr. 11
Almadina Language Charter Academy
and Matthew Kwan Scholarship



As a youth in the community, I inspire others by sharing my skills like drawing. Although I am not really good at it yet, I am still in the process of learning more about it.

I was inspired by a person that helped me develop my interest in drawing. I am hoping that I too, could encourage others to pursue their interest and make it their passion by practicing a lot and being patient with the results.

At first, I only admired and had a wishful thinking that I can be as good as the famous artists. Then someone told me that everyone

starts from scratch and that I have to work hard to be as good as the artists that I admired. That person's words etched in my heart and I can never forget it ever since. If that person did not tell me their advice, I would not be able to practice what I wanted to do since I'll be discouraged by my envious thoughts.

For me, the power of voice is to influence others with those who'll seek to hear it. In the illustration, everyone has their own voice that could influence the world. Every individual has their own unique expression. The voice of musicians is their music. As for the visual artists are their artwork, the writers are their words.

Each person has their own talent to inspire others whether you are young or old.

Everyone is unique in every way possible and they have their own different ways of influencing the world.



Niccole Cuadra

My Untold Inspiration

Bishop McNally High School, Gr. 12
Resch-Chuah Family Scholarship



I can say that most of the youths today will say that their inspirations are undetermined or trivial - like keeping up with trends or conforming to societal standards - however, my inspiration is different.

For me, being inspired is sparked by our connections with others which as a result will influence our actions thus making my inspiration be my family, friends, and those who I look up to. I describe this to be untold because I do not explicitly say that they are my inspiration, but instead I would just act according to how I feel they would most agree on. It is important to understand the reason behind your motivation behind your decisions because it can determine how well one can carry out those actions - for instance, one will noticeably perform badly if there is no underlying motive or it is vague. Moreover, this

touches on another aspect of inspired actions - that is, perseverance.

To be resilient whenever I face adversity is essential due to various reasons such as, losing all my hard work, disappointing myself and others, as well as losing confidence in myself. It is vital in my life to maintain my relationships and through these methods of turning them into my inspirations makes it convenient and easy for me to do so.

Furthermore, the reason why those people I have mentioned are my inspiration is because I want to make them proud. Especially with my close family, I feel indebted to them because I know I can be a difficult sister and daughter - trying to keep me sustained with both my basic needs and my selfish wants. I want to relieve the burdens that my family shoulders even if it is as small as helping around the house or as big as helping pay for some bills. This revelation came to me when I first arrived in Canada and came to a realization that my parents sacrificed a lot for my well-being and my future. It came to my attention that I had to do something to repay those who have believed in me when I have not believed in myself. For instance, when I was in grade school in the Philippines, I lacked confidence in my own abilities like studying or sports, however my parents always encouraged me to try out new things and improve on my own skills whenever I doubted myself. I am truly grateful to them for that because I feel that without their constant boosting of my confidence, I would stay very insecure and doubtful of my skills; this could be very bad for I will not try out new things or improve to reach the pinnacle of my abilities. Given that I consistently received awards throughout my years of studying, I believe it has paid off trusting their encouragement which has made me trust myself more and got rid of my pre-existing anxieties. This belief in their support of me is the main reason that my family, my friends, and those I look up to are my inspiration.

After becoming aware of what I would like to accomplish - to make those I care for the most proud of me, I strengthened my bonds with them. This resulted in my eagerness and determination

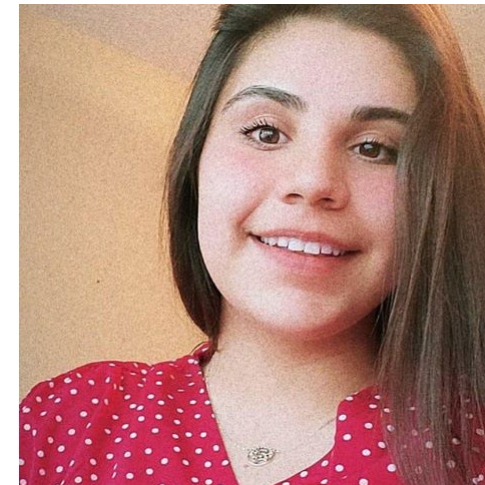
to overcome adversity. I used my inspiration to become open-minded and more flexible about opportunities despite my timidity; this then followed my growing appreciation for those who encouraged me. For instance, in the past, I would be unwelcoming to opportunities that would require me to be out of my comfort zone like the Mentorship Program. However, I learned after joining the program that it is not that bad at all and I quickly learned to come outside of my shell afterwards. At times of adversity, I would tell myself mentally that if I give up, I would immensely disappoint those who believed in me. I use this to motivate me to do better and improve on what I am lacking instead of giving up. My family, friends, and idols are like the light in my dark world where I am lost - they find me, then with their light, provide me with comfort and warmth, before continuing to guide me back to the right path. Due to their consistent heartening, I started to become confident in myself overtime. In the present day, my improvement grew more constant because I trust my instinct and believe in my own skills more. In relation to this, my inspiration has become more secure and I find myself coming to them for advice habitually.

Through my persistent justification that giving up is not an option, I grew more aware of the ramifications of my actions. This resulted in my increased understanding of my responsibility, balance and stability, as well as perceptiveness. After my confidence boost, I started to believe that nothing could bring me down - albeit, true depending on my mentality - and encountering difficult times that I could not overcome thus bringing me down regardless of my attempts. These occurrences made me want to give up because I felt hopeless and discouraged; being brought down after believing my skills were solid took a huge toll on me. Fortunately, considering where I am now, this did not worsen. In everyday life, I learned that I will not always get the outcomes that I like - such as losses, undesirable and/or inevitable results, my family was there to prove to and convince me that nothing should be the cause I give up unless it is truly what I choose to do, meaning that I have given it a second thought but still come to that same conclusion. As a result, I stay humble and do not get ahead of myself regardless of the achievements I receive because I know that at the end of the day, I am still the same person as I was when I was born. My family taught me to learn and improve on my mistakes instead of surrendering to my defeats. In turn, I had less regrets as well as became more prideful of my accomplishments because I knew all my hard work - improvements, patience, so on - cultivated to bring me to my goal.

