



Ruth Lira, SVCF YES™ scholar attending CSU East Bay

Looking back on my life I would have never guessed this is where I would be standing. Four years ago I debated not continuing onto a higher education, and today I am very grateful that I did. If it had not been for the people in my life who pushed me (urged me) so enthusiastically to carry on I doubt I would be writing this today. These same people are the ones who have given me a second chance at life risking a great deal to see myself succeed through a vision they all saw before I had. Not only have they grown to become my parents, they are also my mentors. My foster parents have seen me through the little things (messy rooms, fights w/ my foster sister, boyfriends, bills, etc.) as well as the bigger things (college, love, affection, and understanding) by supporting me every step of the way. Without them and SVCF, who have given me and many others the opportunity to financially afford our education, I can only imagine where I would be today.

From the time I was eight years old I had wanted to run away from home because I was mistreated. My birthmother died when I was a month old and left behind her three daughters, two from a previous marriage, and two sons. I was raised mostly by my birthfather who kept me indoors cleaning and cooking from the time I was four years old. He would abuse me not only physically and emotionally, but psychologically. I was not taught to think for myself or care for myself for that matter, but to make sure

## My Story

By Ruth Lira

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the house was vacuumed, kitchen swept and mopped, dishes washed, and meals on the table. He constantly would say, “You will be nothing but a housemaid to some man.” I endured plenty of hostility from him and many nights I would cry myself to sleep.

When I was sixteen an incident occurred at my home that made me realize that I no longer had to live with all of the lies and threats that my father placed upon me behind closed doors – when no one was around to protect me. I told the police that I did not want to live at home any longer and if they did not take me away I don’t think I would see the light of day ever again. After much discussion between my father and the officers, they decided to take me to the Children’s Shelter because my father would not allow me to stay with any of my older sisters. From that day on I have never looked back.

From the time I walked into the Children’s Shelter I knew I was going to be safe now. After a week of arguing with my social worker who wanted to return me back to my father, I stood up and said, “There is no way I am going back and that’s final.” She then looked into relatives whom would take me in, and my oldest sister picked me up. However, two months later my sister returned me back to the Children’s Shelter. I was happy to be back and at that moment I knew I was home. Everyday I was happier and knew I would be fine now. God helped me see my way out and has walked beside me ever since. After a month I moved into my foster parents’ home, and I was sad to be leaving the Children’s Shelter. After months and months of court dates, my birthfather gave up his rights. I was finally free, and it never felt so good. I was free to wish, dream, and live a somewhat normal life.

Normal is not something I know very much of, but I try to live it that way as much as possible; It never will be though... I will always have my past to remind myself of where I have been and what I have been through. My foster parents whom I now consider themselves my parents are the ones who taught me how to love, what affection really is, an understanding of who I am, and to dream as high as I can. This lesson did not happen overnight, but it has been going on for five years now and counting. Without them I would not have applied for college, let alone have a family to belong to. They encouraged me to go to college and there was no other choice but to go. I’m glad I did.

The SVCF YES™ program provided the support I needed to attend California State University East Bay, formally CSU Hayward. Without SVCF I would not be in college now. I will graduate in Spring of 2007 and I plan on furthering my education by going onto medical school shortly after that. So thank you to everyone associated with SVCF—staff, board, and donors—because without your support I would not be where I am today! ✨



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