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No More Sweaty Hands

"GO BACK TO MEXICO!" hollered the landlord to six-year-old me. "Your people are crap anyway. I don't even speak Spanish."

I broke down in front of my parents, stating that we are being evicted from our home. In a trembling voice, they ask that I speak with the landlord as to why this is the situation, given that we have regularly paid our rent on a monthly basis.

"Ari, explícanos esto, hija. ¿Qué significa 'Urgent eviction?'"

My hands began to sweat as I experienced an anxiety attack over how people could be so harsh with their comments. My head throbbed with the anxious thoughts of having to explain the situation to my parents.

As a first-generation Salvadoran-American, I've had to study two languages simultaneously: Spanish and English. My parents and extended family didn't speak much English when I was growing up, so I had to step in as the family translator at a young age. Despite the fact that their ability to communicate in English is minimal, it became my motivating factor to assist others in similar situations. Witnessing my parents go through an extensive process involving intricate policies, convoluted lingo, and several documents while renewing insurance programs, credit card bills, work permits, and invoices on a monthly basis piqued my interest in working at a law firm in Richmond, California, that specializes in education.

Learning Spanish has enabled me to improve my communication horizons, particularly in terms of the acquisition of new knowledge and strengthening my intellectual capabilities. When confronted with an unforeseen challenge, I now have more tools at my disposal to cope with it and resolve a conflict. This constant language barrier challenge has inspired me to further pursue a career in the legal field, where I will be able to use my skills to foster greater solidarity and compassion in the Hispanic community while working in a progressive manner to give back to my community.

Being bilingual is one of the most crucial responsibilities I undertake as a paralegal assistant who educates families about their rights, as well as aiding them in deciphering reports and evaluations and explaining the implications for their children's academic success. Being able to communicate in their native tongue is an example of additional care that I provide that other assistants don't have. Being able to communicate well in Spanish is vital because it removes any language barrier that would otherwise prohibit me from being candid with my clients. When I communicate across languages, what may seem like a subtle difference in translation has profound impacts on the overall meaning of what is communicated. Despite the complexity of

legal language and procedures, I have successfully communicated with clients and naturally developed trust.

Maintaining a consistent pursuit of higher education is challenging while simultaneously helping others in the profession I love. Nonetheless, I enjoy using my mother's tongue to help others in need. My good memory, ability to communicate effectively in Spanish, and interest in social justice has led me to the conclusion that I want to continue to be the reason others don't arrive at the office with sweaty hands. I have too much to fight for and I can't give up knowing that there are millions of people still in that situation. Speaking Spanish has influenced me in many ways, for not only is it a way for me to communicate with my family, but also a reminder of what my purpose holds.