Due to my strong bonds with my family, friends, and people I look up to, they have become both my inspiration and reason for persevering. Through their consistent encouragement, I learned to act more responsibly and consider all my options when faced with problems. Subsequently, I achieved my goals - both with ease or difficulty - and became less disappointed in the outcomes. Nowadays, I seldom require assistance to boost myself when the results I receive are undesirable. This is because being loved unconditionally and receiving never-ending support, I feel that I will never truly lose or be defeated - I know that I could just continue to improve if I notice factors that may hinder my success.

Nisreen Abdo

Henry Wise Wood High School, Gr. 12
Friends Forever Scholarship



My name is Nisreen, I'm from Syria, Aleppo, Afrin and I'm a grade 11 student at Henry Wise Wood High School.

I was born in Aleppo a city in northern Syria. I grew up there and my life was pretty normal. My dad had a job and I and my sisters had a school to go to. I was in 4th grade when all of a sudden, all cities in Syria started to protest against the government and soon enough the war erupted and reached our city. My parents evacuated the city and moved to the village outside of Aleppo believing that it was safer. The village was 63 KM away from the city Aleppo. Things were not better in the village. The war had reached it soon after we moved. One day I was going to another village with my mom and aunties to bring bread and in one of the stores an armed man tried to grab me and question me where I came from because they know that's I'm not from that village, and I couldn't tell them we are from the Kurdish/ Yazidi otherwise we would have been killed. My mom and another woman stopped them. I was let free and my mom and I were able to go back home together. So, my parents decided to escape somewhere else and the journey of constant moving had begun. My sister and I would wait for hours waiting in a line to get bread. Before we even knew it, ISIS was getting closer to our village, so we had to move to my mom's village which was quite far from our village. Moving was not an easy thing to keep doing every other day. Roads were closed and dangerous. None would travel or move, but we had to risk it in order to survive. We slept in fields in the nowhere for two days. We did not know if we would stay alive or not. Everything was uncertain and scary. The Kurdish army announced that they were recruiting people to fight ISIS that was threatening to kill all the Yezidis because have a different believes. Since my dad was in Lebanon we didn't have any males to fight with them, my mom was terrified that they would take females to fight with them, so she called my dad to come to the village and take us with him to Lebanon. However, my dad came the other day and we packed left the village. We moved to Lebanon as refugee. Everything was so expensive and there were a lot of challenges we had to face a lot of conflicts. We slept without food or light for many nights. We drank the rainwater and even sometimes from the drains. Life was difficult for a girl my age with all those constant changes. I was almost responsible for doing everything at home. I could not go to school. We were not able to afford it also education for Syrians was not provided in Lebanon. I had to stop school for three years. It was just extremely hard not to be a student and becoming an adult with home responsibilities.

Everything was so awkward, because we didn't know people except my dad's uncle. We were registered as refugees with the UN and we had some help from other organizations. Being a minority in my country was scary enough, even in Lebanon we did not feel safe to declare that we were Yezidis. After we got used to our new life, my mom registered us in a school because we had already missed three and a half years without education. I was super excited about going back to school, because I loved going to school and I just enjoy learning and being successful. I started school and everything seemed pretty good. The first semester was great and I became the student with the highest grade in my class, but not until my dad's uncle told him that I have to stop going to school as I was growing and he thought it would not be safe for me to go to school anymore. I

dropped out of school which made me sad and angry with my society and the injustice in it. In total I was out of school for 7 years since I left Syria.

At the end of 2016 the United Nations informed us that there is a chance for us to come to Canada. My family wanted to move again because my dad was already getting sick from his diabetes and my mom as well. Also, my sisters were getting tired of the hard work with fruits and vegetables. We started to talk about it in the family and everyone agreed that's if we go to Canada things might change to the better. We could go back to school and get educated for a better future. We did all our paperwork and it was getting serious and just in a few months we will be in Canada. There I am again going to a new country with where I do not speak the language or know anyone there. However, February 22 2017 we moved to Canada. I couldn't say goodbye to any of my friends. The day I entered Canada it looked scary because I didn't know anything, it was snowing, and frigid. My family and I came to CCIS (Calgary Catholic Immigration Society) for 20 days. Everything was different: the food, language, and society. It was safe in that building as we got to meet other people from Syria and we used to talk, dance, and even sometimes we would cook together. We moved to our new house and started school. I started grade 8 for two months. It was difficult because all the students in LEAD spoke English, but not me. I didn't know how to open the locker. In my second year I was grade 9 and I moved to the other class which was ELL and I graduated. And I got 4 awards one for my citizens in school, social, math, and for my 30-food class. Also, I started my grade 10 at Henry Wise Wood High School, of course my English got better. I took every opportunity provided by the school. My sister introduced me to the Mentorship program which was an amazing experience. I got to meet other youth that I just saw them passing around the school, and now they are my friends. I improved my English by practicing it. I was introduced to the rules of the Canadian society and schools, my rights and responsibilities in my new home Canada. I was determined to participate in all the volunteering opportunities available by the Mentorship program, CCIS, CIWA and other extracurricular programs in my school. I knew that I have to devote my entire time in order to be a successful student and citizen. I was trained to be a peer mentor to take a role in supporting newcomer youth. A group of Yazidi youth joined our school and I felt responsible to make a change in their lives. I befriended them since we share the same religion and language. I understood their pain and fear at school. I was there to mentor them and introduce them to the school system, language, classes, programs and society. The improvement that I saw in them was my inspiration to keep going. Everyone has a potential when they have the right support.

Now I'm in my 11th grade and I'm still doing ESL English level 3 but the other courses I'm in are mainstream class. I'm a hard-working student because I use all of my time studying. I have a dream to graduate high school. Even if I aged out and needed to upgrade to go to university I still would do it. I have a dream and I want to reach. I want to break the illiteracy and poverty circle in my family and be an example to the all the victims of wars. It is not our fault to suffer and pay for adults and politicians' games. I do not want to lose my future. Students with no schooling background who join Canadian high schools might age out before they graduate thus they have to upgrade their marks in order to go to university or college. In my case if I aged out of high school I might have one year in Chinook Learning center to upgrade and be illegible for the post-secondary.

