

It's not what America can do for me, It's what I can do for America

Mom's deployment, or absence from my life, was a turning point for my individual accountability. In the wake of her absence, my sixteen year old self and younger brother moved in with our dad, step mom and younger half-sister, an unprecedented event. Though Dad was concerned for our well-being, he did not partake in our school or extra-curricular activities, Mom's old hobbies. In her absence, I discovered my capabilities and how I can care for myself and others.

The deployment fell on my 10th-11th grade levels of High School. While a conglomerate of interests arose during this time, none were so desirable to me as participating in the Governor's Honors Program (GHP). I managed the process independently, only receiving occasional advice from friends and teachers, and was successful. My mom's deployment showed me the value of my own means to achieve what I want, making me far less dependent on my parents and significantly more accountable to myself. This trait surfaced in outwardly expressing my gratitude and love for my family. In Mom's absence I realized it was not solely the duty of a parent to unite the family; contributions could be made by all members to support one another. I embraced the concept of supporting my friends, family and strangers by aiding their efforts, listening to their complaints, or simply letting them know I care for and think about them. The idea being that strength in society begins with strength in family and friends.

I was no longer with my mom, but I realized I was not by myself. This realization struck against the individualization I had been taught by society. The ideas that personal hard work and perseverance would grant me what I desire seemed to me like the tunnel vision of a racehorse, life like the race blocked out by eye patches. By only focusing on my own efforts, my personal achievements and what I wanted to do with my life, I realized I was missing the full perspective.

It is not about what I can manage to do and get for myself, it is about how I can contribute to what the societal efforts, achievements and goals are of my generation. The connection of me to my surroundings instead of my surroundings to me brought me closer to my friends, teachers and community in my Mom's absence.

While these lessons are not epiphanies for human kind, they were life changing to me. My mom's deployment made me able to finally internalize and comprehend the life lessons of becoming mature and knowing my place. It was only once I was practically on my own that I was able to see what I can do for others, instead of what others can do for me. I was only then able to appreciate my family, what soldiers were doing for our country and how I can also be instrumental to the success of my united society.