

Helping Feed America

I am Teresita Daniela Paz currently seventeen years of age, and I am Mexican American. I attend Sampson Early College High School located in Clinton, N.C. I graduate next year with three Associate Degrees, along with my high school diploma. Despite all the obstacles in my life and being the daughter of farmworkers I have achieved many of my goals because of the environment I was born in. Growing up in the fields that feed America has been a major impact on me emotionally, physically and mentally.

My parents Jorge Paz, and Teresita Santiago deserve the credit of all of my success in life. My parents made the sacrifice to come to America to seek for the "American Dream". Unfortunately they did not get the style of life that they were hoping for. They got the life of the fields of being in the hot sun from sunrise till sun down. They worked in the field picking blueberries, sweet potatoes, oranges, tomatoes, zucchini, cucumber etc. Fortunately they had six children in which at a very young age we were all out there helping them fill their blueberry buckets and helping them carry sweet potato buckets to the big truck. Money needed to be made one way or the other and that was the only way for us.

Many times I would have loved to stay in on the weekends and catch up on my sleep after a week of school but it never worked that way. Saturday morning my parents would be up by 5:30 am getting ready for work while I was hoping they would tell me "Te puedes quedar en casa hoy", never happened, I knew I as a daughter needed to help them because I had needs and wants. I would stay up all the way to work to keep them up because they were always tired from the day before. The physical effect it caused me was when we would get to the field, tie the bucket around our waist and start a row of big blueberries. I would complain constantly of how hot it was out in between those bushes and how my back would begin to hurt because of the

weight of the bucket. I would begin to cry because sweat got into my eyes. Every now and then I would sit with my mom under a bush to get some shade while my dad stayed picking so we would not stay behind from the crew.

The fields affected me emotionally because even if we have hands full of dirt and chemicals that go within our pores that make our hands swell and get full of blisters; my parents kept working, they suffered injuries but they knew not to complain because they could not afford to lose a day of work. I would want to already be grown and have a good paying job so that I could have them out of the fields; but patience is key. There are times where I sit back and think how many people take advantage of migrant workers and do not value their work and do not think that thanks to them there is food on the table. My family and everyone else in the fields feed America, we make sacrifices to feed not just our family but also everyone else in the country.

Growing up in the fields impacted me mentally, psychically and emotionally; I had no choice but to continue helping my parents. Mentally by making me want to continue my education and become a School Counselor. Emotionally, from seeing the tiredness in my parents face and body posture. Physically because up to this day I have scars that have been left in my arms and back from walking through the perky branches. I also have scars from all the scratching I would do from the chemicals that would itch my entire body. As a daughter of farm workers, I have learned to appreciate everything I have even if it may not always be enough. Thank You to them I will accomplish much more and strive for my better future.