

From Homeless to Harvard

On the day after Christmas, 16-year-old Liz Murray stood in the cold at her mother's poorly-arranged funeral. It was the lowest point in her life, and she knew that something had to change.

Liz's childhood in the Bronx, New York City, was terrible. Her parents, both addicted to drugs, could not take care of Liz or her sister. Their home was dirty and they did not have enough food or clothing, and young Liz often saw her parents using drugs. She didn't go to school. Eventually, after her mother developed AIDS and had to live in a hospital, the family lost their home. At 15, Liz became homeless and spent her nights on friends' couches or on park benches.

Her mother's death was a turning point. Liz knew that she had to put an end to this miserable life. At an age when most students begin to apply to college, Liz decided to go back to school. Many high schools refused to admit a homeless teenager. Even the school Liz eventually attended did not want her at first, but Liz would not give up. She took her father to the interview to pretend that she had a place to live.

Liz's dedication did not disappear once she started high school again. She studied every moment she could, and took a double load of courses so that she could finish the four-year program in two years. At the same time, she worked a part-time job and earned enough money to have a place to live. Eventually, she received a college scholarship and decided to apply to Harvard. When she learned she had been accepted, she screamed with joy and called all her friends. Her dream of attending Harvard had come true.

The journey from homelessness in the Bronx to one of the world's top universities shows the power of hard work. Liz Murray's story tells us that with determination and effort, we can each decide our own destiny.