Winning this award would be another step towards achieving my dream. My path is long and my journey towards my career is also long, but as long as I have come all this way, I will not stop. I have a mission in my life and I am on the right way to achieve it.

Precious Hilario

James Fowler High School, Gr. 12
Resch-Chuah Family Scholarship

Inspiration Comes from Everywhere



Our forefathers who have suffered oppression, racism, abuse and many other unjust treatments only ever thought of freedom in their dreams due to the fear of consequences they will face once the desire of letting their voices be heard turns into reality. Fortunately, as our society continues to evolve, one of its main goals is to leave such an unfair structure behind and let everybody's voices be recognized. By doing so, we will be able to take a unanimous decision in taking a step forward into the future together. But why is it that countless individuals still consider their voices as something invalid, insignificant and full of flaws? Why are we choosing to cut our tongues when we can freely let others know how we truly feel without worrying about the terror of judgement?

I am Precious Hilario, an individual who embodies a strong desire to help free the oppressed from the chains that are continuously restraining their ability to stand for themselves.

Upon hearing the phrase “power of voice”, the fantasy-like abilities of superheroes immediately came into my mind but this time, the image I perceived was displayed with realism. It is both amazing and scary how our actions can greatly impact those that surround us. Thinking back to the time when I was a recent immigrant, the thought of being the only Filipina at school scared the life out of me. I was shocked. Days before we moved to Canada, I remember going to an orientation that entails how life would be like in this country and it was mentioned that most individuals would go through a “culture shock”. I was not sure what it meant at first but as I wandered through the halls of my junior high school, it hit me. A couple of days have passed when I realized that I have not seen any other Filipinos in my school. But instead of isolation, loneliness, and anxiety taking over my body, it was filled with warmth, smiles and genuine care. I was blessed with an environment wherein prejudice against any race or anyone in general has been subdued. I was so grateful to have friends and teachers who overlooked my status and any differences that I had which could have been the reasoning behind any unjust treatments. And instead, they looked me in the eye and listened to what I have to say. They encouraged me to believe in myself, embrace diversity in each individual and be proud of who I am.

Through the numerous programs and activities, I'm currently involved in, I have been making the effort to let others attain the feeling of belonging, appreciation and self-love which I have been experiencing thanks to the people that continue to inspire me. As the VP of Sales and Marketing of the company Smile Straws under Junior Achievement, I help create an environment that ensures everyone is treated fairly and their voices are all being heard. It is also my job to encourage my company members to avoid going back to their comfort zones but instead realize that they have the freedom to explore and strengthen themselves even more. My involvement with the Student

Wellness Action Team (SWAT) further assists my goals of establishing a safe space for all. Our team works closely with the school's guidance counselor in order to promote mental health and come up with innovative ways that can support students facing difficulties in their lives. We have allocated a games room with the purpose of providing students with space wherein they can seek any help, information and ways to cope with stress and relax. I am also enrolled under the Advanced Placement Program of James Fowler High School and it has helped me immensely with acquiring skills that are essential for any leadership roles. However, I was still looking for opportunities where I can further help individuals who came from a similar background. I wanted to share my experiences as an immigrant and hopefully inspire them to have a more positive outlook in life.

It was through the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth where I was able to attain my goals, make more relationships and embrace who I am even more. It all started with the Summer Mentorship Program wherein I was fortunate enough to be exposed to a great number of immigrants and refugees who I shared similar experiences with. Through the training, I was able to learn proper techniques on how to interact with them. I really enjoyed the program itself primarily due to the fact that I got to engage myself with new people and was able to help individuals escape their comfort zones. It made me really glad to see these new people adjust with their new surroundings through the help of individuals who were in their place a few years ago. A lot of friendships, memories and lessons were made throughout that time. But as summer ended, I joined the Mentorship Program in my school and as well as the Youth Advisory Council. It was thanks to the impactful and life-changing summer I experienced with the mentorship program that compelled me to join the two other programs. I was very humbled by the fact that I got chosen to be a part of YAC and through this council, I have learned that each and every one of us- even the youth, have a power.

Through the Youth Achievement Award Scholarships, I believe that inspiring others through my support of a very powerful ability which is being held in our voices will become even greater and will eventually be freed and be heard. I will use this scholarship award in order to help my family and I in reducing the expenses of post-secondary education. As of the moment, my definite goal throughout my high school career is to keep working hard and graduate with flying colours in order to keep my options as open as possible for when I go to university.

Sohil Agrawal

The Inspirations of my Life!

John G. Diefenbaker High School, Gr. 12
The RBC Foundation Scholarship



Take a moment to relax your mind, take a deep breath, and clear your mind of all of its worries. With a blank mind, sit there in a state of tranquility, and dig deep inside your roots to think about somebody who inspired you. Your inspiration, who motivated you through every step of your life, who pushed you through the adversity, and who helped you become the person you are today. It brings a warm feeling to your heart to think about them, doesn't it? This goes to show the effect that inspiration has on people. Inspiration encourages people to go and become better versions of themselves. It has motivated people to be like the people they commend, which ultimately has a positive effect on humanity itself. Inspiration accounts for much of society's successes, as it has allowed humanity to

transcend past its confines and develop as a species. Our competitive nature motivates us to be better than the people we admire, which has allowed humanity to continually improve upon itself. Personally, inspiration is a word that has an extremely profound impact on me because it is what pushes me and keeps me going through the highs and the lows. The people that have inspired me motivate me to take action in what I believe in and allow me to flourish in life. Ultimately, the people I look up to shape my identity and encourage me to become the best version of myself. All sorts of these people have had a profound impact on me, but my biggest inspiration comes from my parents. My mom and dad are the most affectionate people on this planet and the best parents I could've asked for. Since day one, they were there for me, with their sights set on giving me a good upbringing. No matter what, my parents fulfilled not only my needs but my wants as well, regardless of our financial situation. Every time I think of all that my parents have done for me, my heart warms as I realize how incredibly fortunate I am. In return, all they ever asked was for me to be a good person, with a hope of seeing me prosper in life. They always stressed how the virtues of diligence and compassion are the key to success, which they demonstrated through working 60-hour weeks in order to provide for our family. The hardships that they experienced has singlehandedly showed me the true meaning of overcoming adversity in life. Originally immigrating here from India, my parents had to overcome many obstacles, but both in a different manner. My mother came to Canada with her family in hopes of living a better lifestyle. Immigrating to Toronto and later Calgary, she formerly lived in a two-bedroom apartment with ten of her relatives. Being the eldest child, she was burdened with great responsibility, as she was simultaneously working 3 jobs and studying for school in order to provide for her family. My mother had to step up and be strong for her younger siblings, which exhibits her true diligent and caring personality. On the other hand, my father came to Calgary pursuing a Master's Degree in Chemical Engineering. By earning a full scholarship to the University of Calgary, he came to Canada alone with no support system and had to learn everything independently. Along with full-time studying, he worked a job to pay for his housing expenses so he didn't have to burden his parents financially. This goes to show my father's hardworking and benevolent character, which I aspire to be like. In the end, the adversity they both

