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John Jay College

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“Life’s Tough”

My name is Joshua Hernandez and I’m a freshman at John Jay College. This essay is about the virtue of self-control.

“Life’s Tough”

Beep, Beep, Beep. Damn its 5:30am - time to get up. But today it’s harder to get out of bed even more than usual. 5 years doing this and its starting to take a toll on me. Physically my back, knee and shoulder hurt, and mentally I’m starting to weaken. Beep! Beep! Beep! Ok. I’m up! Another day in the life of a FedEx guy.

Five years and I’ve changed so much. I’m thinner, way more agitated, and my outlook on life is depressing. During my mile walk to the terminal, it hits me. I’ve heard the saying before, but never really put any thought into it. “Life is what you make it.” If this is true then I’ve made a terrible life for myself. I never imagined that I would be living like this: 28 years old, in a dead end job, and still living at home with my parents. If life is what you make it, I must be crazy for making this wonderful life. I can’t believe I’m crazy, not yet anyway. I feel life makes you, and all your experiences mold you, so was this my own doing?

During that walk, I questioned myself and if I really thought that the events in my life made me who I was. Then I realized that all this time I’d been taking the easy way out, making excuses for myself because of where I grew up or because of certain situations that have happened to me. If I kept thinking like this, then I’d end up another statistic. I always wanted my life to be extraordinary; now was the time to make it what I want. But I know it’s not that easy; if it was, everyone would have everything they wanted. I told myself then that I have to be tougher than any obstacle that gets in my way.

Thus my life motto was created: “Life’s tough, I’m tougher.” Just like anything else I truly believe in, I went and tattooed myself to always remind me. I put the phrase “Life’s Tough, I’m Tougher” on my left bicep. One thing I was sure of was the fact that through all the bad that had happened to me in the last five years, I had never given up. I complained, and I wished that things would get better, but I never quit. I was a fighter – stubborn - but a fighter none the less. The time for complaining and wishing was over, no more excuses either. It was time to live up to my motto.

My time working in the Bronx at FedEx showed me many things; one thing in particular stands out the most. I learned the virtue of self-control. Every day was a test, a test of my patience and loyalty, but most importantly it was a test of my self-control. It would take every ounce of control I had to deal with some of the people I would encounter on a daily basis. As the years went by it became harder to control myself when someone would insult me or treat me with disrespect. I understand that in business you have to conduct yourself in a professional matter. Plus, I couldn’t afford to lose this job; my parents needed me financially to help out in the house. So, it was just a given when the irate customer cursed me and called me a moron for delivering her package to the address on the label, I had to walk away holding my tongue. When a male customer screamed and threatened me, I could do nothing. I had to control myself.

Before FedEx I worked for myself, made good money, and had no responsibility. I was a drug dealer I had no need for control. I was addicted to the lifestyle, I had money, girls, respect from my peers (or what I thought was respect). It was an adventure every day, one that I fooled myself into carrying on. I would sit and think about what I was making at FedEx compared to my previous job and how it would make my life so much easier just to give in and go back to my

old life. But like I said before I'm stubborn and I told myself that I wouldn't go back no matter what I was going through.

Once my mother lost her job, I had to change. The only problem was that I wasn't making the same amount of money I was before so now I had to work harder for less and had the extra joy of having to put up with people's @#.*^!! As the years passed it became more of a test to stay in control. I had gotten used to the everyday angry customer, now it was the things happening in my personal life that were making it hard not to just give in to the temptation of returning to my old ways. My boss was under paying me and treating me unfairly. Now don't get me wrong; I understand business is business, but when you work for a family member, you don't think that you'll get screwed left and right. I took the job knowing I was going to work my ass off, but I was promised that it would get easier and that it was going to be worth it. Not getting vacation pay, sick pay, overtime, or benefits wasn't my idea of "worth it." I started as a helper and stayed a few years because my parents needed me to, then I became a driver and stayed a few years more because my boss hurt himself. He needed me to run the business when no one else could. Through everything, I never once thought about what I really wanted because my family needed me and I had to make sure that they were ok first. I truly believed that once things got better, they would look back at what I've done and sacrificed so that their lives wouldn't be so affected, and not thank me, but at least try to help me get to where I want to be. I managed to learn how to control myself so I wouldn't lose something important to me or my family.

My loyalty to my family through the last five years has hurt me financially, physically, and drained me mentally; because of this, however, I've found self-control. I have found it important to have self-control when times get hard. When you're at your lowest it is easier to give in and forget your morals. It is easier to say, "Well life gave me this situation; I might as

well accept it and not make a fuss.” Not me. I will not accept something if there’s any way I could change it for the better. I could have said “I’m going to be a FedEx guy for the next 20 years and live an average life” or I could have just walked out on any of those days I wanted to quit in the moment. Neither of those options were good enough. I wanted more, but I knew in order for me to achieve more, I’d need to have a better job. I needed to go back to school and get a degree. My biggest enemy has always been myself and with self-control I have what it takes to continue to fight. Now with a new attitude I’m a new man, starting a new chapter in life. No fear of the future, why should I? Remember I’m tougher.