

My Migrant Life

I have evolved into who I am due to the necessity of having to change since my childhood. Due to my early and on-going experiences, I have been able to gain an open-mind as far as what I want for my future. My name is Dulce Loera; I am second to the youngest of five siblings. I am currently a senior in high school who is trying hard to stay in the top 10 percent, but finds it challenging because I have been part of the migrant population all of my life. My family comes from previous generation of migrant farm workers. My family continues to grow with the arrival of seven nieces and nephews within these past few years that also live under the same roof with us making it hard for me to study and stay focused.

As migrants, my family and I have traveled each summer to different places and have met new people. At first it was hard to adapt, but I managed to deal with it with the help of my family and those around me. When I was small, we first visited Arkansas and from there we moved on in search of job opportunities and I have been to Missouri, Minnesota, and Wyoming. During these travels, it was hard to find a place to stay and most of the so called "apartments" we unsuitable for living, We constantly ate on the floor, bought used appliances, and spent most of the time pumping the restroom because the water system did not function properly. Most of the windows were broken, the doors did not close, there were holes on the walls, and the only visitors we had were the little creepy-crawlers wondering around. In addition, being that we were a family of seven, our expense were pretty high as it was, and now that my nieces and nephews have come along, I feel that my parents are so stressed because it means more mouths to feed, bills to pay, and money to make in this difficult economy.

I sometimes ask myself "How can I burden them even more in asking them for money to pay for college?" I find myself "entre la espada y la pared" meaning that I am not sure of what I should do. I fear that my college expenditures will only add to the load they already carry and I don't want to be the cause of making them suffer for the loss of our home, being that we have already had more than two warnings from the mortgage company. I fear that at any moment we will end up being homeless. There have been times when I have felt so frustrated and so overwhelmed wanting to just give up, yet I know that getting my education will be the only way out. Just the thought of not having a roof over our heads and not being able to provide the basic need of survival for our family of thirteen, is hard to think of and to add to that makes me sometimes want to put my education on hold to find a job to help out until things get better. It seems as if too many of depend on just one income. My parents always tell me not to worry, to enjoy my high school year while they last, and to have fun, but there is no way I can get all these problems out of my mind and it gets to the point where I begin to stress out. I feel that if I just sit back and relax; I will not be able to contribute to the family financially, so therefore, I plan to go to college to someday be able to help out. I know that, eventually, the money we put in now for my education will be worth all of the risks we take and I hope one day to be able to full-fill my dream of becoming an educator and helping my parents pay off their debts. I feel that by becoming an educator, I will not only help my family, I will help students succeed in there academics. I want to work at an elementary school and teach all subjects. Little children are always eager and willing to learn. I want to

help mold the mind of our future doctors, lawyers, and other professionals. When I am no longer here, the children that I will teach someday will be the ones to continue where I leave off.

Although we have all grown up relying on agriculture as our main method of survival and have started working at a very young age, I still feel helpless and wish I could do something that would help change things. When I turned 11, it was the first time I got to experience those back pains, blistered hands, and tiring feet that were caused after having been in the fields from sun up to sun down. Every day was pretty much the same routine; wake up early in the morning, go out to the fields and work until about 6 in the evening. If we didn't work with the sugar beets, it would be with the beans, wheat, or clovers. Our job was to remove weeds from the vegetation. Sometimes we felt in heaven when the fields were not so full, yet at other times we felt like dying because they were like forests without end. I recall one day out in the fields, both my mother and father said, "Aprendan a nosotros y miren lo difícil que es, no queremos que batallen. Hechenle gana a la escuela y traten de salir adelante o quieren terminar así como nosotros en este solazo?" In other words, "Learn from us, see how difficult it is. We do not want you to suffer. Work hard in school and try to succeed in life or do you want to end up like us, in this hot sun?" What they did was use the exhaustion of the work and the heat we were exposed to; to motivate us to stay in school, work hard and do the best we can to change our migrant lifestyle.

