Almaze Lee

Age:15

School: Classic Image dance

“I can be changed by what happens to me but I refuse to be reduced by it.”

-Maya Angelou

Like most of us, I have lived a life of ups and downs. But, unlike some people, I have not allowed the downs to determine who I am. Many things have happened in my life that have made me a better person, starting with being adopted out of poverty from Haiti at age 2. At age 8, I received the best gift of my life when my little sister was adopted into our family. I have learned so much about being a good big sister as my older sister was an amazing mentor to me and set a great example. We spent an amazing year together as a family, my sisters, my mom and dad and I. Then, tragically, my father became ill and passed away just before Christmas a year later. That was a terrible event that changed everyone in my family’s life and we have grieved for almost five years. My mom, my sisters and I grew to accept his loss and we had moved forward, still missing him dearly. Then, in 2019 my dear grandmother passed away from a fall, another huge loss for our family. It wasn't easy to lose another family member, but being the strong person that I am, finding a way to channel my sorrow made me a stronger person.

I have always loved to dance. When I dance, I feel free and as if nothing can go wrong. When I dance I am in the moment and I forget about all of the stresses in my life. In particular, I like hip hop dance. The quick, sharp movements are like a stress reliever for me. I also like ballet because the graceful movements allow me to move beyond my fears of loss. Whenever I find myself saddened by my grief over the loss of my father and my grandmother, I look to dance to escape my pain.

The song, “I Believe in Love” speaks to turning to your loved ones to help you get through tough times. The lyrics remind me that even though my father and grandmother are not present physically, their love will always be with me.

I am Almaze Lee and whatever new challenges in my new lids come, I will continue to let dance remind me that I can get through them gracefully.