My Life's Journey

Most people like watching dramas in the movies or on TV. However, no one likes to experience drama on their life's journey. Neither do I. Many times we run from it. Yet, when the "gates of drama" are opened, we are not the ones to close them. We have to go through our journey learning and growing to be stronger persons.

In 2008, after I became a victim of reprisal at the hands of the Chinese government for my attempt to prompt people to protest against the bureaucratic corruption of the government, I realized that I had reached an impasse in this campaign. If I continued to criticize the Chinese government, I would end up in jail. Therefore, in August 2009, I left China, leaving behind my parents, relatives, friends and my lover—my whole life.

The ending of one part of life's journey is the new beginning of another. When I walked out of the JFK airport, breathing the fresh air of freedom for the first time, I gave all my gratitude for God's blessings. After a while in America, I was surprised to see that many people take this freedom for granted. They hardly know how much it is worth. I gave up everything in my native country, China, for my quest for freedom and to start over again in this "Promised Land."

In the past three years, I worked as a babysitter, a sales agent, a toy retailer, a waiter, a food delivery boy, a massage therapist, and a flight catering coordinator. I moved on average, twice a year. Once, when I was in China, I intended to stay away from my parents to strive for personal space. Now I have so much personal space that I
am overwhelmed by relentless loneliness and helplessness. I used to fear living a life without too much change. Now my life has so many variables that I have a loose social network and poor rapport with people around me.

Like other new immigrants, I have had to fight for my immigration status. I applied for political asylum in 2010. Unfortunately, the U.S. Homeland Security Department did not grant my case right away, but transferred my case to the Immigration Court for a hearing in December 2012. So I had to wait, prepare and pray for two years before the hearing. I did everything I could do. Finally, when the day came, I was relieved to see the judge was congenial and the translator was quite compassionate. Everything seemed perfect except the absence of my attorney. Because of his absence, the case could not proceed and my hearing had to be scheduled for February 2015. After I heard that, I cried like a baby in the court. I could not see any future in my journey and my life was totally out of my control. I felt the expression “If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans.” had come true. This traumatic incident has caused me to be stuck in a limbo for another two miserable years.

In the following weeks, every morning when I woke up, my attorney’s face and his unconvincing rationale for his absence flashed back in my mind. When I realized this nightmare of waiting another two years was a reality, I became despondent and had no appetite for life at all.

Ten days later, I had lost ten pounds. My doctor perceived that I was depressed and sent me to a psychiatrist. The psychiatrist was a middle age Korean lady. Besides some routine-drug therapy, she contended that some other immigrants' situations were
worse than mine and my tragedy was like a train running through a dark tunnel. I thought, but how could a train take four years to run through a dark tunnel? Obviously, she was trying to sugarcoat the bitterest part of my journey. Unfortunately, she failed. Before Christmas, my attorney flew back to his country, Ireland, to be reunited with his family and friends. On Christmas Eve, I imagined my attorney sitting in a cozy chair, beside a fireplace, joyfully chatting with his family, with a glass of Guinness in his hand. He was not concerned with my plight at all. Meanwhile, I sat in a dark and cold room asking myself whether I should kill myself and terminate my journey. I am the hope, pride and security of my parents, their only child. If I committed suicide, they would be destroyed. Thank God, as the loneliest I was not absolutely alone, and as the most desperate I was not isolated from others' hope and love.

After I survived this ordeal, I did not give up on my journey toward a new life. Nevertheless, I felt exhausted in my heart and soul. I stopped odd job hunting and decided to put my attention, energy and two-year-savings into preparation for my career in the medical area during these two years' waiting. To be honest, I cannot predict where I am going to be after two years. All I believe is an upright and hardworking person deserves a better life. Instead, when people pass through a dark valley in their life's journey, they can become more mature and stronger in faith.

Today I am studying at Nassau Community College and aspire to be a respiratory therapist. When your journey in life turns into a drama filled with adversity, loneliness and unfairness, you cannot escape simply by waking up from the nightmare. You have to open your eyes, face up to it, live with it, and overcome it without forgetting to appreciate and enjoy what you already have.