

Essays on adversity and achievement
by Bottom Line students

I am the opportunity

*Now, I'm going to accept that next challenge
to engage in it.*
Afraid? No.
Hesitant? Of course not.
Ready? As I'll ever be.



Bottom Line

Get in • Graduate • Go far

Success depends on you

One Goal. 1,800 Paths to Success.

The essays in this book were written by New York City high school seniors from the Class of 2012 who participate in Bottom Line's College Access Program. These essays tell the stories of students who have faced incredible obstacles and demonstrated the courage and persistence to overcome them. Each student has a unique background and circumstances, but also a common goal: to earn a college degree.

The authors of these essays are 10 of 125 high school seniors who received one-on-one support from Bottom Line throughout the college application process. Many will continue to receive support from Bottom Line for another 4-6 years while they attend college. They are joined by 1,800 more high school and college students who have come to Bottom Line to receive the support they need to reach their goals.

Bottom Line is a non-profit organization that helps at-risk youth get into and graduate from college by providing one-on-one guidance and support. We believe that students from homes with lower incomes and limited knowledge about college need long-term mentoring and guidance to succeed. With this philosophy, 74% of our college students have graduated within 6 years, more than twice the graduation rate of students from similar backgrounds. In June 2011, Bottom Line replicated in New York from Boston and began serving economically and socially disadvantaged students from New York City. Over the next five years, we will expand to serve thousands of New York City high school and college students each year.

Most Bottom Line students are in the first generation of their family to go to college. Some have been in the United States for only a few years. Others play a critical role in providing financial support and other resources to their families. These remarkable young adults are working hard to overcome significant hurdles and become role models for their community, family, and peers. Bottom Line is here to ensure that they can achieve this goal.

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Be the Music

by Joceline Nieves



Joceline lives in Brooklyn, NY and attends the Academy of Urban Planning. She's active in a variety of school clubs and service organizations and is passionate about music, animals, and experiencing the outdoors.

Joceline is excited to pursue her interests at SUNY New Paltz next fall.

In my life I've had people mistreat me, abandon me and lie to me, but I know there's more to life than what I've gone through. My father died of cancer when I was a baby, affecting not only me but also my mother in a big way. She was unable to get over the loss of my father, but also that of my older brother. Before I was born, he died at the age of 6 in a car accident, and my mom felt like she lost everything.

When I was little, my mother was my entire world. But my mom's life growing up was rough and she never had the chance to deal with what happened to her. When problems built up she began to disappear, use drugs. At first my mom would leave for the night and come back the next day; then, a couple of days later. When she was not sleeping in her bed for months, I was home taking care of my family - there was no one else. She would sometimes bring us food but most nights we would go to sleep hungry and cold. What hurt the most was that my mom abandoned me and she knew what she was doing. It was hard for me to believe that all this was actually happening to me. I didn't know how to process what was going on - I just had to provide and care for my family.

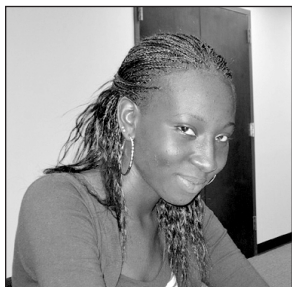
I was now in charge of my brothers, alone, at the age of 14. I loved them, but they were impossible for me to mother. As my mom found her escape, I found mine. When my brothers wouldn't listen, I would lock myself in my room and escape with music, taking away my stress. I needed inspiration, and listening to lyrics helped me believe that things would get better. Even when I felt like I had no one, I always had my music.

In tenth grade, I joined a program where I met with a mentor weekly; I began to trust other people and see the life I wanted for myself. We called Administration for Children's Services, even though I was terrified that my family would blame me for being separated. I ended up moving into my cousin's house and my brothers moved in with my older sister. Looking back, I should have talked about this sooner - it's better for both my brothers and me. We now have all the things that we didn't have before and I am able to live my own life and be a teenager again.

