In 500-700 words, please describe what qualifications you have that makes you deserving of this scholarship. Also, please tell us about your current AND future academic, career, and personal goals. Tell us your story!

My name is [REDACTED] and my academic journey has been trying and empowering. I believe I have found the career destination that will fulfill my goals and help others. I am excited to complete my academic journey through the ADN Nursing program at Merritt College.

I first thought of becoming a nurse 13 years ago. I saw my mother huddled on the floor of a psychiatric unit restrained with a straight jacket. She was spitting mad and couldn't comprehend why and how she ended up there. My mother looked at the nurse and said, “You're the white devil.” The RN looked at my mother, rolled his eyes and scoffed back at her, “Yeah, right. Sure I am.” I was appalled that he would behave in such an unprofessional manner in front of me. If that's how they treated a patient in front of her own daughter, how was my mother being treated behind closed doors? I saw the reality of the conditions in psychiatric facilities. I met overworked staff in need of sensitivity training. I also met professional, caring psychiatric nurses. Maybe with my personal experience and compassion I can make a difference in psychiatric nursing.

My mother was diagnosed with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. My childhood memories of my mother's bizarre behavior started to make sense. For many years, I thought my mother was an eccentric Korean immigrant with an alcohol problem. Her diagnosis explained why she was kicked out of apartment after apartment for hammering holes in the walls and cutting the telephone lines out of fear and paranoia that the government was monitoring her. It explained the nightmare of getting a call from my mother telling me that she had all the tools ready to end her life. Now I know that she was self-medicating her mania with alcohol and didn't have the means to fight something so much bigger than her.

My mother's illness also explained why she was unable to take care of my sister and me and abruptly left us in our father's care. My father raised my sister and me since we were toddlers and became our foundation and our biggest academic supporter. 12 years ago, he passed away from heart failure. This heartbreak has further inspired me to make my father proud and fulfill his wishes for me to finish school and choose a career that I'm passionate about.

As a family we are now more prepared for my mother's manic episodes, but it hasn't made our experience easier. Since I made my decision to become a registered nurse, my mother has battled colon cancer and has been admitted to various psychiatric units. My sister and I have been my mother's caregivers and support system. I remember being late for class because my mother defecated herself and I had to give her a decent shower while trying to keep her dignity.

These personal experiences have only fueled my passion to become a nurse. In the Merritt nursing program, I had the privilege of working with patients suffering from maladies including brain injuries, schizophrenia, bipolar, Alzheimer's disease, HIV, and drug addiction. I know now what it feels like to give a patient comfort by merely holding their hand and sitting in silence. I've already experienced such redeeming and worthwhile feelings.

If I'm awarded this scholarship, the Peralta foundation will be sponsoring a knowledge hungry student who doesn't cower in fear when life throws its most twisting curve balls. This scholarship will fund a student in dire financial need and encourage me to further dedicate my time and efforts to attain my RN license. Scholarship money will allow me more time to study and meet my academic deadlines without the constant worry of how to make ends meet.

My academic plans are to finish the ADN nursing program at Merritt College and continue my education at CSU East Bay via Merritt's bridge program in order to earn my Bachelor's degree. I will then earn my RN license after passing the NCLEX exam. I plan on becoming a psychiatric nurse and contributing a high level of compassion and skill in hopes to improve our health care system.