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A Family Dynamic

Most children growing up had a normal family dynamic, usually consisting of a mom, dad, and a few siblings if they weren't the only child. I, on the other hand, didn't have that family dynamic. In my opinion, I had something even better, my grandma and grandpa. I could say they are my heroes, but that would be an understatement. Growing up on the west side of Chicago, I never felt safe but being with my grandparents always made me feel secure. They were my safe haven. My grandparents poured so much wisdom and knowledge into me, that helped shape me into the young woman I am today. Two amazing people Clara and Charles Davis helped turn me into an amazing young woman. When I was born on June 14th, 2006 my mom and my grandma were in the delivery room. My grandma was the first to hold me in her arms and I believe that's why she and I are so close now.



My sister held me after I was born.

My mom and big sister Andrea were part of my family dynamic but my grandparents were the most influential part of my life. My mom and grandparents did everything to make sure I was set for success. Like anyone else I had many milestones and occurrences in life that I faced, some for the better and some for the worse, but they all helped shape me into the young woman I am today. I started at Learn Charter School on the west side of Chicago better known as The North Lawndale neighborhood, if you're from Chicago you know that isn't the best neighborhood. I attended that school from Kindergarten up until my 8th-grade year. I made some of my best memories there and met some of my closest friends, some of whom I'm still in contact with to this day. My mom and grandparents ensured my sister and I had the most fun and memorable childhood including trips, games, sleepovers, birthdays, or even just family gatherings. It was never a dull moment with my family. Life as I knew it was good, a life any kid could dream of.



Me, my cousins, and my sisters hanging out at my grandparent's house.

Everything changed when I found out in 6th grade I had scoliosis. As a kid, it was terrifying to learn that I would have to alter the way I played, moved, and acted after my surgery because everything put me at risk of getting paralyzed. As they say, “What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger,” and surgery plus my support system did make me stronger. My grandma was by my side 24/7 the week I spent at the ICU and the three months of recovery I spent at her house. From feeding me, clothing me, and pushing me in my wheelchair my grandma was there through it all. When I had to relearn how to walk again and go through physical therapy my grandma took care of me.



My nurse Linda and I after I got discharged from the ICU, after having spinal surgery.

After my recovery, life went back to normal. I went back to 6th grade and everything continued, but then it all changed in 2020. I was in my 8th grade year, and everything that I thought was so good wasn't good anymore. It started with what we now know as COVID-19. When it first happened we were excited for two weeks off of school, and no work. It was an extra break for us but two weeks turned into months, something so little became so major, and then we had to quarantine. From when I was little till my 8th-grade year, I stayed with my grandparents and went to school from there. That's why they are such a powerful and influential aspect in my life; I spend almost every day with them. That also changed when COVID came; the schedule and routine that I was used to was uprooted. I had to quarantine at my mom's house and now it

was me, my mom, and my sister, which wasn't normal. Due to COVID, my sister had to leave college and be virtual right along with me, and with three women in the house, you can imagine how that went.

Quarantining and COVID was okay for the most part, not seeing my grandparents was the hard part of it all though, but I got used to it. It became the new normal until another incident uprooted life again. My uncle was murdered, something that we weren't expecting and thought would never happen, but it did. I still remember the cries and screams from my grandma to this day. That was the first day I've ever seen real emotion from her. Now as a 13-year-old that was my first time experiencing death but it hurts the most because my uncle was an influential part of my life. Since my grandma lived 5 minutes away from my school he always walked my cousin and I to school and every morning before school we would stop and get snacks and he would talk with us. I learned some of my best lessons from him. In a sense, his death made my family closer. My uncle's murder was never solved and that's the main reason I want to be a lawyer now and work in the criminal justice system. I eventually graduated 8th grade. I had a virtual graduation. That fall I attended Holy Trinity High School in Chicago's North side neighborhood in Wicker Park. My grandparents were so proud of me. It was a private catholic school. My tuition was about \$10,000 a year but my mom and grandparents did the best they could to make sure it was paid.



My high school life was average until about my sophomore year and that's when I started to experience bullying, something that I thought I would never face. I didn't feel safe anywhere but in my grandparent's home. I hated school. I would find any excuse or reason to skip it but that's when I met my current best friend Mia. She made me feel safe and like I belonged at school, she helped shape me into a young woman with integrity and independence. Even though we had no one at school we had each other so we faced everything at school together. I became a courageous person because I had to face so much bullying. It indeed made me stronger and the better person I am today.



Mia and I during our senior spirit week.

High school went on and I came to my senior year, still experiencing the negative parts of high school and still experiencing bullying. I went on with the year like it was nothing, but I had a teacher who supported me the whole year. She and Mia helped me with some crucial parts of my senior year and always influenced me to make good decisions and to better myself. From joining clubs, going on trips, and picking a college they helped and influenced me through it all.

Ms. Monahan even gave me a robe at my ring ceremony, and at graduation, Ms. Monahan, Mia, and my grandparents showed up and cheered the loudest for me. They all helped shape me into the young woman I am today: powerful, courageous, independent, caring, and selfless. Without My grandparents, Mia and Ms. Monahan I wouldn't be the person I am today.



Ms.Monahan and I after my robing ceremony.



My grandpa and I at my prom



My grandma and I at my prom.