I know how hard life can be at the age of 17. I want to be the music for other people, I want to be peace and strength and hope for others - the way music was for me. I hope my brothers follow in my footsteps and understand that no matter what happens, they can do big things if they stay dedicated because I am the biggest example! My story is not sad or angry, but happy and fulfilled. I made it. I grew, and I will continue to grow.

The Education of a Girl

by Amie Dukuray



Amie lived most of her life in The Gambia and moved to New York City three years ago. She currently lives in Harlem with her father and two younger brothers and attends the Legacy School for Integrated Studies. Amie is an active member of many school clubs and service organizations, including as a Future Fellow at the Future Project, and works part time at McDonald's.

Amie will continue her education next fall at Daemen College.

The sun rises but some people live in the darkness of the past. I used to live in Gambia. There are some things I wish I could forget. I just do not agree with the traditional ways of life. When I see or hear how they treat women, my heart beats fast, so fast I can hear it like a sound of a drum. I am not saying they are wrong, because people who have lived there before me have benefited by following these customs, but I think their ideas cannot fit in this generation.

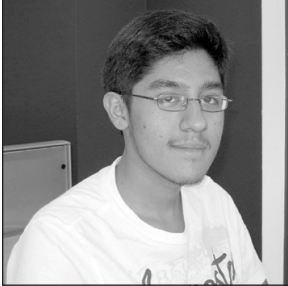
In the village I lived, few went to school. Most of the girls stayed at home and helped their parents with domestic work. I was lucky to have a mother who had seen another part of the world and valued education. I remember sitting outside with my mother and our young neighbor reading a book when her mother came out and started roaring at my mom. She said, "Why do you not let your daughter stay home and work rather than go to school? She is wasting my daughter's time reading a book to her." My mother looked at her; I started crying with her daughter. If those tears could write words, they would explain how valuable education is. My schooling became an issue. People in this village did not want me to attend school because they believe that girls are incapable of taking the position of men. We had to move to the city where I could go to school.

Even in the city where girls went to school, culture and traditions were not avoided. Every day after school I went to my aunt's house to play with my cousin. One day in school I had a strange feeling, like I knew something was not right. I went to my aunt's house – her face and the song she was singing told me that everything was not well. She told me that my cousin was taken to where they conduct female genital mutilation. I was shocked. I had learned about this in school, but I did not know it was still practiced. My mind wandered to a recent day in school when we all cried as a classmate told us her story of being circumcised, how the blood ran like an endless stream and how much pain she was in. I screamed and cried more than ever, all the blood pumping out of my heart was going every direction, ripping my veins. My cousin was just one month old; I could not imagine the pain she was in, the amount of blood she was losing from her body. I wished I could take her pain, her cry in the night. All her laughter and smiles turned into moans and cries.

I learned to speak my mind and say things that benefit others. I have shown my cousin how to succeed by making her mom take her to school. I shall give the people who believed in female circumcision the lasting evidence that what they do to young girls is wrong and that education is right.

Not Alone

by Kevin Zevallos



Kevin lives with his mom, sister, and niece in Brooklyn where he also attends the High School of Telecommunication Arts and Technology. He is a leader in his school government and is starring in his high school musical *Legally Blonde*.

Kevin fell in love with Connecticut College when he first visited it, and is looking forward to being a student there next fall.

I live alone—I always have since elementary school. I wasn't privileged with having my parents there for me. I didn't grow up with my father; he left when I was four. My mom worked from morning to night, so I spent no time with her. While I grew to appreciate her sacrifices, it strained our relationship. My sister, Paola however, was there for me.

Paola picked me up every day from elementary school. Walking home was the best time of my day; the time I got to connect with a person and actually tell them what I drew in school or the new song I learned to play on my recorder. She was the one who fed me, read me bedtime stories and tucked me into bed. I grew to love her like a mother. In time, Paola left me too.

