

Looking Forward to my New Future

Ana M. Toro

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Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, a German philosopher and writer, once wrote, "Treat people as if they were what they ought to be and help them become what they are capable of being." Some people affirm the notion that the world gives us a myriad of opportunities, while others argue that you can't get anywhere unless you belong to a certain class of people. On the other hand, there are those who even declare that destiny directs us towards our rightful place. On the contrary, I believe that people can paint their own destiny regardless of how much money they have, their race, their ethnicity, or their immigration status. From my earliest memories, my deep understanding of the immense challenges of my home country, my intimate sense of all the adversities my family has faced, and my boundless love for them, inspired me to seek the means to make a lasting contribution to the world through my education. And who am I to understand it, but in his vastness, God, with the certainty of having contemplated my efforts and tribulations, led me to a wonderful educational institution, San Jacinto College, where I embarked on the path to my long-cherished dream and goal, which is to become a Registered Nurse in the United States.

Ever since I was just a little girl, I've always wanted to be a doctor, or a psychologist. The desire to understand the workings of the body, mind, and help people preserve, recover, or overcome health problems has been one of my most passionate interests. In addition, I come from a family that has always revered the utmost value of education. Unfortunately, such ambitions require money to achieve. My family's financial situation has been far from ordinary, and perhaps an understanding of it could better explain the challenges I have faced in achieving access to higher education in America, the difficulties in financing my college tuition, and my living expenses.

Coming from a lower-middle-class family, I knew that the only way to help my family overcome the economic crisis Ecuador was facing was through education. In light of this, when the opportunity presented itself to come and study in the United States, I saw it as a blessing from God, who understood my family's situation. In a country where most families are subsidized with an income of less than \$400, it's a tragic story for most citizens. Ecuador's economic situation has taken a terrible toll on its population, and my family was caught in the struggle. Having been married since the age of 19 and blessed with the most beautiful gift bestowed upon my husband and me, our first child, we survived on a low income, and yet it put us in a better economic condition than most people in Ecuador.

I arrived from Ecuador seven years ago. With Spanish being my native language, English was a factor that presented some obstacles. However, I strive to do my best in everything I do and have dedicated myself for perfecting my English skills since the very beginning. When I searched for information at San Jacinto College, the people who helped me were extremely kind and encouraging. The International Student Office, in particular, had an advisor who has been immensely supportive throughout this journey. With boundless empathy, she helped me explore the best class options to pursue this dream. I successfully completed the English proficiency requirement and was prepared to meet the prerequisites for a future application to the School of Nursing.

During this second phase, a marvelous surprise arrived. I found myself pregnant once again. Although my new baby was a complete blessing, achieving my goal became more arduous. I found myself in the predicament of who would take care of my baby while I attended college.

Sadly, the pandemic emerged; however, this allowed me to be with my newborn while taking online classes, a privilege granted to international students temporarily due to the difficult circumstances. I remember taking exams through Respondus, an app for live online testing, while sometimes breastfeeding my son. In this way, I managed to complete my prerequisites. Also, during this period, the international student office invited me to apply for a scholarship for students of Hispanic descent, and I am immensely proud to have won it three times to this day. This was an immense help to my family.

Furthermore, the main reason for attending a community college was the cost, as paying for college was impossible for us. Even without having set foot in a university, the infrastructure, the classes, the faculty, the laboratories, the libraries, and, above all, the caring and supporting people of the institution are second to none. While I was getting my nursing school prerequisites, as international students, we were required to have 12 credits each semester, which meant being a full-time student. I managed to earn two different associate degrees, one in Arts and one in Life Sciences. Every graduation and winning the scholarships were a celebration for my family, both here and in Ecuador, and especially for me. Although demanding and exhausting, every endeavor in the United States has had its rewards.

The day to apply to nursing school had arrived. I knew how hard it could be to be accepted, but I also knew I wouldn't give up. To my surprise, I was accepted on the first try, my heart overflowing with joy, and hope. The first day of orientation for the new students was filled with intense emotions, as I continued to meet people within the school who have consistently provided us with guidance, motivation, and support. For example, this college and specifically the nursing

school offer students various financial support resources for books, software, uniforms, lab materials, and even daycare for our children. In addition to TASFA/FASFA assistance, they offer the option to pay tuition fees in up to four installments. Although the number of such options is limited for international students, the existing ones are still of great help and motivation. One of the initiatives that I applaud a lot is the support groups that meet regularly during the semester. This space is designed to provide us with help and strategies to manage stress, anxiety, organize our time effectively, and access more resources.

To conclude, in the midst of these written words, it becomes evident what Johann Wolfgang von Goethe eloquently said; that kindness toward others is what ignites the flame of their potential. My experience at San Jacinto College is a living testament to this belief. This institution, with its infrastructure, remarkable faculty, dedicated staff, and supportive initiatives, have guided many dreamers like me, lighting the way to a brighter tomorrow. The scholarships I have received have transcended mere financial aid, have fostered my academic development, and have bolstered my resolute dedication to success. As I get closer to achieving my dream and goal of becoming a registered nurse in the United States, I am humbled by the profound impact of this educational institution. This is where I have discovered my true potential and strength to shape my future, overcoming the various obstacles of social class, racial identity, cultural heritage, and immigration status. With deep gratitude in my heart and unwavering determination in my soul, I immensely praise this distinguished institution for taking me to my well-deserved rightful place and not for not only changing me but for giving me the opportunity to change the lives of my loved ones and perhaps, however small, the world.