had to overcome has inspired me to follow their footsteps as well. My objective to succeed in life is fueled by my obligation to ensure all of the difficulty my parents experienced wasn't for nothing. As per my parents' advice, I integrated the values of kindness and diligence into my day to day life, which I reflect in my every action. This is portrayed through my average of 95% in high school and the 170 credits I have earned from numerous extra-circular activities I have participated in. The principles that my parents taught me from a young age resulted in me earning the position as Co-President of the Student Council at JGDHS, where I endeavor to inspire other students as my parents aspired me. In the end, I believe inspiration motivates people to become better versions of themselves, which has ultimately shaped who I am today!

The "Power of Voice" – a statement that singlehandedly empowered humanity to overcome adversity in society and evolve as a species. The Power of Voice, which allowed Martin Luther King to unite his African-American people to overcome oppression and slavery. The Power of Voice, which Mahatma Gandhi used to unify his people and end British coercion over India. The Power of Voice, which enabled Nelson Mandela to end apartheid in South Africa and overcome prejudice in society. All of these world-renowned figures used the power of voice to alter the course of history and change the world in one way or another. Reaping no award or recognition for their actions, everything they did came from a thought of a better world, where righteousness and equality prevailed. By using the Power of Voice, they were able to bring awareness about what they believed to be right, despite fighting against all odds and knowingly suffering severe repercussions. Ultimately, their courageous ambitions of challenging societal norms for the good of humanity showed me the true meaning of the Power of Voice. I believe the Power of Voice means using your voice to change the world in a positive way, no matter how big or how small. The Power of Voice can be seen in something as simple as complimenting someone, with the intention of making their day. On the contrary, the Power of Voice can also be seen on a larger scale, such as impacting hundreds of thousands of people positively like MLK, Gandhi, and Mandela did. These three icons showed me how one person has the potential of influencing millions of people using only the sheer power of words. The way they made a difference and brought change to the world as we know it has personally impacted me and prompted me to try to use my voice for the good of society as well. My parents have always emphasized the importance of diligence and kindness, so I convey this through my voice and choice of words. I use the power of my words to benefit others, with the hopes of using my voice to change the world. Currently, as Co-President of Student Council, I have emceed numerous ceremonies in order to build my public speaking skills. I strive to use the Power of Voice to address my graduation ceremony as the valedictorian and to impact every person in a positive way.

The Power of Voice has ultimately impacted me to make a difference in the world positively and use my voice for the good of humanity, which I believe every single person should also do. In conclusion, I leave you one last thought: It takes one person to change the world, so why not you?

Sri Anshitha Arva

Henry Wise Wood High School, Gr. 12
Suncor Scholarship

Me & Myself



Myself Sri Anshitha Arva, is a 16-year-old born and brought in a well settled decent family. I am currently pursuing grade 11 at Henry Wise Wood High School. Making a decision to move to Canada was a tough one, especially since my family was already well settled back home, as my dad was a government officer there. However, my parents eventually made a final decision to move here, thinking that Canada has better education prospects for their children. So, we landed in Calgary, AB as immigrants on 16/Aug/2016. Although I was excited, it was initially a bit overwhelming, because there were many new things that I thought would be challenging and that I had to overcome. Some of the challenges that weren't easy included starting a new school, and meeting new people with different cultural backgrounds. I realized later though that it was not as difficult as I thought it would be, as english was my major in India, so I didn't have any difficulty in communicating or making new friends.

From then on I faced every day willing to learn a new lesson each day and felt myself changing/ growing each day. I overcame challenges and made it a learning process. One thing that inspires me is to not just start my day as another day in my life, but to make it a great day. Struggle is a part of life, I need to keep going, and to not stop growing. This is the best lesson I have learned from my parents.

I still miss eating fresh fruits plucked directly from trees, veggies raised in our own farms, traditional food, going to cultural festivals and gatherings. But, I also like the natural beauty of Canada, where almost each area is surrounded by many lakes, and parks. I also appreciate the recreational centers, libraries, and the best C Train commute. Above all, I like the safety and security that Canada provides, and the practical approach in learning that my school provides. I love my school, my teachers, and other resources that are available in shaping my future.

I started volunteering when I was 14. My volunteering experiences include volunteering at CPL, CIWA, YMCA, Youth Central and CBFY. Later on, I got an opportunity to participate in Canada's 150 celebration as a mentor to speak in front of a huge gathering at Genesis Center. Initially I was very scared then I made up my mind and told myself that "Nothing big is going to happen, the world is not going to end, let me do it." I learned to "Never hesitate to accept, to not compromise my efforts and not worry about the results." With this experience, I never look back or stop myself from taking up any opportunity. Working with these organizations gave me a great exposure, built communication skills, I made new friends, and was able to help society. Not only didn't I get good references, many appreciation letters, awards and rewards recognitions, but also, made my parents feel proud.

CBFY is unique in its own ways. It is a welcoming platform for all the newcomers to Canada, there is a lot to learn. It mostly gives an opportunity for youth to build new skills, meet new people, make career plans, help in budget planning, financial planning, gives updates on upcoming/ongoing events, any hiring events. It also helps students with tools like great resources, job aids, resume writing and reference letters. I started volunteering at CBFY in the year 2018, from then I got many different opportunities to visit Mustard seed, Youth Conference, get to go on field trips, and had a lot of fun. As bridge connects two distinct points, gives us a chance to explore what's on each other side, the same is my feeling about CBFY.