Having to tend to her newborn child LaMya, my sister could no longer devote her attention to me. Since I was only in second grade when Paola had LaMya, I did not comprehend my sister's actions. I felt abandoned, and I longed to hear someone say "I'm proud of you". I used that as a driving force to excel in elementary school.

Before my niece was born I wasn't the brightest kid; I would get Cs and Bs. Diligent studying, however, paid off. In the fifth grade, Kings County sent me a letter about the "Citation of Honor." I was one out of two kids in my school to receive this award. My mother and sister told me "si tu quieres, puedes", (if you want it, you can achieve it). Like the engraving on a statue, those words stuck with me forever. I felt empowered knowing my mother and sister had faith in me. In high school, when my mother told me "yo quiero que tengas un mejor vida que la mia", (I want you to have a better life than mine), I finally accepted that they had other responsibilities. I don't remember the last time anyone asked me how my day was, but I admire my family's sacrifices for their children to have a better life.

Now I pick up my niece from school and listen to her day as my sister did for me. Everything I learned from my family, I pass on to LaMya. My family's values of sacrifice and self-determination, values embodied in my persona, I echo on to her. One day, if she ever feels lonely, she'll know who to come to.

Work drains so much vitality from the people I care about. I know they must work so that one day I will go to a great college, have a good career, and be successful. I will not let my family's economic situation deter me from my future. I used to be selfish and stubborn; I longed for their attention to hear that they are proud of me when in reality they always were. I now understand and don't feel so alone anymore.

Humble

by Danny Perez



Danny lives in Brooklyn with his parents and brother, Johnny. He attends High School of Telecommunication Arts and Technology. Danny is on the math team, has interned at the Lutheran Medical Center, and enjoys photography and collecting sneakers in his spare time.

Danny is excited to be attending SUNY New Paltz next fall.

As a young kid, I wasn't spoiled by my parents. I was truly humble that I had at least one pair of sneakers on my feet, ones that I received as a reward for my excellent grades. However, my sneakers were beginning to tear apart and smell. I asked my parents if they could get me a new pair; they responded: "Sorry, but we don't have enough money." Although I was disappointed, I maintained my excellent grades and patiently waited for another pair. I really wanted a new pair, not just to fit in, but to feel that reward that motivated me to achieve my goals.

On July 13, 2010, 4:00 A.M. my alarm rang. I was excited and had not slept at all! Although it was pitch black and no one was walking around, I ran to the local sneaker store for the most anticipated sneaker of the summer, the Air Jordan 7 Retro: For the Love of the Game edition! I didn't have enough money before the release date, but was so eager to get this pair that I got a job. I washed dishes in my house daily and scrubbed the bathroom floor clean to get more allowance. At last, with patience and determination, I had earned enough money to get the sneakers. However, when I paid for them and ran home, my excitement disappeared. The joy I thought they would bring never happened. I felt the same way after I got the sneakers as I had before. I thought I would feel thrilled, but instead I felt disappointed with or without the sneakers.

I learned a lesson that moment. I realized the joy comes from the process, the determination and hard work, not the material possession. I realized I felt pride when working, not when I wore the sneakers. I took this lesson to high school with me. I used to be in Resource class because I had a learning disability. I never knew why I was labeled with a learning disability, but I worked really hard regardless of this label. I used the extra time I was given for tests, quizzes, homework, and projects to make sure I earned excellent grades. The process of taking time and working hard motivated me.

In my Junior year I was on track for the Advanced Regents Diploma, but I still had to take a foreign language class and Regents Exam to earn that distinction. Resource class would take the place of a Spanish class. At that point, I made the decision to push myself and to drop Resource class, knowing that I needed to be more motivated without it to maintain my high grades. I had the confidence and enthusiasm to succeed because of my hard work. Ultimately, the report card grade did not really matter but, rather, the process to get the outstanding grades without Resource class was most important. This is what I learned from my sneakers. I realized that if I set any goal, I can truly achieve it through determination and effort. The end product is not as important as the process.

