

My Daughter Helped Me Build a Life Here

Ruzana Romanova

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. How do children help parents “build a life”?
2. If you have children, how have they affected the goals you have for yourself?
3. Think about the word *purpose*. What do you see as your *purpose*? Talk about a time you have done something *on purpose*.

Pregnant and Alone

There is one person in my life who makes me feel at home, and it is my daughter.

Before coming to the U.S., I was in a serious car accident. I broke my leg and ribs and spent a long time in the hospital. It was a very hard experience, and I was treated badly. After that, I promised myself that if I ever had a child, I wanted to give birth in a different country.

I came to the U.S. when I was four months pregnant. I was totally alone. Everything was new for me and I didn’t speak English. I only knew a few words. I had very little money. I started working on the day after I arrived. It was not easy to rent an apartment. During my pregnancy, I moved many times. I felt tired and stressed. Sometimes I thought about going back, but I stayed because of my daughter.

When it was time for my daughter to be born, I went to the hospital by myself. I was nervous and afraid. But one nurse was very kind to me, and the doctors treated me with care and respect. In that moment, I felt like I was not alone. That was the first time I felt cared for in this country. Sometimes home can appear in unexpected moments through kindness and support.



My Daughter Gives Me Purpose

The second time I felt at home was when I took my daughter to daycare. I cried because I realized how far I had come. Step by step, I became more confident living in this country. Through my daughter, I became part of this new life. Then I opened my own business and built my life in New York. Little by little, I stopped feeling like a visitor.

Now I can say that New York is my home, not because life here is easy but because my daughter helped me build a life here. She gave me strength, *purpose*, and the feeling that I truly belong.

Ruzana Romanova is an ESOL student at Borough of Manhattan Community College in New York City. She lives in Manhattan with her daughter and has worked in the beauty industry for over 15 years as a permanent makeup artist and educator. She hopes to continue her education in the medical field.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. How does Ruzana's daughter give her purpose? Cite evidence from the text.
2. Look at the illustration below. Write a few sentences that might serve as a caption to the illustration.
3. Read the stories on p. 16 and p. 17. What is similar and what is different about the author's perspectives?

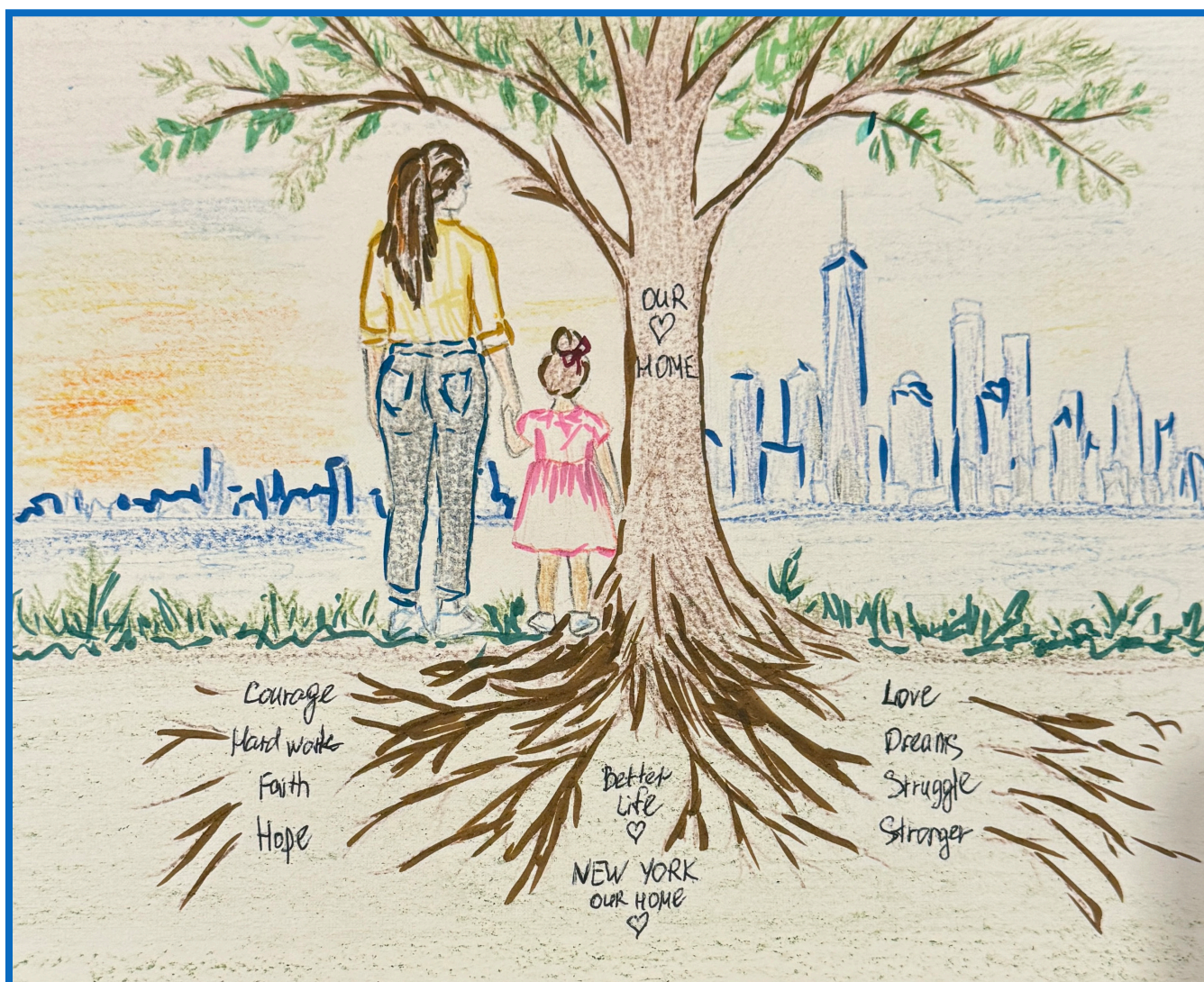


Illustration by Ruzana Romanova

Visit this website to see other illustrations of what home means: <https://www.nahro.org/membership/what-home-means-to-me/>. Try making your own illustrations, collages, or other visuals to express what home means to you.