

Essays on adversity and achievement

by Bottom Line students

I am the opportunity

*Now, I don't see that next challenge
to engage me.*

Afraid? No.

Hesitant? Of course not.

Ready? As I'll ever be.



Bottom Line

Get in ♦ Graduate ♦ Go far

Success depends on you

Finding Paths to Personal Achievement

The essays in this book were written by high school seniors from Worcester's class of 2010 in Bottom Line's College Access program. With Bottom Line's support, these students learn to navigate complex college research, application, and financial aid processes. Perhaps the most challenging task of the college application is perfecting the essay. This is a piece of writing unlike anything each student has ever written: a 500 word statement that represents their past, present and future. These brief statements cannot adequately describe the versatile, multi-dimensional students who write them, but they do provide a glimpse of their strength, courage and perseverance.

Most Bottom Line students are in the first generation in their family to go to college. Many have been in the U.S. for only a few years; others play a critical role in providing financial support and other resources for their families. They are all remarkable young adults. Their dedication drives them to come to our office to spend hours with counselors completing their college applications. Their hard work pays off: 98% are accepted into at least one college.

Bottom Line is a nonprofit organization founded in 1997 in Boston to help improve the quality of life in urban communities through higher education. In July 2008, Bottom Line opened a satellite office in Worcester, MA. During its second year, the staff is currently working with more than 115 low-income and first-generation high school seniors to provide them with opportunities to lead successful lives by earning college degrees. Bottom Line helps students overcome the formidable barriers to "get in" and graduate with support programs and personalized attention. Our students earn college degrees at more than twice the rate of the national average in their peer group. Bottom Line alumni overcome incredible personal hurdles and become role models of success for their community, as well as sources of inspiration to their families and peers.

Contents

Those Elusive Words by Shakia Asamoah	3
Reflections and Realizations by Nana Agyemang	4
Realizing it's not all about Me by Nicholas Briggs	5
Always Looking Forward by Jeanine Harushingingo	6
Learning to Take Chances by Tung Nguyen	7
Far from Home by Modesto Boton	8
Inspired by Obstacles by Joseph Allen	9
Alone but Determined by Cooper Zuo Jr.	10
Following in My Abuelo's Footsteps by Cristopher Jimenez	11
The Thrill of the Unknown by Susan Niroula	12
How You Can Help	13

Those Elusive Words

By Shakia Asamoah



Shakia has traveled around a great deal in her seventeen years. She was originally born in New York but went back to her motherland of Ghana for a long time before moving to England and then back to the United States two years ago. She is currently a student at Doherty Memorial High School and has a great passion for reading and writing but also enjoys learning about the sciences.

After a rigorous selection process, Shakia has been notified that she was selected to be a Posse scholar and will be attending Denison University in the fall.

I used to hate writing. I dreaded those last few minutes in English class when the teacher would put the writing assignment on the board; it would effectively ruin my entire day because I knew that I would spend hours that night slaving over a paper that would end up being only moderately decent. The Essay was my nemesis and those elusive words were its tools to making me insane.

My problem with writing was not a lack of imagination; I had an abundance of imagination (I was constantly making up tales in which I was the heroine); my problem was finding the words to express the ideas swirling around in my mind. I always felt like they were just beyond my reach, taunting me, calling me names; and no matter how much I chased them or how far I stretched, they still evaded me and laughed at my exasperation. My teachers were baffled at my inability to compose a worthy paper considering that I was excellent at all my other subjects and I was an avid reader, averaging about two novels a week. My battle with The Essay seemed endless, at least until I met Mr. Cass (I never did learn his first name, unfortunately), my new English teacher and the man that would lead me to defeating my long-time foe.

Mr. Cass did not get frustrated with me when I was unable to produce essays that met his expectations. Instead, he encouraged me to stop chasing the words and to just allow them to come to me. I heeded his advice and every night, I would sit down and write something, anything that came to mind. The next morning, I would show what I had written to Mr. Cass and he would teach me techniques to improve what I had written down. By the end of that year, he handed me back all those pieces I had written, and he made me read them out loud to my entire class. I was amazed at their reactions; they loved my work! The papers that I had written without even trying were better, by far, than those that I had spent hours and hours on. After all those years in battle, I had finally defeated The Essay; I stood on its territory and firmly planted my flag in its soil. I was the winner; I had control over The Essay.