A Heritage Inspired

by Christine Maynard



Christine was born in Trinidad and moved to New York City two years ago. She currently lives in Brooklyn with her parents and four siblings. She attends STAR Early College High School, where she takes classes at Brooklyn College. Christine keeps busy with her school work and her part time job at Popeye's. She enjoys writing, psychology, and wants to pursue a career in medicine.

Christine is excited to be attending SUNY Buffalo State College next fall.

Such a bold man, powerful, adamant, and proud. He took from others the things that were irreplaceable, and they knew not to defy him, for death was the penalty. His empire was in the process of becoming a marvelous one, with its foundation built by the 'inferior ones,' shipped across the Atlantic, doomed to a life of torture and nostalgia. They wanted to fight, but there was never a struggle when it came to the slave master's whip. So to their defeat, they toiled, and they toiled...

My great-grandfather was born on the island of Trinidad to a Hispanic plantation owner and an African slave. The history of his last name burdened my mother with the shame of being related to a people who had no regard for the lives of anyone of direct African descent. Growing up, all opportunities to advance in life were taken away as she was ridiculed because of her heritage. I've chosen to make the torture end with me, because I feel empowered by my history to become everything my past generations wanted me to become. It is my duty to regain the hope that was once lost and I have a right to give back to my community everything that was taken away.

The America my forefathers dreamed of is not the land I live in now. This bed of roses has its thorns; it is these thorns - an unstable economy, increase in emigration, and budget cuts - that have pinned me to reality: without an education, I cannot do any justice to my mother's legacy. Two years of living in a country so welcoming to change, self expression, and individuality has taught me to become a more tolerant person, and made me more appreciative of the differences between this culture and the one I came from. All my life, I longed to attend college here, so that I can learn differently, building character on my own, instead of being disciplined and drilled like the way I once was back home. I've had the privilege to partake in college classes at Brooklyn College. Although I was once afraid of the word 'college,' I have found the teaching so unique there that I now find comfort in it.

Attending college is not the 'big bang' that will create anything significant, however. It is success in college which will help my generation leave our impact on the world. I know my mother dreams of us becoming an inspiration to those who ever felt inferior because of their ethnicity or race, and we have been handed the opportunity to do so. It would be foolish to let this chance go to waste. To fulfill this dream, I must bring change by showing how much easier it is to become part of the solution rather than to add to problems or remain in a state of denial. It is imperative that I take all that I've learned and create awareness back in the land where I was born, because it is my past that will show how much of a difference I've made in the future.

Teamwork

by Rebecca Leon



Rebecca lives in Brooklyn with her mother and three younger siblings and attends STAR Early College High School. In addition to managing her school volleyball team, Rebecca is an active member of her church and Safe Horizons, a group that raises awareness about domestic violence.

Rebecca will begin her college career next fall at the Borough of Manhattan Community College.

A loud screech breaks through the tension in the air. Resting upon a high platform aligned with the net, the serious referee looks across the court, motioning for the next volleyball player to come up to the line. Looking with great scrutiny, he blows the whistle. Will her serve go over or will the other team get a chance to score? The server tosses the ball - and BAM! The volleyball comes smacking through the air, only to hit the floor within a split second. The referee blows the whistle again - announcing the end of the game!

Along with the scoreboard, sitting at a table in the gym are two people carefully recording the details of the game, including me. Who says the formula for a great team is only the players and the coach? Actually, a great team includes everyone - including me, the team manager. Through becoming the team manager of the Dutchmen Volleyball Team, I've learned a lot about responsibility, teamwork and confidence.

Being present at every practice and volleyball game is necessary. Not only am I present, but I also have the privilege to assist in practice. It's a heterogeneous mixture of grueling work accompanied by laughter and fun moments. At the volleyball games, I take care of score sheets that track the game, requiring a great deal of concentration - even one mistake can throw off the game, and the referee I have to pay attention to all the little details throughout the game.