I want to become a lawyer and help society, which means I need good grades and graduate from a top university. I want to volunteer at law firms, research about Canadian legal system, and continue my education, which means I will need support, such as financial aid and right guidance.

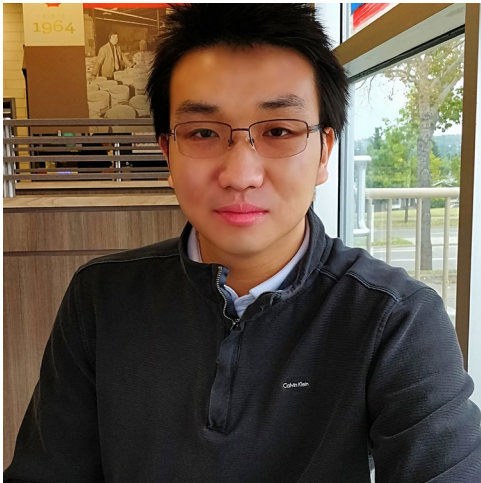
I firmly believe that for any country to be strong, successful and become powerful, their economic, political, legal, Investments & infrastructure, R&D systems play a major role. Legal system is unique and an integral part of every other system, not only confined to people but each entity associated. Stronger Legal system can maintain a peaceful, secure, safe and crime free society. I like to be a people's person, be among people, work for people, help society and I know my passion in my profession helps me to be successful, through building good relationships.

To the best of my knowledge CBFY plays a major role in my career planning; CBFY has a wealth of knowledge, great resources and contacts, and can provide me with good references.

Above all, I appreciate all the support that I have received from the CBFY team, as they have played an integral role in my professional development and in my process of figuring out who I am.

Victor Chen

John G. Diefenbaker High School, Gr. 12
Sien Lok Society Scholarship



My name is Victor Chen, I am a Grade 12 student who was born in Canada, but with ethnically Chinese parents. Though I was born in Canada, I've been back to China and lived there at times. My ethnic culture is heavily tied to my identity, and so a lot of that ties into my life, including my knowledge of the languages related to my identity as well as cultural traditions. Other key characteristics attributed to my identity and personality would be my passion for STEAM and extracurriculars.

The most influential part of my identity would be my heritage. It is what enables me to relate with my friends, interact with my family, and some people in my community. An example of how I shape the community is my volunteer work at The

Chinese Academy, an Alberta-based Chinese school within Calgary. As a result of my knowledge of the Chinese language, I can volunteer and help out this organization, shaping my community through this way. I also get to interact with and work with a lot of children through this, and other organizations like the Calgary Public Library. The work I usually do involves the set-up of activities and also helping students with their English and Chinese literacy, math, and coding. Through this, I get to be an Asian role model to children in a world where there aren't a lot of Asian role models and shape and inspire my community in this way.

Another influential part of my identity is my involvement in extracurriculars. I'm the leader of the environmental, science, and board game clubs in my school. A lot of my time is put into the management, maintenance, and participation in these clubs. The synthesis of my desire to make a difference along with my passions from my identity (STEAM, the environment, and games) allows me to better run these clubs seriously and get these positions. As a club leader, I shape the community in various ways. The board game club presents a haven for people who are bored or looking for new friends, and I make sure the environment is light, welcoming, and interesting by also hosting tournaments and events. Science club presents a place for people to explore science, I helped create a volunteer-run tutoring program for Science courses in the school in my first year of being a leader. General things the club explores are science experiments and interesting topics and interactions that might not be explored in the curriculum. Another responsibility that the club holds is having a calendar that is updated with many of the science events around Calgary, including conferences, competitions, and presentations. The most service-oriented club in which I have a leadership position would be the environmental club of the school. We raise awareness for environmental issues, maintain the school's hydroponic aquarium, and also run the school's recycling program. This year, I was running the Calgary Mayor's Expo, with the intention of reducing our school waste by 30%. We attempted this by starting up a composting program as well as raising awareness about trash, and also selling our own eco-friendly food. It takes a lot of volunteers and time to routinely run through these, and I am grateful that I get the chance to facilitate this.

What I do in clubs and my community also inspires people around me. People see me as a leader, who juggles academic success with extracurricular activities and my own hobbies. My influence

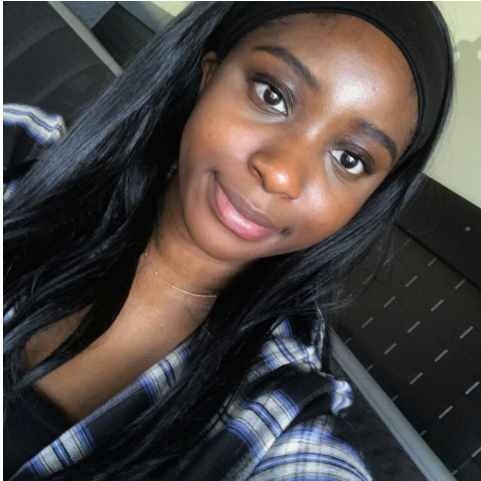
is known to people within the school, and it gives people something to strive towards. I also have lapses of depression from time to time, and people who are aware of this can witness me push through, finding success and giving inspiration through the struggle. In addition to the contrast of depression with my academic success, my Grade 10 past also gives my actions more weight. In Grade 10, I wasn't that focused on schoolwork, doing some homework, not taking classes seriously, and also none of the volunteering and extracurriculars. However, by Grade 11, I shaped up and started volunteering for the Calgary Public Library, took a leadership position in my school's board game club, and took my classes seriously as well. I now have over 150 hours with the Calgary Public Library, and also expanded the board game club to be one recognized as one of the biggest 6 clubs in the school. The stark contrast provided by these highlights my path from nothing to success, and that anyone could make a difference if the effort is put in.