I learned to love writing. My former foe had now become my best friend. Writing gave me an avenue to release all those wild ideas that were constantly jumping around in my mind. I began to read less and write more, simply because I was finally able to create my own pieces of art (although not as good as those of the authors whose works I read, I must admit), instead of always admiring those of others. Those elusive words had not only stopped running from me; they had also embraced me and offered me their friendship, and I happily accepted.

Reflections and Realizations

By Nana Agyemang



Nana was born in Temani, Ghana but moved to New York City at a young age. When she was six years old, her family moved to Worcester in search of a calmer setting. Aside from attending Doherty Memorial High School, she spends her time babysitting her younger brother. Last year, she participated in a business internship where she learned the underlying strategies needed to operate a small business. She does not have a particular career goal in mind, but has applied to schools that will help her decide what she would like to do in the future. They include Fitchburg State, UMass Dartmouth, Bridgewater State, Worcester State, WPI and Wentworth.

Strolling through Elm Park alone, I begin to reminisce about my past and all the obstacles I have overcome. At the park, I notice the maroon bridge that reminds me of all the obstacles I've faced. When my family and I moved from Ghana to New York I was excited because I was going to get on a plane for the very first time and see a few family members living in New York. When I turned five, I started kindergarten and I felt like from then on things just went downhill. I would cry everyday because things weren't the way I expected them to be and I felt like kids in the U.S were so disrespectful to me and each other. When I was six my father announced to us that we were moving to Worcester, Massachusetts because the school system was great and there were variety of jobs available.

I have to say moving to Worcester brought a sigh of relief. When I started school the kids were so polite to me and to each other but I was still shy and scared to say anything. The teachers tried to figure out why I was so quiet and shy. Instead of asking me about it, they decided to give me tests to see if I had a learning disability. I didn't do too well because I didn't understand English well so the school then decided to put me on a plan. It's funny because I had no idea what was going on. I finally realized what was going on when one of my teachers called me and a few other students, her "special" students. That word honestly hurt me because I never in my life thought that silence would cause me to become a "special student". I was put into lower class levels for many years, but it all changed my junior year in high school. My junior year felt like a self-fulfillment year because it was the year I felt like I had control over my life and education. I began to take challenging classes that I thought at one point were over my ability but I stayed true to myself and I excelled. Even though the classes I took weren't easy, when I got my final grade I knew "it was all worth it".

Writing this essay made me emotional because I never realized that I could be my own motivator. Realizing all I've been through, I feel confident about the next chapter of my life. College isn't easy but I know that my new found confidence will see me through all the struggles.

Realizing it's Not All About Me

By Nicholas Briggs



Nick is a star student at University Park Campus School. He devotes much time and energy to his work and truly enjoys learning. Last summer he spent time taking classes at Harvard to fully prepare for college next year. He also leads his fellow seniors as class president and likes to involve himself in community service such as working at UMass Medical and tutoring.

Nick has applied to Boston College, Harvard, Tufts, Brown, UMass-Amherst, College of the Holy Cross, Northeastern, and Yale where he is interested in majoring in Government or Political Science.

I have always had to work hard because things never come easily to me and my family. We have never been wealthy or even comfortable either. Going through the first few years of high school, I strenuously worked to achieve academic greatness at my school to benefit myself. I was tired of living without what everyone around me had, so I devoted myself to getting into a good college. I would not let my past get in the way of my success.

At the end of sophomore year, the Department of Welfare placed my family in a hotel once it became clear that we could not live on our Social Security checks comfortably. My mom could not work anymore despite her best efforts and my brother and I held on to our pride as long as we could, but we had no other choice. Anything was better than eviction and months of sleeping on the floor at my father's apartment. Our social worker told us that we would be placed somewhere in Worcester after a few weeks in the hotel.