The challenging work of the team manager is also rewarding. The best part of my job is encouraging my teammates to improve and I have been privileged to watch them grow as players. Not every moment of the game is rosy and sweet. There are times when the players are frustrated with themselves and their teammates. A lot of pressure is put on them to perform and sometimes even the best players freeze up. Words of encouragement from me are sometimes all it takes to motivate and encourage my teammates. I feel connected to my teammates and the overall outcome - although I am not playing the game myself. Knowing that I belong to this team, I walk the halls of my school with pride. I can recall the numerous times my heart has skipped a beat when the score was so close, and to see the look on my teammates faces when we win a game is more than priceless.

Before becoming the team manager, I considered myself self-sufficient, not seeing the need for teamwork or depending on anyone else. I've always had myself to count on for my success and failures. However, my job has allowed me to view people and the world in general in a different light. There are a lot of roles to play in a school community - and even in the world. Sometimes, it's the people behind the scenes that we normally don't notice who have the greatest impact on our lives. Every person in a school community is a part of the puzzle.

The Physics of Higher Education

by Elmer Rodriguez



Elmer Rodriguez moved to New York two years ago from Puerto Rico and currently lives in Brooklyn with his mom. He attends the Academy of Urban Planning where he plays volleyball and traveled to Nicaragua with Global Potential. Elmer was selected to become a member of the Gates Millennium Scholars Program.

Elmer is excited to study Physics at the University of Rochester next fall.

Newton's Law says, "What goes up, must come down" but I would say that in life "what goes down, can still go up." You may not be able to change the basic nature of things, but you can change your life for the better. Growing up my life was chaotic. Physics is order and logic. Physics requires the use of analytical techniques to construct magnificent theories that guide complex natural phenomena which also uncover the hidden secrets of nature. I live my life like a scientist, searching for new events and understandings. The knowledge acquired by Physics is reflected in technology creating improvements in the life and the knowledge of a human being. I will be a part of advancing that future.

My desire to explore nature's true identity and to help create a better world started at an early age. I grew up in slums of Puerto Rico, where everybody had a gun, and drugs were more popular than bread. The saddest part was that many involved in the illegal activities were my close friends and family in search of easy money. This was painful, as I saw too many loved ones disappear over the years. Through a series of fortunate events, I escaped this path I grew up with one solid truth: an education will lead to a better life and I have never lost sight of this goal. No one in my family has a University degree, but I will be the first. I have proven this by excelling in school, and rising to the top of my class. At an early age, I was nominated to attend the gifted program in my local middle school. My active participation in school events led to my reputation as a leader; I excelled at many endeavors, from athletics to community service. The government of Puerto Rico rewarded me in 2010 for my potential as an international leader and for my comprehensive abilities. The gift was a trip to New York City and India with other talented students from Puerto Rico.

When I returned, I decided that I had to get the best education possible I decided to come to the United States. I moved to Brooklyn, NY. I came not just to seek the "American Dream," I came to make my own dream a reality, a dream based in the perfection and precision that would make my skills and abilities valuable for their application to the modern world. Making it in a perfect combination between the power of understanding of the unknowns, and the nature of the universe.

My impact on society will be through my understanding of social issues and the application of physics, making the world a better place through innovation. There is some truth to the human homily, "you can never go home again" but I begin my next chapter in life for all those I left behind in search of a basic truth: a higher education equals a better life.

The Ink in My Pen

by Joy-Anne George



Joy-Anne lives with her older sister in Brooklyn. She attends STAR Early College High School. Since then she has worked hard in order to be able to graduate and go on to college. She has taken classes at Brooklyn College during her time in high school and has excelled in them.

Joy-Anne hopes to study English and is excited to attend Hamilton College next fall.

