

## **“Walk a Mile in My Shoes” Essay Contest Winners**

### **Winners Ages 11-12**

#### **First Place**

“...Hi, come walk a mile in my shoes. This is about my trip last summer to Vietnam. This is where I was born 11 years ago. Last summer, I got to go there because my father had a job there. The mile can be best seen through the view of my shoes! Let me introduce you to them, they're actually pretty fun. My left shoe is Sakura and she is pink and very hyper, funny, and caring, though sometimes very sleepy. My right shoe is Naru Narusegawa and she is also pink like Sakura, actually they're twins. Naru is weird and sarcastic but she could be very grouchy and serious sometimes. She can also change her personalities and moods very quickly. They are named after my favorite anime characters. This is how the trip started.

Sakura: Why do we have to wake up this early to go to some airport named Logan, huh? I mean come on people, it's four o'clock in the morning!

Naru: Hey don't forget about me! I have to wake up to and so does Maggie and her dad. Actually, her dad has been up all night packing in a panic.

Sakura: Off we go in the taxi loaded with luggage ...Hey look Naru! I see the airport! Yay!

Naru: Look at the inside, even though it's early, there's a massive bunch of people here in all sorts of crazy lines!

Sakura: I think that we got the tickets and are heading to the airplane! I'm getting excited!

Naru: Yeah whatever...”

- *Excerpt taken from essay by Maggie V.*

#### **Second Place**

“...One of my favorite memories of Trinidad is when my friends and I would go to the beach and take a tan, bury ourselves in the sand, play volleyball in the water or go hang out at the Tiki Tak. The Tiki Tak is like a shed, so when you go to the beach you can sit in it, or under those big colorful umbrellas and drink coconut water out of a fresh-picked coconut. It was always fun to go on the beach at any time of the day. I had a lot of friends and I miss them. Another of my favorite memories of Trinidad is when my dad and I went to a club when I was two years old because he said that I always liked to dance in front of his friends. He would always feel proud inside to see me grow up so fast because I was his only child for 12 years then he had a baby. When he told me he was having another baby, I was mad but I didn't tell him. When he told me who the baby's mother was I got happy because the woman had always been very nice to me and showed me a lot of respect and I was proud of my dad for making the choice to be with such a nice woman. In 2004, I went to go visit them in Trinidad.

Since coming to the United States, I've struggled with most of the work because in Trinidad we would learn subjects way differently because the school system in Trinidad is different from the one here. I've also struggled with the death of my grandfather because when I was younger he would always come to visit me

from, downtown Boston and read me stories and sing and dance with me. He would also help me to read the bible. I learned a lot from him because he would. always tell me "never let the fear of striking out keep you from playing the game." He also taught me that even though you have struggled with things in the past you must always move on..."

- Excerpt taken from essay by Janilia J.

### **Third Place**

"...It is hard being a kid no one really knows what is happening in my shoes. Sometimes my shoes feel like they are falling apart. Life is hard too. The violence in the street is really bad. I know bad things are happening everywhere because I hear it on the news all the time. Someone is always getting hurt for no reason. This summer my cousin was shot and killed as he was walking up the steps to go into his home. We still do not know who did it or *why*. It makes me very sad sometimes to know that people hurt other people just because. Everyone has an attitude. You step on someone's sneakers or look at them the wrong way they have to start trouble. Personally I think it's dumb. That's *why* me and my shoes choose one path and that's the right one. Wrong is a waste of time. I know I do wrong sometimes but it always comes back to get me. So my point is why do it?

Sometimes I feel like someone has glued my shoes to the ground. Sometimes I just feel stuck in certain situations. I know that I still have to pick my feet up off the ground when I feel too weak to move them. My shoes don't always feel physically weak sometimes they feel mentally weak, sometimes I don't feel good inside. I guess we all feel this way sometimes..."

- Excerpt taken from essay by JaLissa L.

