

Katiria Sanchez, CitySquash U17/19 Age Division

I was never given the opportunity to grow up with my brothers and sisters. When my mother went into labor to deliver me, none of my family members were notified. She took herself to the hospital and, later that day, a beautiful baby girl was delivered. The date was January 1, 1994 and the little girl's name was Katiria Janelis Sanchez. My mother was already trying to raise four kids; adding a fifth was more than she could handle. So I was given to my grandmother and that was that. My father never once thought to argue to keep me, his youngest daughter. I guess drinking was always more important. I've lived with my grandmother in the Bronx all my life, while the rest of my brothers and sisters have lived in Puerto Rico.

It has not been easy having friends talk about their brothers and sisters and how much fun they have together. I would have liked to experience that over-protective brother figure, or the father who wants to watch over his little girl. I can honestly say that I have never received a "Happy Birthday" call from my father. My mother calls once in a while and talks with my grandmother, but we have very limited communication. I feel like after all I have been through, she should be the one extending her arm to me. When I think of adversity, I think of obstacles and situations you encounter in life that force you to find a way to overcome them and grow. My situation is an example of adversity because I had to learn to live without the support of my family.

One of the things that has helped me overcome this adversity is my grandmother's infinite love and determination to make me something in life. She is my number one believer and, without her, I wouldn't be where I am today. I am on the Principal's honor roll at school, I made it onto the CitySquash team, and I am one of the biggest role models in my school. My grandmother has always taught me to be a hard worker and to never give up no matter how hard the task is. Another very important factor that has helped me overcome my adversity is CitySquash. CitySquash is my home away from home. My teammates are the brothers and sisters I never had close to me. The staff members are the parental role models I would like to become in the future. CitySquash has trusted and believed in me. They are determined to give me the tools I need to make it in the real world. I could never have asked for a better group of people to grow and share my life with.

After going through my adversity, I have learned to really respect and cherish the people around me. I have also learned not to dwell on the past or what could have happened, but instead to be thankful for the things that did happen. I do not resent either of my parents, because in my eyes giving me to my grandmother was the best option they had. Now, looking at all I have and everything my brothers and sisters lack, I thank God for the way things ended up. Here in New York City I am offered a

good education, health benefits, and my grandmother's unconditional love and support. In my eyes my future is bright, and I will lend a hand to anyone who needs one, including those who did not lend a hand to me.