

**Rain**  
Margarita Adame

The storm  
continued for nine months  
as we moved  
from home to home  
with our relatives.

The worst part come  
close to the end of the nine months.  
We left an uncle's home  
and it was raining  
endlessly.  
We all got into the car  
and it hit us.  
We were homeless.  
Other family members  
had protected us from the storm.  
But,  
this last one,  
didn't care what else  
the rain  
washed away.

**My Stomach Was Always Empty**  
Christine Clark

Growing up as the youngest of six, my parents were exhausted and so I raised myself mostly. It was expensive to raise us. My brothers were gigantic and never stopped eating. Also my father had spinal surgery and could not work for two years. Our friends would help us out and sometimes put food on our front porch like bread and pastries but that was rare.

My stomach was always empty. When I did manage to get food my brothers would eat my food before I could finish it. I learned to eat fast and never leave my plate to go to the bathroom during a meal.

Lunch money was a privilege not a necessity—and if I did pack my lunch it was always a pickle sandwich with mayonnaise. I learned to hide food in the house. I would save any food from school I could get my hands on and keep it in my purse. I loved the days when they served apples, wrapped cookies and orange juice.

Anyway, grooming was the next issue. Or should I say, “lack of grooming”? I was supposed to keep my hair long for some religious reason—what I never knew. But I was responsible for my hair and so dread locks became

of me. Ratty ratty hair and so it was. I didn't care because I had no self-esteem because when you're a child and you don't have money, you don't think you have any value.

My parents work two jobs and deal with guilt on a daily basis. They always think that they aren't good parents because they could not afford what we needed. They feel badly that their youngest daughter has no bed nor a birthday party. They never wanted us to feel differently, but we did.

My teachers would ask if I would like to go home with them on the weekend. I asked my mother and she was more happy than I. She needed a break and also wanted me to do well in my life. So I went.

And so I would go with anyone who would take me. I moved out young and grew up fast. I met several people who took extreme interest in me and believed in me. They told me to “reach for the stars.”

The cycle will not continue. I educated myself and will not have more kids than I can give attention to. My brothers and sisters will not have many children either. They struggled with our reality more than I for they tried to kill themselves repeatedly because they just never felt worthy enough.

I will never return to the house I was raised in because it is infested with mice, rats, cockroaches and fleas. So now, as future teachers, maybe you want to know what you can do for students like me? Give them love, they need it. Hug them, compliment them, they eat it up. Look beyond their smelly hair and dirty clothes and do not judge them because, believe me they have already written themselves off.

**Shame**  
Stephen Windes

The school was familiar, though all along my family was different. We lived only three blocks away, walking distance. It was a Catholic school, and it always seemed as if every other student got a ride in a flashy car; everyone else's parents seemed well dressed. Tuition at the school was costly. My mother worked to make ends meet, and I don't remember anyone at home when I got back from school. My father worked nights and I didn't get much help on homework. I took pre-algebra in eighth grade. When I asked my mother questions, she never knew the answer. I learned quickly not to ask her.

The mother of a friend who was one of the lunch-moms noticed how often I came to school without a lunch. She stared bringing an extra one for me. At first, it was great. I'd never had such snacks. There were juice containers, chips, cookies or candies, sandwiches I had never seen before. It took awhile for me to realize that I was the only one who needed a lunch. I don't know if my mother ever realized where my lunches were coming from. It wasn't the first time school had taught me something about shame.