

IN MY DREAM I WAS IN MY
OLD APARTMENT WHERE
I LIVED WITH MY GRANDMA
AND GRANDPA, BUT THE
HOUSE WAS NOW DARK AND
SPOOKY. I WAS LOOKING
AROUND, TRYING TO FIGURE
OUT WHAT HAPPENED, WHEN
SOMETHING WALKED BY
ME. THEN MY GRANDPA
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AT ME WITH A SERIOUS
LOOK. HE SAID, "YOU
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WAYS, BOY," AND THEN
DISAPPEARED.

-DEVONTE PARSONS

DEVONTE'S UNTOLD STORY

Devonte Parsons

My grandma used to be a housekeeper for the movie star Jimmy Durante back in her early ages. She also used to work in Hollywood with some other famous stars. About twenty-five years ago my grandma moved to Seattle from California.

When I was born I lived with my mom in Texas. My dad died before I was born so I never had the chance to see him. The only people that did were my older brother and my mom. My mom used to like partying when she was young and I used to get babysat by different people. My grandma did not like that so she came all the way from Seattle to pick me up, and my grandma is nice, so that's the reason I think she's my idol. When I was born, my grandma was the first person to hold me.

When I was little my grandpa took me everywhere with him. I

remember him taking me to the baseball game, specifically, because that was the last place I went with him before he died. He died at the train station getting ready to go to his friend's house. I was little, so when my grandma told me, I did not know what was going on. I asked her every day when he was going to come back home. It took me a few months to realize he wasn't.

When I was eleven I found out about my dad. He was shot and killed while walking down the street in Texas. I found a picture of him and my mom and hung it up in my room. I was scared to ask my mom what happened because she might start crying. My uncle told me part of the story. He said that my dad was walking down the street when it happened, and my uncle did not know who it was at the time. The person that killed him eventually went to jail and was killed in there. I'm trying to get information from different sources and piece the puzzle together.

I first started getting in trouble at school when I was in third grade. I think my grandma was most upset when I got expelled from Washington Middle School because I was doing so well at first, but then I fell off. I don't exactly know what I was expelled for, but I think it was because a lot of minor things built up on me and they got tired of it. I was doing un-smart things like disrupting the class by messing with people, or blurting answers out loud, and making beats with my hands.

Before I got expelled we had a meeting to decide what the punishment was going to be. Everybody that got involved with me at Washington was there, and so was my grandma. As far as I know they had already made the decision but just held the meeting to tell me what it was. As I sat at that big round table with all eyes on me, I felt very uncomfortable, as if I were on stage with millions of people waiting for me to say something. After sitting there for a while talking about why I do the things I do, they told me their decision. Tears of anger rolled from my eyes, but I did not cry, yell, or throw anything. I just got up, took it like a man, and left. I could tell in my grandma's eyes that she was disappointed. The night before, she had cried because she did not know what to do with me.

It was like the trouble I got into grew with me. When I was in sixth grade I was getting detention and suspended. When I got to

seventh grade I got suspended and emergency expelled three times. I also had a few police run-ins outside of school.

One time, my friends and I decided to go to the mall. We saw a tip jar full of money in Jamba Juice. My friends ran in and grabbed some money and I didn't want to be left out, so I grabbed some, too. After that we ran around the mall and got kicked out with the police called on us. We were waiting for the bus by this gas station and messing with the gas, so they called the police, too. We finally caught the bus and were on our way home when two cop cars pulled up and told the bus to stop, then took us out. As we were sitting down in handcuffs outside the bus stop a lot of things were going through my mind: my grandma, my mom, and my future. The police were talking to us while another one called my grandma. I thought I was going to juvenile for sure, but they decided to let it go and put it on my non-permanent record. One of my friends and I went home, but the other was a runaway and had to go to the Spruce Street Crisis Residential Center. That night my grandma was real disappointed in me, but I was too shocked by this encounter with the police to notice.

After being grounded for a month I decided to change and stop stealing and committing crimes. My grandma was the one who inspired me to stop getting into trouble, but a dream I had stopped me from doing it completely. In my dream I was in my old apartment where I lived with my grandma and grandpa, but the house was now dark and spooky. I was looking around, trying to figure out what happened, when something walked by me. I ran back to my room and sat there. I started hearing barking from inside the house. It wasn't a regular bark but it was more of a disturbing, sad bark. I walked in the living room and saw my dog that had died a couple years before. Then my grandpa appeared, staring at me with a serious look. He said, "You better change your ways, boy," and then disappeared.

I woke up so scared I was sweating. I told my grandma and she said that might have been a sign, so listen to him. The weird thing about it is she said she had a dream about him the same night in the same place. I was rattled but I still listened. I started doing better in school for a while until I got angry with a kid for trying to yell at me. I blew out, and started throwing things and cursing. I

IT'S NOT ALWAYS...

got emergency expelled for that.

I'm now in eighth grade. I have been trying my best to do well in school, and I haven't had that dream at all. But still to this day when I have a slipup I try to think about my grandma and grandpa and how they would feel about what I am doing.



*Thirteen-year -old **Devonte Parsons** would like you to know that he doesn't change depending on who he's around—he's the same outgoing, cool, smart person. His goals are to graduate from college, expand his vocabulary, and be a rapper. He enjoyed the 826 Seattle project and "the chance to have my story in a book and tell about my life and growing up."*