This was the most important part for me. I have lived in Worcester my whole life and did not want to leave all the opportunities I had waiting for me when I returned to school for my junior year. I would not be ready to leave Worcester until it was time to go off to college.

Two weeks later, the call came. "We found a place for you in Framingham." I sat down and did not say a word for an hour thinking that my college career would be in jeopardy if I did not finish my Hospital internship or fulfill my goal of becoming class president. I could not do these things in Framingham. While I sat there my mother cried and my brother screamed.

This was the moment that I realized that I had been very selfish. My mother and brother were just as affected by what was going on as I was. My mother had worked hard for years and when she was not able to work anymore she was going to have to move away from everything she loved. My brother was just starting out at his vocational school as he pursued his goal of being an electrician. It was not just about me.

Things have since worked out, and I did not have to move to Framingham. My situation is hardly what I would like it to be, but I am at peace with it. My mother has worked so hard to support my brother and I, and although it usually is not enough, I know that she has given me all that she could. I now understand that I have to do the same thing in return. My goal of graduating from college is not just for my benefit, but for everyone who has helped me to get where I am today. I have had to deal with many challenges in my life, but just because I have dreams to rise above them does not mean that my family has not earned the same right. I carry the hopes of those who cared for me on my shoulders, and I will not let them or myself down.

Always Looking Forward

By Jeanine Harushingingo



Although Jeanine has only been in the United States for two years, she has truly excelled in her studies at North High School. She takes her schoolwork very seriously and is determined to succeed when she goes to college. Coming from an unstable country in Africa has made her want to study International Relations or medicine so that she can devote her life to helping those from Burundi as well as other places around the world. She plans to stay in Massachusetts for college and has applied to Clark, Assumption, UMass Dartmouth, Worcester State, Emmanuel College, UMass Amherst, Brandeis, Salem State, and Wheaton College.

I was born in the small country of Burundi in a town called Cankuzo. In 1993, a war broke out between my people. They called it an ethnic conflict. Many people were killed during this time, including my grandfather, aunts and uncles.

My family escaped to Tanzania and stayed in a refugee camp. We spent most of our twelve years there in very small living quarters and it was very crowded. We did not have any running water, a kitchen or even electricity. We cooked on the fire outside of our tent and every two weeks we were given small amounts of food.

When I was five years old, I wanted to start school but my parents would not let me because I had to take care of my sister. I ended up going secretly for an entire year and would take my sister with me on my back every day. We would get home before my parents returned from work, so there was no way for them to find out. The following year, my parents discovered what I was doing and saw that I really wanted to continue so they let me. After that, I went every day and continued until ninth grade.

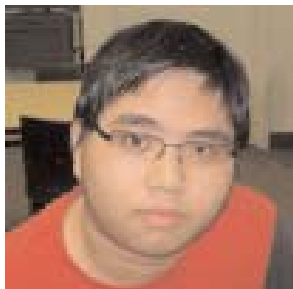
Eventually, the war in my country ended and the Tanzanian government told us to go back but things in Burundi were still not peaceful enough. My family decided that we did not want to go back. My mom wanted my sister and me to finish school, since I was already in the ninth grade. After a long process, we were able to resettle in the United States so that we could continue our education.

When we finally got all the papers ready, my parents, my younger siblings, and I set off on the journey to the United States. I remember us all getting on a plane and being very scared but also excited. We thought life in America would be so much better than in the refugee camp. One month after we came, however, we were ready to go back home because we started to go through difficult times, we struggled learning English, and my parents had financial hardship and even health issues.

Over time, things have started to improve and even though it is still hard, I promise myself not to give up. While I have been in school in the United States, I have worked hard to pass all of my classes and become a part of the community. I want to become a medical doctor or work with the United Nations so that I can go back to help those who are suffering with hunger or medical problems in Africa. I realize that no matter how hard things get, it is important to always look forward. I know that no matter how difficult my goals are to reach, I will reach them because my experiences have made me strong and determined to succeed.

