Mrs. Gilbert

English 12, Block 5

8 September, 2016

College essay

The aromatic smell of spices, cinnamon, mint, ginger, and lemongrass mixed with beef broth lingered in the air. My fondest memories consist of watching my dad mix secret ingredients in giant liquid-filled pots that sat in our kitchen. I grew up learning about the family business. I stacked chairs on tables in the morning, listened to the roar of pots and bowls as they bumped against each other in the afternoon, and at night, enjoyed soft music in the background as a fellow "co-worker" mopped the floors. I have experienced my parents’ work. I know why they come home late and smell of Asian food when they walk through the doors: this is the life of restaurant owners. As a little girl surrounded by a family business, I inevitably picked up a few tips and tricks along the way, as well as experienced the hardship.

To this day, I still help my parents with their business. The restaurant has been there to send my siblings and I to private school and provide a great lifestyle for us in this way, and others, it's been a major part of my life. I might not like working until 9pm, especially if I have school the next day, but seeing my parents come home late at night—everyday- helps me realize how hard they work. I only help out sporadically, but my parents work every single day from dusk till dawn.

My dad constantly reminds my siblings and I how he immigrated from Southeast Asia. He traveled by boat from Vietnam to Cambodia with his parents to escape communism. My
father learned about the world of business and leadership at his parents’ three businesses in Cambodia. His parents taught him how to make the authentic Cambodian dish Phnom Penh Noodle that we now serve as a specialty. At the age of 14, his parents sent him to Thailand for ingredients and supplies to bring back to Cambodia. He learned of the many varieties of spices, as well as the different foods in Thailand. Today, the legacy continues. I have chance to learn from my dad through the food he makes. Inside each dish is a culture filled with history.

Throughout high school, I dreamt of joining our school's award-winning choir, or participating on the swim and lacrosse teams. However, this was not possible because I am always helping out with the restaurant. I am still working to get over my resentment surrounding this. I try to remember how my parents come home at 10:00pm, exhausted from their day. On days that I do not work, I stay up until my parents come home to eat dinner with them because this is the only time I get to see them. My family will, and always will be, my priority, I am often unable to do other activities outside of school.

Some may say that owning a restaurant is a huge accomplishment, and you are living a great life, but that is not always true. My parents have to make huge sacrifices to keep their restaurant open and successful. They sacrificed everything to immigrate from Vietnam, and now, they are sacrificing everything to make sure we have food on the table and that my siblings and I experience an easier life. It is hard to have limited time with my parents, but I am independent and appreciate the little things in life. Our family business has shaped me into the woman I am today. I am motivated to achieve my goals for my parents and myself, to show them that their hard work paid off. I want nothing more than to make sure my parents are happy and proud of me. Now it is my turn to work hard to give them the life they deserve.