The nature of the clubs also involves me talking to students of all ages within the high school, and I see myself as a mentor towards these students. I've already experienced a fulfilling high school life, and so students look towards me for advice on things like classes to take, extracurriculars to participate with, and things like being their friend or someone to talk to. These interactions are more social examples of the inspiration and the way I shape my community. I enjoy interacting with students, and seeing where they're headed in the future, a different perspective of the world, and also the fulfilling feeling gained from helping guide students. I also help them with their schoolwork if they're struggling a lot, but I also do formal tutoring through the CBYF's RBC Youth Empowerment Program after school. I'm also competitive with my classmates, and we have friendly "rivalries" to out-do each other on tests, projects, etc. This friendly competition inspires all of us to try to do better and truly bring out their best for their school work.

My past and my identity ties into the inspiration and difference I make in my community because it is what gives me my passion to help others, and my passion for these fields of education, (STEAM, Chinese, etc.). In addition, my communication skills are further expanded upon because of my bilingual abilities and experiences. I can interact with and relate to people who have had trouble with their second languages and adapting to a different culture because of this. As a result of my large involvement with various organizations around Calgary and within my school community, I get to make a considerable difference in my community, all the while meeting and inspiring people as well.

Vivian Obiakor

Bishop O'Byrne High School, Gr. 11
Shore Family Scholarship



My Nigerian heritage and culture play a major role in how my identity came to be and has influenced me in all aspects of my life, including in my community. Growing up as the first generation Canadian-Nigerian, there was a lot of pressure on me to succeed and achieve opportunities my parents were not able to achieve in Nigeria. My parents were not wealthy growing up which is why we moved to Canada for better opportunities.

As a child, I was expected to do well in school, and succeed in every aspect of my personal life. Although my parents were quite strict, it was their pressure that had allowed me to become the person I am today. I had always been a quiet person, but this aspect of my culture and family made it possible for me

to go outside of my bubble and discover what kind of person I was. They pushed me to make decisions I had never considered before which played an important role in my identity. This pressure established strong determination and self-discipline in myself which I am very grateful for till this day. These new qualities that I gained through this pressure allowed me to reflect on myself, and discover my interests. In high school, I decided to force myself outside of my comfort zone and because of this, I was able to make friends of different cultures, where they introduced me into new ideas and concepts. Through them, I was able to understand myself better, including my likes, dislikes, and passions.

One of the passions that I learned about myself was being able to help people. I realized that being able to help another person, whether it is through volunteering, or even through helping my friends with their homework makes me feel happy because it feels like I am making a difference, even if small in someone's life. Now, I am able to help shape the community positively with my passion to help people through volunteer work. One of my favorite things to do every month is to participate in a program called "Spread the love" where students make sandwiches for the mustard seed. Students bring in supplies such as bread or condiments to make the sandwiches with. This program gives me an accessible way for me to get involved in my community and directly help others who are in need. Even though my sandwiches may not make a huge difference in another person's life, they are still positively impacted as they are able to eat, in which before they may not have been able to do so. This experience would never have been discovered if it weren't for my Nigerian identity which pushes me to thrive in my personal life and the community as well.

Within the school community, my identity has helped me make a positive impact in other students lives as I currently participate in the student council where we organize, plan and conduct school spirit and community building events. My determination to serve others and make them happy has given me the courage and opportunity to work with great people and come up with ideas to do such. My position on student council allows me to shape the school community with optimism and positivity that can often be forgotten when students are dealing with heavy workloads. My identity, and my culture which has helped shape it gives me opportunities to make a difference in the lives of others, which helps fulfill my passion and creates meaning in my life. However, there are times

where I can get discouraged in my life. Times where passion is not enough to get me through difficult times. When that happens, I look to music and specifically a group's music which inspires me to try my best and love myself when I cannot find a reason to do so. A kpop group called "bangtan sonyeondan" or BTS had first caught my eye with their explosive dance moves and catchy music during my first year of grade 10. During this year, and throughout I had experienced a lot of stress from my friends, my family's financial situation and especially in school. I had decided to join the international baccalaureate program which was good because it was challenging but also created a heavy workload. With all these problems going on through my high school life, it caused me to not take care of myself physically and mentally. At first I had only looked towards them occasionally, only if they happened to pop up in my YouTube feed.

However, after actually looking at the lyrics to BTS music, and watching some videos of the members daily lives, seeing them work hard relentlessly towards good performances inspired me to do the same with my life. They're lyrics and videos taught me that it was okay to fail, make mistakes and be flawed as I cannot be perfect. However, they also taught me that as long as I keep trying and don't give up when I fail, I will eventually succeed and that these flaws should never be excuses for not working hard enough. Their empowering message of self love and hope reminded me of aspects of my life I could not properly appreciate at the time. Seeing them practice from morning to night a single routine encouraged me to start working out again, and even start dancing myself. Physically, they inspired me to take better care of myself, and to start eating better. Mentally, their music enabled me to escape from my everyday stress and it gave me relief. Their music was a distraction where I could recollect myself and work harder again. BTS have given me something to look forward to, they've helped me realize that as a human being, we all go through difficult times. They inspired me to lead a healthier lifestyle, mentally and physically which gives me a way to continue to fulfill my passions. Their music helped me move on from the difficult things in my life so that I could continue to serve others and make them happy. If it weren't for their music, I would not be able to help others efficiently and properly, especially in the wrong mindset and attitude about life. Till this day, I am grateful that I was able to notice them and listen to their music at the time. They inspired me once again to work hard towards my goals and achieve prosperity and success through all aspects of my life.

Yasmin Abdo

Henry Wise Wood High School, Gr. 12
Mateo Jumas Scholarship

"You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it."

— Maya Angelou



I grew up knowing I am different. I am different with my language, costumes, beliefs, appearance and my mentality. I thought different and acted different. I was the minority that had to hide and cover up. I am Yasmin Abdo, a Syrian Yazidi girl. I was born in Aleppo Syria a city of thousands years of history and cultures. Just as most minorities we learned to blend in and follow the mainstream culture. I was a young girl with big dreams. People who know me would say Yasmin is a very kind girl. I was raised to be polite and respectful, and of course as a Middle Eastern girl I had to be a girl and be obedient which a thing I had to deal with was. I was grade 6 when the war erupted in Syria. It reached our city so we had to escape to our village Afrin. By the circumstances of a country in a war I stopped going to school. In the city we owned our own home

and we lived a very simple life. We are a family of eight people, six girls and my parents. Our routine was going to school and be children. My dad would work and my mom would take care of the house and the kids, and everything seemed normal and sound until the war started and we had to evacuate our house to the unknown. My dad said it was only for four days which turned to be three years. My life in the village was all about helping my mom taking care of the family as my dad moved to Lebanon to work and provide us with our basic needs to live. Life in the village was not as privileged as the simple one we had in the city. The war was surrounding us from everywhere and we lacked the basic means of a simple life. No gas, no heat, no power, no water and no hope.