Learning to Take Chances

By Tung Nguyen



Tung is one of the top students at University Park Campus School. He is extremely focused and always makes school a main priority. Not only is he involved in academics but he also is a devoted member of his school's drama club and has been since he started attending the school in seventh grade. He also makes sure to take time to volunteer as a tutor. Last summer, Tung took a Psychology class at Harvard extension school to further his academic success and is now considering making that his major when he starts school.

He has applied to Johns Hopkins, Brown, Clark, College of the Holy Cross, Wesleyan, UMass Amherst, Bowdoin, Brandeis, Harvard, and Tufts.

"If the square root of x is 5 and the square of y is 225, what is the ratio of x to y in simplest form?" This was the last question on my 8th grade math homework. I knew that if I could just get through this final problem I would be able to see him again: my hero, my mentor, my friend. Just as the clock struck 7, I scribbled down 1:3 on the worksheet and lunged for the remote control. The television chimed, the picture faded in, and then I saw it: fluffy white clouds parting, welcoming me into a kingdom of laughter and bliss. The Simpsons was on: the episode in which Homer tries to jump the gorge. A personal favorite.

People don't see this person when they look at me. A bespectacled Asian with a polo shirt and neatly combed hair: how could he possibly appreciate the moronic antics of a fictional yellow man? And yet I do and have done so from when I was a young child to now as I venture into the next stage of my life. As strange as it may sound, I credit much of my personal development to that man and the life he led from 7:00 to 8:00 pm.

Timid is the word I would use to describe myself as a child. The little nerd sitting in the back corner of the room with his hand raised half an inch above his head: that was me. There wasn't a single question that the teacher asked that I didn't know the answer to, but because of that little voice in my head that said "That's wrong" or "You're gonna embarrass yourself," I kept silent. It wasn't until the age of ten that I finally realized I didn't have to live my life this way. That was the year when I was introduced to Homer J. Simpson.

The man was fool. Everything he did, he did poorly. Everything he said, he said wrong. But he was never defeated; he was never silenced. Instead, he would accept criticism, laugh it off, and find ways of bettering himself (even if they never quite worked out in the end). He was not the nerd in the back corner. No, Homer was the brave soul in the front row of the classroom with a hand held high above all others and $2+2=5$ on his paper. That was not me. But it should have been.

And so I studied him. I watched what he did and tried to find ways to apply his philosophies in my daily life. Soon, without even realizing it, I began to speak up more in class, and attempt things even if I thought I would fail just to say that I tried. Leading role in my high school play? I'm there. A high stakes oratorical contest with competitive upperclassmen? Bring it on. That annoying little voice inside my head faded away, drowned out by Homer's obnoxious bellowing, daring me to jump the gorge myself. But unlike Homer, I will be ready. With the experience I have gained and the skills I have learned from him and so many others around me, I know that I will make it to the other side.

Far from Home

By Modesto Boton



Modesto came to the United States from Guatemala alone when he was fifteen. Since then he has truly thrived, quickly learning English and getting involved in school. He spends most of his time playing sports and is part of the soccer, track and volleyball teams at North High School. Church is also a very important part of his life.

Modesto plans to be a history teacher after he graduates from college and has applied to Worcester State, Assumption, Bridgewater, Salem State and Dean College.

Being a new immigrant in the United States is hard when you don't speak the language but it's even harder when you come by yourself and you don't have your family here to support you. I came here from Guatemala four years ago by myself and was then placed in a foster family in Phoenix, Arizona for four months. When I started school, it was very tough for me. There were times when I remember having to use the toilet and not going because I didn't know how to ask in English or was worried that other students and teachers would laugh at how I asked. When I was with my foster family watching TV, I got frustrated so many times because I couldn't understand what was going on. I never talked to anyone in school because I thought that my English was horrible, and they would not be able to understand me.

After those four months in Phoenix, Arizona I was sent to Massachusetts, a state I knew nothing about. I was placed in another foster family and at first, it seemed impossible to get used to their rules and lifestyle. At the same time, I was still struggling with getting used to being in the US and learning English.