A stranger seeing me for the first time will notice that I look like any other average teenage girl but my struggles in life cannot be seen. Instead they are somewhat complex entities that have to be understood. Ever since the tender age of nine I have had some difficulties expressing myself verbally. I have been a hostage to this inherent fear that prevents me from doing so. It is not one I can overcome easily, it takes time and determination. It is accompanied by sweaty palms, the churning of my stomach and the quickening of my breath.

Over the years I have found alternate, somewhat effective ways of expressing myself and venting my frustrations. I found that I have strength in my written words. The gliding of the pen and the clicking sound of the point satisfies my urge of expression. Since then I have always clung to a pen like a second skin. It empowers and enables me to write down my innermost thoughts. Writing is the only way in which I can thoroughly express myself. There are many advantages of writing, but the most beneficial to me is the mere fact that there are no limitations or rules that are thrust upon a writer. It is my prerogative to determine how much I write, when I write and what techniques I use. People always say that the eyes are the windows to the soul, but pertaining to me, writing is the window to my soul.

Earlier this year I celebrated a small milestone. I presented a clear and precise project in English class. My group understood my past troubles and was very proud of me. Whenever I have previously tried to overcome this fear my words would get all mixed up, I would stutter, mumble and ramble a couple of incomprehensible sentences. It seemed no matter how prepared I was it was a task that I simply could not achieve. Sometimes I am eager to share my thoughts, my enthusiasm seeping through my pores. The words linger on my lips but I shut down. Instead I wallow in self-loathing, cursing myself out inwardly for my cowardice.

I want to use this experience as a foundation, as something that helps me hold my ground knowing that if I was able to overcome my fear of public speaking I can overcome anything. I am tired of being seen but not heard. I am a part of nature that goes unnoticed due to my unwillingness to speak out. I am nowhere close to finishing my journey but as the Chinese Proverb states, even the longest journey starts with one small step. I am eager to overcome this obstacle so I can unlock my inner voice and exhibit the talent I have within. One day my voice will be heard and my ideas will be shared with millions. One day I will make a difference and have an impact on the world. I will overcome this fear, and it will be the making of me. Until then, my mark on this world will be made with the ink in my pen.

Cadmiel

by Anabel Perez



Anabel is a student at Peace and Diversity High School in the Bronx. In addition to attending school, Anabel has volunteered as a legal translator for the National Coalition for Concerned Legal Professionals (NCCLP), which gives free legal advice to minorities and people who are struggling economically. Anabel hopes to pursue a career in law and criminal justice.

Next fall, Anabel will be part of the inaugural class at the CUNY New Community College.

Throughout my life I have been told: “Sometimes in order to get the good things you have to get past the bad.” I never really knew what this quote meant until recently. At the age of sixteen, I became pregnant with my son Cadmiel. I will not consider my son a mistake even though he was unplanned, but I do consider him a challenge. Having a kid when I was a kid myself was a very hard decision, but at the same time a worthwhile one.

Cadmiel has inspired me to do the best that I can for him and myself. I have learned to be both a mother and a father since Cadmiel’s father was not around for the first few months of Cadmiel’s life. Luckily, I am one of the few teenage moms who have emotional and economic support from my parents. But having them around is not enough to help with the struggles I have as a mother and a student. I have had to give up many things in order to take care of my son. Like any average teenager, I used to like going out with my friends, going to the movies and just having fun; but when you are a mother, these are not options anymore.

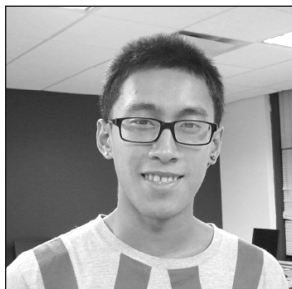
As the time passed, my son’s father took responsibility and everything seemed perfect. I used to think that the three of us could face anything together, but after a couple of months, that changed. My son’s father started to get aggressive and increasingly violent in front of me. I used to come home with bruises, but I still couldn’t see that I was being abused. My family even started to notice that there was something going on, but I always had a way of hiding it. It was the day that he punched me in the face that I realized that my life was in danger, and if I wanted to survive I had to get out.

