*Tazmi Siddique*

**What’s Your Story**

**Change!**

I grew up in Hamtramck, a small town in Michigan that stretches roughly about 5 miles long. I arrived here at the age of 4 with my mom to begin our new lives. Taking my first step on American soil was a pretty big deal, the one thing that I can vividly remember was that there was a gigantic stretch limo that didn’t seem to end and a man wearing a black suit standing in front of it. The only thing I could remember about him at the time was that he was tall, really tall and he had a funny haircut, most of his hair was on one side of his head, on the other side looked like its been completely shaved off. His hair was odd looking but his mustache was just ridiculous, there was a long strip of hair placed on his upper lip that look like it belonged on the empty side of his head. He was holding a blue circular metal container that had all these various pictures of cookies on it, so I guessed it was a container full of cookies that he was trying to hand me, out of fear I ran behind my mom. I thought why would some random man just hand me a box of goodies? Well because it was my dad, and this was the first time we met.

I was overwhelmed with confusion when introduced to my dad mostly because I just met this man and now I have to call my “baba”. My dad moved to America a few months before I was born to find work and save up money for us. My entire existence at the time was focused on my mom, so you can probably tell the fear that was installed in me when I was approached by a large man in black. He did manage to win me over though, I mean how can you say no to a box of cookies?

The box of cookies was a unique looking container. It was circular shaped metal container that just fascinated me because it was a metal container that held food, which I wasn’t use to. Most of the cookies in Bangladesh (our homeland) were usually sold in paper or cardboard boxes. On the top half of the lid there was a picture of a enormous white house with what seemed to have grass as a roof, which I quickly assumed was the house were going to be living in, boy was I wrong. Just below the picture of the house in gold letters read *Royal Dansk Butter Cookies* and underneath that was a picture of numerous different kinds of cookies that I couldn’t wait to devour. Around the side of the container there was just a copy of what was on the lid. Till this day I still posses this container because it wasn’t just a container anymore it’s now a memento, a part of history that symbolizes the first time my dad and I met.

We moved into a fairly average sized home in Hamtramck. The house was made out of bricks that were all painted red and the porch was a dark shade of gray. Our house was located at the North side of Hamtramck on a street called Sobieski. It was a quiet neighborhood, but soon as my friends and I come outside not so much. I basically grew  up on the street, literally. I remember always getting into trouble and always causing problems with the neighbors. One of our neighbors, an old married couple would always threaten to call the police and complain about the loud noise to our parents. But what can you do, kids will be kids.

Everyday after school my friends and I would play soccer on the street of Sobieski, it really didn’t seem like soccer more like dodge ball with cars, but the cars weren’t doing such a good job dodging the ball. We had only one ball to play with for almost 4 years because our parents were hoping that once the ball pops we’ll move onto something else and they won’t get as many complaining neighbors at their doorstep. But we took care of our soccer ball, we made sure no one kicked it too hard, we never played by pointy objects, and we certainly never played by our insane neighbors. We loved that ball too much to let something happen to it.

Our ball is nothing but history now all I have of it is the memories a single picture. It was of me, playing the part of goalie on the verge of blocking the ball as it was coming towards me. Our ball was a bright yellow color that contained red hexagons placed all over it. There were a bunch of bumps and bruises all over the thing. I’m not even sure if it was yellow before we we bought it, regardless it meant something to me, meant something to my friends. At that time we all wanted to be professional soccer players and one day join a really honorable and respected club and travel the world playing soccer, but that soon changed when we started to grow a little older and everyone started to move away. Soccer was no long my priority, things started to change.

The biggest change in my life happened when I was thirteen, It was boxing. I was always a hyperactive child, always starting trouble so my dad decide to take me to the gym, “We’re gonna sign you up for boxing lessons” he said, my parents didn’t think much of it, they looked at it as just an environment where I can let go and just be crazy. Things soon changed when I started to fall in love with the sport. I was totally obsessed, everyday after school I would rush out the door, get home as fast as I can, and then immediately get ready for boxing practice. I was only allowed to go twice a week because my parents thought It would cut into my study time which only existed in their heads. But that wasn’t the case I’d wait days just to go to the gym and soon I bought my first pair of boxing gloves.

They were black and white, sixteen ounces, and had a picture of an ox on the front. On the strap of the gloves (the part used to tighten it or tie it) had the word *Warrior International* written. They were such comfortable gloves, very firm and solid. When I first held my gloves in my hand I felt such an enormous amount of joy and excitement and I didn’t want it to fade. It was that joy and excitement that I started to chase after and to this day I still am chasing, not wanting to let go.

You can probably say that I am sort of an unrealistic person, someone that has a lot of fantasizing thoughts and dreams. My Warrior gloves is the reason for it all, I believed in the impossible and that I could maybe one day become Welterweight Champion of the World, yeah I know sounds really unrealistic. I guess I just like thinking outside the box and not behaving like a structured person who only believes in things that are achievable. Unrealistic ideas aren’t achievable? Tell that to Neil Armstrong, but first tell it to my parents.

I approached my parents about this. Hard headed as always and motivated of course this time I came with logic. “What do you want most from me?”, I asked. Without hesitation, my mom said with a strong and solid tone, “to be successful.” “Well hypothetically speaking would you rather want me to be successful and hate my life or happy and a failure?”, they looked at me and gave me a blank stare and shook their head in upsetting way. “What’s a parents number one goal?”, I asked. “YOUR parents number one goal is to make sure you become somebody in this world” I relaxed myself and started to think logically. “To become somebody it takes motivation, dedication, hard work, and initiative. Do you see any of those traits in anything but boxing?”, I said calmly. The question went unanswered and there was a few seconds of silence. “What do you think about school?”, I said. “School is such an amazing opportunity that not everyone can have”, my mom answered. “Well what do you think about those who didn’t finish school but become incredibly successful?”. She was quiet for a few seconds and said, “They got lucky, some people get lucky.” Out of frustration they quickly left the room and went about their days. My parents are hard headed, must be wear I get it from.  They were all about school and wasn’t.

School, school, school, breathe, eat, sleep, school. This is how my family wanted me to operate, but that was not going to happen. I didn’t totally hate school I actually really enjoyed every minute of it. From freshmen year to graduation it was all just an amazing experience. Looking through all my high school mementos I came across my tassel. It was a bright sparkly gold that sort of shinned in the light, attached on the top was a metal “12” that was just dangling about. It just made me all gloomy inside, I hate that feeling when it’s relevant to school. But it was true, I didn’t drop out, I actually graduated and went off to college with an ambitious to excel. Before school was just a nuisance, but now I consider it my back up if my boxing career doesn’t pick up soon. Lots of things changed throughout my life, even some of my ambitions, but I guess change is good.