Before I was sent to high school, I had to go to a program called New Citizen Center and that is where I met students just like me from other countries, who were also having a hard time learning English. I met students from Latin America like me, but I decided not to hang out with them, because I wanted to practice my English with African students so that I would be able to move on to high school.

The preparation paid off and one year later I received a letter saying that I was fully prepared to go to North High School. My first few weeks were hard. I needed to memorize the room numbers and I even got lost once in that big building. I was still having trouble reading in English, but then I started to read book after book; I read the newspaper every day, read everything that I saw, asked questions about the meaning of the words. I bought myself an MP3 Player and listened to music in English, watched TV and stayed every day for after school activities like soccer, volleyball and extra help with math and science. After a while, I was able to assimilate into the school, making new friends from all over the world. US History became my favorite subject as well as English. Now I think that I can say I know even more about the USA than my own country.

This experience of coming to the US alone has been very difficult but I have learned so many things through my path. I have enjoyed learning a new language and learning how to communicate with people. I think with all that I have been through during the last four years, I have learned how to become independent from my family and foster parents. I know that I am responsible and will be able to handle anything that comes my way.

Inspired by Obstacles

By Joseph Allen



Joseph, or Joe, is an outstanding student at South High School who has a strong interest in engineering. Joe's difficult upbringing has provided him with a strong understanding of the need to obtain a college degree. Through his involvement with the Robotics team, he has discovered his passion for engineering and plans to pursue this interest in college.

Joe has applied to Boston University, Wentworth, UMass Lowell, Suffolk University, Northeastern University, College of the Holy Cross, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, University of Rhode Island, UMass Amherst, and WPI.

Almost ten years ago I moved from the diverse city of Worcester to the white suburban town of Auburn. It was a somewhat unorthodox living arrangement compared to the normal mother and father setting. It was me, my brother, my mom, and my great grandmother.

My mom had just gotten a job at a Price Chopper down the street, I started at a new school and everything seemed to be going well. As time wore on, my mother made friends and got a management position in her department. Eventually though, I began to see a dark side of her new lifestyle, a side involving partying, drugs, alcohol, and staying away from home for long periods of time. At first, it was a few days here and there, but it soon turned into weeks and then months, until I never saw her at all.

Through all of this my great-grandmother had to care for my brother and I on the little money she received from social security. I wish I could say we all got along and made this work, but eventually the Department of Social Services was called in to investigate. Their investigation led to the fateful day that would change the way I think forever. After much questioning and counseling, my mother became fed up with the hassle this was causing her. When warned of the possibility of having her children taken away, she turned to the social worker and shouted, "I don't want the kids, you take them!" Hearing every word, I was shocked and hurt, especially by the fact that she knew I was in the next room. The next thing I knew, I watched her get into her car with her boyfriend and speed off.

After this, my grandmother who was living in Michigan, swooped in to save my brother and I from being lost in the system. It was a good feeling to know I would be living somewhere safe with family but the damage had already been done. I am still in shock at how heartless my mother behaved. Coming from a poor family, I always valued my family because I knew that they would always be there for me. My mother's actions called this into question. If a woman could do this to her own children, her own flesh and blood, what else could she be capable of? How could anyone willingly do this to a family member? From that day on, I made myself a promise. When I have a family of my own, I will do anything and everything to make sure we do not end up in this position; a fighting, broken family.

Pursuing a successful career will give me the opportunity to give my own family the life I never had. In order to attain that career, I need a college education to go along with it. Growing up barely getting by has given me some perspective. It makes me prioritize and realize what I need to do to get my dream job. I need to focus on my school work, challenge myself to take harder courses and push myself to be the best I can be.

Alone but Determined

By Cooper Zuo Jr



Cooper attends Doherty Memorial High School where he is very athletic and is part of the Football, Basketball and Track teams. He is originally from Liberia and has been living in Worcester on his own since he started high school. When he is not playing sports, he spends much of his time working at a nursing home and attending church.

Cooper is interested in going into the medical field or athletic management and has applied to UMass Amherst, UMass Dartmouth, Salem State, Framingham State, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts among others.