I became the man in the family and did the work that men were assigned to do in that culture. Soon enough the ISIS was approaching our village so we had to escape again. Life seemed to be nothing but a constant move and fear. We moved to my mom's village which was on the other side of the city to stay safe. Those nights we slept wearing all what we owned so we were ready to run away when the danger approaches us.

In our village we were all Yazidi people which is a minority group of contested ethnic origin, indigenous to Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. In August 2014, the Yazidis became victims of a genocide by ISIS in its campaign to rid Iraq and Syria. We were surrounded with no food or water but the drain or the rain water.

I was too young to understand why I deserved to die like this. Why my parents and sisters had to experience all these adversities. I would just cry and remain silent. I would shut down my feelings and try to find hope that this will end somehow sometime. I would not worry about myself at all, my main fear was for my sisters especially my youngest sister because when we left Syria she was very

young and she was in constant fear and trauma and could not comprehend what was happening. Her childhood was lost in a fast second. My dad somehow managed to move us to Lebanon right before ISIS took over our village. At that time, I knew we would never go back to Syria.

Moving to another country sounds better and safer. Death is not a threat anymore, but living life is. We did not know anyone in Lebanon and we lived among Muslims and because of our traumatic experience in Syria because we were Yazidis, we had to blend in again and hide our identities. My mom started wearing Hijab and my sisters and I started to dress differently to not draw attention to ourselves. We started to work and help my dad to pay the rent, the electricity and the food. My two oldest sisters and I were working and my other three youngest were going to school and my mom would take care of the house. The war was getting worse and worse and the news came that our house in the city was bombed and so our little one in the village. At that moment I know that we had lost our past, memories, all what we owned and our beautiful childhood. I asked my mom many times why I do not have any picture of me as a child like the other kids, and her answer was always “your pictures were gone with the house”.

My youngest sisters were going to school at night in Lebanon because the Lebanese people didn't want the Syrian refugee to be with the Lebanese student, which was unfair. Rejection, hated and unfairness was all I felt. There was no safe place for us. At the beginning of February of 2017 my mom received a call from Canadian embassy, which said that we have a chance to move to Canada. While I was at work my mom called me and told me that we are going to Canada. At the beginning I didn't even know what Canada meant. I had never heard of a country called Canada. I lost my mind at that moment my mom explained to me, I felt hopeless. Being in Lebanon was my only hope to be back to my country one day. We were nearby. I did not want to move, but it was my parents' decision for a better future for us. They wanted us to study again and have a safe home where we are accepted and loved. On February 23, 2017 we moved to Canada. We came straight to Calgary airport, we went to Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS), we stayed there for around two weeks so they helped us to get a house and we moved. Those two weeks I could not think of anything else except crying and being sad while wondering where I am now. It was very cold and people were saying words that I could not understand. All I knew in English was the alphabet. Everything looked, felt and tasted different. Leaving the house was a challenge as we did not know how to go around the city until we started to go to school. Reflecting back to my first day at school makes me wonder of how many people go through the same thing when they move in here. It was April 8th, 2017 a day that I will never forget. I was terrified and all by myself. Learning the language was a dream that I thought I would never achieve. On my way back home, I got lost and I started crying without knowing what to do next. A random lady helped me to put my address in Google map and told me which bus I should take and told the bus driver to let me know when my stop comes up. I could not thank her as all I could say was no English. Starting high school in Canada was not as dreamy as I thought it would be. None spoke to me even those who spoke my language did not accept the fact that I was different by religion and costumes.

On my second day at school, my teacher introduced me to Mateo and the Mentorship program. I was relieved that I finally found someone who spoke my language and is going to be a support for me. I joined the Mentorship program and I had full trust that I was in safe hands. I made a friend who was from Somalia and we started to take the bus together every morning and, on the way, back home. I communicated with her in sign language and she would reply in English. The mentorship

program was a turning point in my new life in Canada. I started picking on some English words and it was a place for me to share with Mateo all my concerns. I had trust in him and that helped me cope with all the trauma I went through. Later on I understood what mentoring meant. That exactly what I needed. I was so scared of the fresh start but I wanted to learn and prove myself. I did not want to be vulnerable anymore. I hate being weak. Being out of school for six years did not make it any easier for me. I had forgotten how to hold the pen. Having a mentor changed my life. I was supported and confident to start from zero. I worked hard and shifted my entire focus to study and redeem myself. I did not want to get lost and be made off for not saying the right word or using the correct term. I received all the support needed at school and from the Mentorship program, I even joined the NOW summer program just to have a space where I was surrounded by English speaker. The next year I became a peer-mentor and I could not be happier. My English had improved and my confidence in myself as well. I always look back and think of those days. I might not have noticed the change at the time, but I always remember Mateo's words “work hard and let the time deal with the rest” Now I am fluent in a language that I did not speak when I came here. Yes, working hard and time. I made new friends and learned about a lot of new things about my new home Canada. I spoke to my friends in English, I texted in English and read a lot of English books. My biggest step after learning English was moving to level B in my classes. I was so happy and proud. I even moved up before students who were there way before me. I took every opportunity to shape up the new Yasmin. I volunteered and encouraged youth to come to the program so they benefit from what I benefited from.

I presented for the newcomers at summer program, and explained to them how Canadian life and school works. I was in their spot a year and a half ago. In 2018 a group of the Yazidi genocide survivors arrived to our school. I was there for them and helped them joining the Mentorship program where we had special sessions for the traumatized Yazidi youth. I was there for them and witnessed their success. All my fellow Yazidi girls overcome a different kind of a challenge in Canada and learned the language and integrated into their new community. I take pride in witnessing and supporting in that.