### **Winners Ages 13-14**

#### **First Place**

"...As if life isn't hard enough being black, I was born a black girl, which, in some people's eyes, means that I'll be high and dry and pregnant before I turn 18, but it's just not true. I look out at the world and the men and the women. I look out and see all the men, and I see how cruel, hurtful, and evil they are to the women who love them. I want to think "There's a strong black man taking care of his business" but I'm forced to think "Another black man beating up or pimping out an innocent woman". It makes me sick because men should be protecting their women, not forcing them to seek protection. Sometimes it makes you want to give up on the whole gender, but there are some good men out there, good people who give you hope for the rest of their kind.

Scenarios of life like that prompt me to work my behind off and make sure I don't "slip through the cracks". I not only go to school but I excel in school, I participate in extra curricular activities, I tutor, I do whatever I have to do to get into a good college and a good job so I can live a good life. Ever since I was a little kid, my education was the most important thing to me. I want to be able to provide for myself and my family as an adult and to not have to rely on someone else to handle my business..."

- Excerpt taken from essay by Shawwna T.

## Second Place

“...I cried because I was accustomed to being able to help my mother with her problems, but I couldn't help her then. This incident resulted in our family being torn apart. My sister, and I ended up moving in with our grandmothers, and my brothers moved to New York with their father. A few years later, all of us ended up back together with our mother, during this time my mom got pregnant. The second day after my sister C. was born, I held her in my arms and told her I would always be there for her.

Three years later there was another incident were my mother had another breakdown, but she now had another child who could not fend for herself. Both my sister and I now live back with our grandmothers, my brother J. is in jail, K. is in foster care, and C. is with my aunt. My mother's relapse brought C. and I closer together, because she gives me a reason to survive. However I'm most thankful now because my mother is getting treatment for her illnesses...”

- *Excerpt taken from essay by Unique H.*

## Third Place

“...I'm your average 13 year old girl. Well, not totally average. Actually, not at all. I'm a Vietnamese-American girl who lives with her mother and 2 half siblings in a dirty town. I walk to school everyday wondering what it's like to be someone else for a day. I'm always "the new girl" every time we move somewhere new. Some how, I always get the reputation of being a "nerd", "geek", "goody-two-shoes", "teacher's pet", you get the point. I'm always being harassed by the people in my classes. Being called "Chink" and having students mocking Chinese has made me even stronger instead of making me feel so small. Realizing that it isn't my problem, it has helped me develop into a person who doesn't care about what others think. Just because it looks like I have "slanted" eyes, doesn't mean I'm Chinese. If it bothers you when someone is stereotypical to you, then why do it to others? We have all probably said that we would never tease anyone, but I bet we have at least once in a lifetime. For me, the past 3 years has been nothing but trouble. It's either been me hanging around the wrong people, dealing with teasing, friends moving, getting into fights, or self-mutilating. I have been moving all my life every two years or so, not being able to settle into the "right" home. We have moved many times because of all the fights that have occurred. Moving too many times has made my life a wreck. I haven't had a real friend who I could talk about anything until July 27, 2000. That day I had met my best friend of six years who has gone through absolutely everything from my first boyfriend, first kiss, first break up, even first period. She's helped me live my life without noticing all the other girls around me slicing their way to happiness. She's made me realize that I can just be me and I will have the friends I need that will last a lifetime...”

- *Excerpt taken from essay by Asia M.*

“... So do not look at me like you are above me when I walk by because I do not seem to fit in. Do not look down on me because of my struggles and sorrows because you could not walk in my shoes for a quarter mile, even if we wore the same shoe size. No matter how hard you tried. Please do not change your way just to feel my heart that once had a beat. Live to succeed and do not let the past interfere.

To all the young girls my age, I say do not let people hate on you because they are not worth your time. Do not be afraid to speak up and take what is rightfully yours. Do not wait for people to make your dreams come true. Take charge of your life and keep your head up, `cause if your going somewhere, how can you see where you are going if you are too busy looking at the ground? Besides, you already know your shoe size; just try walking a mile down my road...”

- *Excerpt taken from essay by Traci P.*