The first few years of my life, I lived in Liberia with my mother and father but was separated from them at the age of seven when I was sent to the United States because they wanted me to have a better life than they had. My mother told me, before I left "I gave you life, now it's up to you to make something out of it."

Leaving my parents to come to America was extremely difficult. I had no idea where I was going or what the purpose of it all was. I was to live in America with my brothers and sisters that I had only known from stories my parents told. The most difficult part of the transition was the language barrier, which set me apart from everyone around me. It didn't help that my brother would tell me I would never make it to college because I couldn't speak or read English. The person that should have been there for me was constantly putting me down.

After a few months of living with my brothers and sisters, many problems arose. My brother insisted I was causing problems at home. He didn't like that I spent so much time at my friends' houses or that I would come home late at night. Eventually, he sold the house and left my family and me without anywhere to go. We all went our separate ways and I didn't hear from them for about a year. I moved in with a friend and his family. I couldn't believe my own family would do such a thing to me-leave me with no one. I was completely on my own. I mowed lawns around the neighborhood to save money and buy myself clothes and school supplies. When I graduated from elementary school, I watched as my fellow classmates and their parents exchanged kisses, hugs, and took pictures. I felt like I was the only student there without a support system. I questioned whether anyone really cared about me. I would cry at night because I didn't understand what I was doing here in America.

In the beginning of my freshman year, I was officially put into foster care and assigned a social worker. I started going to church and playing sports after school to keep myself busy. Life wasn't easy, but I didn't let it hold me down. I wanted a better life for myself and I wanted to make my parents proud.

One of the things I've learned about life is that it's not a fast food restaurant like Burger King; you're not going to have everything your way! I've learned to rely on myself. My parents gave me the opportunity to live in America and better my life. I look back at the life I left behind in Africa and appreciate what I have here. I want to be the first in my family to graduate college. I've learned to fight for what I want, what I believe in, and I now know that I can overcome any of life's obstacles. My parents aren't here to see me achieve all that I have, but it won't stop me from working as hard as I can to become successful in America.

Following in My Abuelo's Footsteps

By Cristopher Jimenez



Cristopher, was born in Puerto Rico and moved to the United States as a young boy. As a student at Worcester Technical High School, Cristopher has been able to explore the different culinary classes the school offers. In efforts to follow his grandfather's influence in developing a passion for food, Cristopher has worked at restaurants in Worcester and also works at a local catering company. He hopes to attend a culinary school in order to learn the proper techniques he will need in order to become the next great chef.

He has applied Johnson & Wales, Culinary Institute of America, Worcester State, Southern New Hampshire University, UMass Amherst, Newbury College and the University of New Haven.

When I was a young child, my abuelo (grandfather) and I were walking down the banks of a river in Puerto Rico, looking for wild herbs that he used in his cooking. He stopped, plucked a reddish brown plant from the ground, smelled it, closed his eyes and waited for a few seconds. I wondered what he was thinking about, so I asked him and he replied, "I am thinking about the perfect dish that this plant would go in." I could already taste the dish. A very famous Puerto Rican dish "pasteles", grated plantains, pork meat and other ingredients wrapped in banana leaves and boiled. "Do you love this? Cooking, I mean" I asked. He looked at me and said in Spanish, "When you're older and you start cooking, you tell me if I love it."

Ever since, my abuelo's sentence has resonated with me. I spent most of my time in my grandparents' house because my parents worked so much. I was able to learn all of my abuelo's tricks and techniques. He taught me how to make so many delicious Hispanic dishes with different Latin flavors. Through his teachings and passion, I was able to love and appreciate cooking. Even though through him I found my love of cooking, one more important lesson that my abuelo taught me was to never give up on something that you believe in. My abuelo has loved cooking ever since he was a child but his family never supported his dream because in my culture, cooking is for the women. He did not let the stereotype hold him back and that is why like him, I will never give up on what I believe in.

Knowing that I wanted to pursue cooking, I have started taking steps towards that goal. I have begun using the techniques that my abuelo taught me at my high school. Thanks to him, most of my cooking at school has a Latin flavor that just makes every dish taste like Caribbean heaven. Knowing how to incorporate different ethnic flavors into my cooking is a very important quality which would not have been possible without the guidance and counseling from my abuelo. Also, thanks to him I have the courage to pursue a career in the culinary world.

