

Olivia Anderson
Personal Statement
November 27, 2014

After months of watching the movie The Color Purple by Steven Spielberg, my parents became obsessed with the name "Olivia". They fell deeply in love everytime they watched that movie, and heard that name. On February 7, 1997, a baby girl was born to a sixteen year old mother, and an eighteen year old father and was named, O'Livia. Unsure of whether this was the best or worst thing that happened to the two teenagers, they took the challenge head on. I was pampered hourly, stared at with curious eyes, loved by strangers, and held with love. I lived as a princess day by day until my life took a turn for the worse.

Just eight months after I was born my father, Alvin Daniel Mayberry, went missing for four days. With an emotional mother, and a gone crazy family, I quickly became the center of attention. My father was found in Ford Lake, near I-94 east in Ypsilanti, MI. His cause of death: murder. He left my mom, who was now seventeen years old, to raise me on her own. My mother graduated high school in 1999, worked three jobs, and attended Washtenaw Community College to make ends meet for the both of us.

My mom is without a doubt the strongest woman I've ever met. She went through a relationship in which she was abused mentally and physically, and I couldn't do anything to help. I vowed to my mother and myself, that I would do absolutely anything I could to make our lives better.

I thought that it was going to be just me and my mom from here on out, but I was wrong. She married a man, and had two boys of whom are 9 years apart. I see my mom's pain every single day of wanting some way out. A way out of her hidden pain behind bottles of alcohol, a way out of her sarcastic remarks of not wanting a marriage, a way out of life and a way to happiness. I lost understanding of what love actually meant until I realized that the only actual love I had received was from my mom. She was the only one at all of my countless doctor appointments of blood work, echocardiograms, kidney scans, and daily blood pressure monitor works. I was diagnosed with hypertension (High blood pressure) at eight years old, and fought it for 9 years afterward. As of August 17, 2014, I was high blood pressure free.

Life has been hard. EXTREMELY hard, but I never go a day without telling myself that *"on my worst day, I live like someone on their greatest"*. It's motivation to keep going, and reach a place that I can be happy, and make my mother happy. She's worked her ass off to get me to where I am now, and I know she would continue to do so even if she were laying on her death bed. I've received countless awards for all that I have accomplished both academically and athletically. I have big dreams of becoming a pediatric endocrinologist and attending the University of Michigan, or Michigan State University. Any financial assistance I am awarded would greatly benefit me in being a step closer to reaching my dreams. My life is dedicated to my mother. I just want to make her proud.

Friday, February 10th at 8:10 am, I found my grandmother laying in her bed, so peaceful looking. She had passed away, my life was shattered. I felt like I had nothing to live for, the only one who had cared for me, just as much, maybe even a little more, was gone, and was never coming back.

Two of my brothers were incarcerated, one the summer of 2014, the other this past fall. I deal with that on a daily basis; the thought that my mother lost two sons, and I had lost two of my top supporters. I am trying to make my mother proud, to convince her that she did not fail, and that I can actually be something in life; graduate high school, go to college, and have a career. I hold a lot of weight on my shoulders, but I never give up because I have people who believe in me.

When I look back at the things I have been through, it almost seems impossible that I am on track to graduate in May, holding down a part time job, and controlling my anger. It is hard enough trying to overcome the stereotypes of the average African American teenager, but having to live up to the potential you know you have is tough.

I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder when I was about 6 years old. You see, when you are bipolar, your moods are never at a steady rate, you can be happy and content one minute, then something little can trigger you to be very violent and angry. I was always getting in trouble in school. I was fighting. You name it, I did it.

My anger had gotten so bad that, when I got to the seventh grade I was sent to an alternative school. I was capable of receiving all A's, but was surrounded by kids who had no home training, and barely went to school. That was not me, so I excelled through that year, maintaining a 4.0 GPA. The next year, I transitioned well back into a regular middle school, where my principal had noticed the change, and nominated me for the "Turn Around Student of the Year" award, which I had received a few weeks prior to that. My grandmother was so proud of me, then the unthinkable happened a few months after that; my grandmother was diagnosed with stage four lung cancer. That took an emotional toll on me, sooner or later I was back to my old ways, getting sent out of classes, disrespecting teachers, fighting; everything I had thought I had overcome, I was doing it. My grades were slipping where I barely passed the eighth grade, the only reason I passed was because the teachers knew I had potential.

High school was rough on me, with trying to find the right crowd to hang with, and dealing with my grandmother's illness was just way too much for me. Once again, I was sent to another alternative school, where I barely passed. As you can see, this was a pattern that has already been established. School administrators weren't always thrilled to give me another chance, but they had seen my potential.

You see, I believe everyone deserves another chance at life. I have seen my life going down the wrong path, I, myself didn't believe I would make it this far. Losing my grandmother to cancer, and my brothers to the system opened my eyes and made me realize that life is too short; one minute you can be here, and be gone the next. My losses in life made me who I am today, in fact, they made me a lot stronger, I learn to handle things with a straight, and a much clearer mindset. It took a lot of growing up to do, but I did it, and I will continue to strive for greatness. If I should be so fortunate by winning this scholarship, I plan to attend Southwestern Michigan College, and work on a double major in culinary arts and journalism.