I worked very hard on myself to reach my goals and help others reach theirs. I felt it was my duty to prove to the world that we are capable to overcome the hardest obstacles once we have our chance. I achieved a lot of those dreams. I graduated from LEAD classes to ESL, I found a job at Walmart as a cashier and started my journey as an independent young woman. I challenged myself by joining the field hockey team at school. A sport that I had never heard of before and now it is my favorite sport. Things started to brighten up from the past experience I went through. In 2018 I got rewarded from the school for being a hard-working student, a great leader and role model. I was very proud of myself. I never stopped. I kept going and going and finishing more classes and getting into Canadian classes such as math science and social. I worked even harder to reach my goal and finish my high school diploma.

It is still so surreal and confusing how life circumstances change this fast. This year I'll walk the stage, graduate but without a diploma. I wasn't able to complete grade 12 because I aged out for high school. I always dreamed of finishing school and having a real graduation, but my circumstances are different and I accept that. I was born again three years ago, and I have achieved a lot since then. I won't stop here. I will have one more year to finish in Chinook Learning and get my diploma. After that I am planning to become a flight attendant. I want to travel and learn more languages.

Thinking about it now English was a piece of cake. On a community and personal level I want establish a program to help supporting all the Yazidi girls who survived the genocide by ISIS. I want them to have a better life and environment and make them feel stronger. I want them to make a difference in the Canadian society. The world has to know what we have been through and how far we have come now.

I am beyond grateful and thankful for being in Canada for three years now. I am Canadian now and I will officially be one soon. If you are reading my story, stop for a second and reflect back, everything is achievable by hard work and time. I still have a lot of dreams to work on achieving. Wining this scholarship would be another chance I get to keep perusing my journey.

“And once the storm is over, you won’t remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won’t even be sure, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm, you won’t be the same person who walked in. That’s what this storm’s all about.”

— Haruki Murakami

Thank you for taking the time to read my story. Yasmin Abdo.

Yimin Dong

John G. Diefenbaker High School, Gr. 12
The RBC Foundation Scholarship

Throughout the video, the music is used to create specific emotions to show the journey I go through from inspiration to the end. My inspiration comes from the desire to constantly improve and seek out fulfilling experiences. I show the ups and downs of pursuing such lifestyles. The first phase of the music shows a phase where I take too much comfort in the journey, so much so that after reflecting back, I realize that I have made very little progress on my goals.



[Link to the video on Youtube](#)

The second phase shows my struggles as I go to the other extreme, working day in and day out to the point of exhaustion and being completely overburdened. At this point, the music shifts to a tension that is eventually settled down.

The third phase is where the pursuit of the goal finds a balance between work and enjoyment. Towards the end, the music shifts to the excitement that is associated with coming closer and closer to accomplishing a goal, while still enjoying the journey, ending with a conclusive and fulfilling end.

In short, I derive my inspiration from the potential learning opportunities that come with specific experiences. In comfortable stagnation, I am inspired by the possibilities that more action can unlock for me. When overburdened with failure, I am inspired by lessons that help me do better next time. Above all, I seek new and fulfilling experiences and the enjoyment of pursuing such experiences.

Yohan Bryant

Michaud Scholarship

We are using an alternate name to protect the identity of the author.

I believe resilience means not giving up. Resilience is important in life because it leads one to find success. Throughout my lifetime, I have faced many difficult situations. My mom died when I was six years old. After her death, my father was changed. He drank every single day and he came home in the middle of the night. My bigger brother was taking care of us. He washed our clothes; he cooked for us. He was 12 years old at that time. One day my dad came home in the middle of the night and suddenly he started fighting with my brothers. The next morning, he took us to my grandmother. He told her “he could not take care of us anymore “. A year later, my father died and we went to live with my grandmother.

I feel that my ability to be resilient is because of my grandmother because she became my parent. My grandmother taught me little things like cooking but the most relevant lesson was to never give up, to respect myself and to respect others. She was an excellent role model for me. Life was tough after for us; she could not afford anything. She had to work hard to survive. So, she started making Sambusa and I would sell the products, even though I was 9 years old. She taught me that I needed to work hard to get what I wanted like nice food. Sometimes the business was so bad because the customer did not buy our product. but we never quit. So, she taught me how to face adversity. That inspired me to learn the value of being resilient. In fact, I did not fully understand what family means but after living with my grandmother, I was able to understand what family really means.

At that time, in my home country, people did not believe education could change your life. Even though some people had engineering degrees, they could not find any job unless your family or your close friends were at the top place. Because of this perspective, I did not pay attention to my classes. I skipped multiple classes, I cheated multiple times just to pass the class. I dropped out at grade ten, because my grandmother died and all of her support had to stop. I realized that it was on me and I had to take responsibility for myself and for others. It was very hard from the beginning. But I did not give up. I took care of my little sister, my bigger brother’s son and my Auntie, until it was not possible anymore.

When I came here, I was 17 years old. Pretty much everything has changed like my family, my life and my school. Now I have stopped taking responsibility for my family. Just worry for my future life, which is my education. Here you need education for your future life. So, I registered at Catholic High School in Calgary. When I came to this school, I started at zero for my English language skills. The first few months, It was so hard for me, because I could not understand what people were saying. I felt like I was a deaf person. School was hard for me because in my home country I did not even finish grade ten but here they put me in grade 12 because of my age. But my knowledge was low for grade 12, even grade ten. So, I started from level two English language and I failed. I was mad at myself. I knew I had two choices: one, I go to the real world and work in a warehouse or somewhere and help my family. The other choice was to spend a few years and complete my dream. My dream is to be a technology electricity engineer. So, I decided to study hard every single day because I had plans at the end of semester to challenge level three. I passed level two but I failed level three. It took me one and half years to take a grade ten course. Now I am preparing to write the diploma

for June. Here my teachers inspired me because they stayed after school for me and helped with my homework. I think the biggest thing is that they understand my struggle in side school and they also support me on everything.

The lessons I learned in school, the lessons I learned from my family, the lessons I learned from my friends, all will help me in the future. I will always remember that help all way available, if you ask. I know life will not always be easy but having a positive attitude, persevering when life gets hard will lead you to be successful - you just need to remember to go step by step and that you just need to try.

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