My abuelo is my hero not because he fights evil or saves the world, but because he lives and he loves what he does. He was not ashamed of what he did even though his loved ones were. He might not have cooked for a living, but he lives to cook. Now that I am older and have experience in the kitchen, I can understand why my abuelo loves cooking. I hope to follow in his footsteps, pursue my passion and one day become a great chef.

The Thrill of the Unknown

By Susan Niroula



Susan is originally from Nepal and has only been in Worcester for a year and a half. She enjoys living here and has found the time to make good friends and get involved at her school. In her spare time she participates in the book club and drama club at University Park Campus School and also volunteers at the Lutheran home.

Susan is interested in going to a school with a good premed program and has applied to UMass Amherst, Tufts, Clark, Wellesley, Worcester State, Dartmouth and Bryn Mawr.

I had never been out of my country before-not even to India or China which share borders with us-and there I was on a plane to the U.S.A., to the other side of the world. The airport was bustling with people; some looking for their friends and family and some just sad to see their loved ones go. There was chaos. One could easily get lost in the sea of people, but there was also melancholy in the air, sadness of departure.

I was feeling lightheaded...with excitement? Sorrow? I wasn't sure. My grandmother had me in a tight hug. She was crying, and although I was equally sad to leave her tears wouldn't come to my eyes. We said our goodbyes, and she left.

I boarded the plane eager to meet my mom after two years but, reluctant to leave behind the home I had always known. As the plane took off, reality hit me. I didn't know when I would be coming back, if ever I would!

After a two day flight, on May 13, 2008 we were finally here. I was starting school in August, and I spent the two months of summer exploring the foreign world-the land of opportunities.

There were many firsts for me during this short period of time. There was the first time I saw an ocean, which for a person coming from a landlocked country is a big deal; the first time I rode a train, an underground and underwater one for that matter; the first time I was on a ferry out in the sea enjoying the salty wind playing in my face; the first time I saw skyscrapers which were not on a screen; the first time I saw whales, the biggest mammal of all; the first time I saw and heard seals and found they sounded like a man; the first time I ate m&m's and fell in love with them; and the first time I ate McDonald's and got hooked. They were the most memorable days of my life.

Everyone, especially my parents, expected me to go through some kind of adjustment problem. I admit I was a little apprehensive, but I would be lying if I denied that I was having the time of my life. I was thoroughly enjoying myself, exhilarated in the thrill of the unknown and its discovery. Although Nepal and America are worlds apart in every sense, I did not let the differences, the newness, scare me from venturing out and exploring new realms. Nor will I in the days to come.

How You Can Help

Thank you for taking the time to read the essays in this book. We hope you agree that the preceding pages tell the stories of some remarkable young adults. Each of these students was fortunate to have the support of a Bottom Line counselor throughout the college admission process. Unfortunately, the reality of the overall situation is more daunting:

- ◆ There are about 1,600 high school seniors in the Worcester Public Schools
- ◆ Only about 40% of them will enroll in a four-year college
- ◆ Out of the 40% that enroll, many less will actually make it to graduation

The message is clear. Worcester students need better help getting into the right schools, and many of them need ongoing support while in college. Bottom Line's proven programming model addresses these formidable issues head on. We work with students to help them gain access to college and maintain a constant presence in their lives until they graduate.

For the last twelve years in Boston and two years in Worcester, we have been able to offer a high quality advising service at no cost to the students. As happens with any quality service, word has spread quickly among our constituents about the work we do and the demand for our program has never been greater. In Worcester, we have been able to serve more than 115 students during our second year. In the coming years we hope to continue to work with equal numbers in our Worcester office in order to serve all of the students who seek our help.

To learn more about how you can help more disadvantaged students get in to college, graduate from college and go far in life, please contact us or visit our office. We look forward to hearing from you.

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Bottom Line is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Your charitable contribution will be tax deductible.



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