After that day, I looked at myself in the mirror and noticed that the girl looking back at me was just not me. I was no longer the happy and positive person that I used to be. I asked myself, “How could all of this have happened?” and the only answer that I had was that I was blind. I realized I had to make a change.

Even though I came across this bump in the road I learned from it. I found the courage to report the incidents to the police. I have managed to raise my grades and make new friends. I have learned how to become stronger and fight for the safety of my son and myself. I have taught my son how to clap, run, dance and say a few words. They say that a mother is supposed to teach her child, but one thing Cadmiel taught me was to believe in myself because I am not only doing it for myself but for him as well.

Thank You, Mom

by Vanbiet Nguyen



Van lives in Brooklyn and attends the High School of Telecommunication Arts and Technology. He is the captain of his high school volleyball team and is involved in several community leagues as well.

Van is excited to study Philosophy at Wheaton College as a Posse Scholar next fall.

For a period of time, I lived without light. My parents didn't have enough money to pay for electricity. It had been months that we were living under candle light that eventually tarnished our white walls with dark ashes. I never really had a home and I've lived so much not knowing where to go. It does get lonely. I, at times, waited for life to come back and for love to greet me again. I waited for the darkness to cease and for our family to reunite once more. We were all scattered. I thought a lot, trying to find my Zen in my retreat, to endure the cruel world. I struggled alone next to my dim candle light. The air was lonely but it came to be more enjoyable as I learned to appreciate the simple things in life.

At times, I didn't see that my mom was trying her hardest. She had no skills whatsoever and would constantly be picked on. She couldn't cook, clean or even speak English. Why couldn't my mom be smarter, stronger or even more motherly? One time, I yelled at her because I was so mad for her uselessness. I saw the pain in her eyes as she saw mine. My heart dropped and flooded with guilt. I never wanted to make my mom sad. She was in the same situation as I and her delinquency couldn't be helped. I was sorry. Whatever my mother did usually went the wrong way. She didn't know how to take care of us or earn a living. We were always hungry. I remember a time when my mother came home with a box of noodles and was so happy to have that much. My mom didn't know and couldn't do much, but there was one thing she was absolutely sure of: that she did love us. My mom did everything in her power to make us happy. She loved us with all she had.

My mother was there to hold and nurture me. I'm all grown now. I'm not my mother's little boy anymore and my hairs are turning gray, but I will always retain my innocence and love. I had not always done well for my mom, but she has given me so much. Now it's time to give it all back.

Nowadays, everything is uniting with a low, but steady income, enough to keep us together again and going. My mom is simply happy with this. She doesn't want anything else, but I do. I want it all. I want to give her so much more. I want to show her more than she could have ever imagined. I want to find the truths of life. She wanted us to laugh and live life boundless and happy. For this, I'd give it all back. Education is beautiful. I want to learn and experience it all! Life is so beautiful. Transcendence is beautiful. Show me the way. Show me all of it!

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:

- Next fall, over 25,000 NYC students will be heading to college
- Only a third of NYC students who begin college next fall will complete their degrees
- Nationally, only 10% of students from the lowest-income families will earn a bachelor's degree

The message is clear: students need better help getting into the right schools, but they also need ongoing support while in college. Bottom Line's proven program model addresses these formidable issues head on. We work with students to help them gain access to college and we provide ongoing, comprehensive support until they graduate.

Since 1997, Bottom Line has been able to offer a high-quality advising service at no cost to our students, thanks to our generous supporters. As happens with any quality service, word has spread quickly about the work we do and the demand for our programs has never been greater.

Just over a year ago, Bottom Line opened our first office in New York City. With your help, over the next five years we will grow to serve thousands of New York City high school and college students.

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

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