

Strong

Having, showing, or able to exert great bodily or muscular power; physically vigorous or robust. Accompanied or delivered by great physical, mechanical, power or force. Mentally powerful. Of great moral power, firmness, or courage. Powerful in influence, authority, resources, or means of prevailing or succeeding. Aggressive, or willful. Of great force, effectiveness, or potency. Solid or stable, Healthy, thriving. Well supplied or rich in something. Having powerful means to resist attack, assault or aggression able to resist strain or force.

This is what the dictionary defines as strong. I however have a different definition. Strong is the ability to stand in front of complete strangers and tell a story. A story that was not made to amuse, distract, entertain or deceive. It is the ability to hold your head high after having your way of life exposed to millions of people without an ounce of shame. My story will be one of strength because it is not a story at all. It is my life.

My name is Barbara Izquierdo; I am a 21-year-old mother of 2. Today I will be giving each and every one of you a chance to look into a day of my life. I would like to begin by asking you all to close your eyes and picture this. I ask you to close your eyes because I do not want to you judge the words that I am saying but to simply compare your life to mines.

It is the middle of March. It's snowing outside. There are two infants crying, so you think of how you can soothe them. You get up walk over to the window and cover it with a bed sheet so the light wont disturb the nap they are about to take. You then go downstairs and take the pots of water that were boiling on the stove, carry them up the steps to the tub so you can mix it with the cold water, and take them a bath.

You then run back downstairs and turn on the stove to provide heat for the home because there is no other way. You dress them, then feed them the only thing you have available which is a can of chef Boyardee, the same thing they eat everyday because it was all you could afford, you divide it evenly for them, and while they eat, you stare at pizzeria menus to take away your hunger pains. When they are done and all cleaned up you take them up the steps and begin your bedtime story.

There once was a girl Name Persistence. Persistence had many dreams. She dreamt of a big home with a white picket fence, a career, a college education, and a car. However, she faced many obstacles on the road to pursuing her dreams. Therefore, every morning when she got dressed, she would put on her lucky pair of jeans and in the front left pocket, she would place courage. In the right ambition. In the back left pocket she would place determination and in the back right she would place hope. She would leave her home with all of these things and start her journey towards her goal. Nevertheless, what persistence failed to bring with her was reality and reality was working against her.

She had no money, no formal high school education, and a disgraceful background. She grew up in a broken home without a father to whom she lost to prison because of drug trafficking. A mother who only would like to see her fail and a drug addict brother who stole anything he could to get what he needed. Her family you ask....well she had none. Only an uncle whose hands she escaped when he tried to rape her. She was not so lucky when it came to a neighbor so she learned to trust no one. With all of these things floating around in her mind, she would go to colleges and explain how she was of "low income" but had high expectations of herself. However, the admissions counselors would inform her you could not pay tuition with hope, dreams, and expectations. Therefore, she would leave.

Her next stop the public assistance office who would inform her she was ineligible for assistance because she had a job so she could provide food, pay rent; pay bills buy essentials, clothe herself and two children, pay medical bills, and constantly replace everything that was missing in the home. Therefore, she would leave. So slowly everything she had in her pockets would fade into sprinkles of lint. Open your eyes.....

As I dry the tears away from my eyes I kiss my sleeping children and whisper persistence stands before you. So Here I am everyone and I would to inform you I will not give up. I would not let my limited income limit my ambition, or persistence. I would not let it interfere with my intelligence. That is why I chose to be the first mother of Witnesses To Hunger. I want to be a well-educated woman so I can provide a life for my children where canned food is not dinner. Where hot water does exist. Where the stove is used for preparing meals only. Where they could be safe and not molested my neighbors or raped by family. Because I am more than a statistic. I am a person just like you the difference is We just were brought into different lifestyles. I am here because I want to change my lifestyle. I want people to see in me what I see in myself.....

WHAT DO YOU SEE IN ME???