Being a migrant has not been easy because throughout my journey I have encountered many obstacles. As a young child, I experienced racial discrimination. Since some friends and I were Hispanic and had grown up with Spanish being our primary language, we would communicate in school in what came easiest to us. However, for some reason or another, teachers and students up North did not allow us to speak Spanish in their presence; to them, it was a sign of disrespect, yet for us, it was an act of disparity. I remember going home that day and feeling upset for what had happened, but somehow I managed to adapt to it and did what they said, for I was left with no other choice but to speak English. Currently, every year my family and I face the problem of isolation from the rest of the family. The holidays are not the same without our loved ones being at our side, but once again, we have had to cope with the changes. Although these factors were not too much of an extreme, one that did affect us all was my mother's health.

My mother is a diabetic and she also works in the fields with us. However, about 3 years ago, because she was dehydrated, her sugar and blood pressure went down and she had a heat stroke. The doctor notified us that if we would have waited any longer to tend to her, she could have gone into a severe coma or even passed away. Luckily for us, we took her just in time and she was prescribed medication to make her feel better. Although she was told not to expose herself to the hot sun, our financial situation and the circumstances in which we find ourselves are greater, therefore she still goes out every day and works just like everyone else. Neither my family nor I agree in letting her work in the fields, yet she is very stubborn because she feels that one more person will add a little bit more to the paycheck. Up until today, we let her work, but we limit her hours and we are constantly watching over her, yet there is no day that I do not fear for her health and worry that the next time we may end up losing her forever.

As a result, I have grown up very quickly. I now help take on the responsibility of helping to provide for the family. Now, with seven younger children in the family, we have to work more and earn more to survive. My brother and two older sisters got married and had children and they say that because of the children they now have, it has kept them from attending college. They now have a family

to take care of, but find it difficult to provide for their kids. I see how they struggle and not little by little they add more weight to my parent, because they still depend on them. I place myself in my parent's shoes and think about the things they have gone through and how I would like to pursue my dream of being the first in my family to graduate from college. Not only to make something out of my life, or to be able to say that I did things on my own, but to set an example for my little sister and nieces and nephews that anything is possible if you are committed and that the story does not have to be the same for us. My vision of majoring in education and receiving a minor in coaching is distinct and therefore I have decided to challenge myself into taking advanced courses to graduate early from college. Testing myself has not been easy, especially because there seven children (all 5 years old and under) living in the same household and they tend to get rowdy and are very energetic, making it hard for me to concentrate. Aside from this, because we migrate we tend to get out of school early and enter the following year late; this has caused me to get off track and has complicated things for me because I have to work even harder to make up assignments. I even had to take Credit by Exam through the University of Texas at Austin Graduation Enhancement Program in order to obtain missing credit to be allowed to graduate under the Distinguished Graduation Plan.

I am very grateful for the help that was given to me; I honestly don't know what I would have done with the support from the migrant program at our school and the University of Texas at Austin Graduation Enhancement Program. I believe this was a great opportunity because it facilitated things by allowing me to receive credit in such a short period of time instead of having to take the courses all over again. This type of assistance provided by our school has and continues to be a revolving door. I know I can always count on the migrant program no matter what it is I need. It has allowed me to become a dedicated student who is willing to put out her best effort into getting things done on time and efficiently. I am determined to make my dream a reality and I look forward to doing whatever it takes to accomplish it.

Everything that I have been through these past years has shaped me into who I have become. All in all, these experiences have not been only negative. In being a migrant I have learned to become a diligent person and have gained confidence to overcome my shyness by interacting with others. Along with this, I have built enough strength and hope to keep me going in search of a better future. I am proud to say that I am a migrant student. I was raised with the mentality that in order to get what you want; you have to work hard for it. Like Campbell R. McConnell and Stanley L. Brue state in their Economics book, "There is no such thing as a free lunch." Thanks to my parents' dedication to helping us strive and improve in all we do, I have been inspired to go to college and become someone in life, yet I know that even with their willingness to help, they will find it tough to deal with my financial needs for school when they have responsibilities of their own and cannot even meet their due dates for the basic utilities and the mortgage. I know things will not get any simpler, but any help that is given to me is more than appreciated. It will help me realize my dream of becoming a teacher someday. I thank you for taking the time to review my application.