

## ESOL VOICES: Student Spotlight

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*JingSong was born in China. He immigrated to the United States 14 years ago with his family and plans to study Radiologic Technology at MCC. In this essay, JingSong writes about the struggles his mother went through being pregnant with him, a second child, since at that time the "one child" policy was in effect. In October, 2015, the Chinese Communist Party ended its "one child" policy that had been in effect since the late 1970s. Married couples are now allowed to have two children.*



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### A Mother's Battle

"Mother, can you tell me the story of what you went through when you were pregnant with me?" I asked my mother, who was sitting beside me on my bed.

This was one night years ago after I had a little quarrel with my mother during the day. After the quarrel, my grandmother told me about the hardship my mother had endured during her days of pregnancy carrying me and that I should be more considerate of her. After I heard what my grandmother said, it hit me so hard that I felt really bad and decided that I had to hear the whole story.

During nighttime, my mother always read to me before I slept, and that night she came into my room as usual even though we had a disagreement during the day.

"Of course," she said and rubbed my head and placed me on her lap. As I sat on her lap and cuddled around her, she started to tell the story of her endurance...

It was the year 1992; my family lived in a town called BaiSheng in

Fujian province in the southeast part of China. The town was in a rural region, so there were a lot of fields that grew many different kinds of vegetables and fruits.

Our family had some lands of our own where my grandparents would harvest crops like rice, chives, and potatoes. They would work in the fields every day and my mother would often help out. Our houses lay beside the field. The houses were single room structures built beside each other in a perfect straight line. When you looked at them, they were like three separate houses.

The houses were built by my grandfather when he married my grandmother. They were built from hand-carved stone bricks that were firmly placed on top of each other and were paved together tightly. One house consisted of a kitchen and a dining room, one had my grandparents' room, and one a room where my parents, sister, and I lived, and this is where it all began.

One day, my mother was sitting

outside the house, taking care of my sister while watching my grandparents plow rice in the field. All of the sudden, she felt really bad and had a terrible headache. When my grandmother saw it, she took my mother to a clinic in town.

The doctor checked my mother and said that my mother was pregnant. Both my grandmother and mother were in shock when they heard the news. They were overcome with joy and smiles came on their faces. They went home and told my grandfather the news. My grandfather was also thrilled and happy to hear the news.

However, the happiness lasted only for a short while because my mother suddenly realized the situation. In China, during the 90s, there was the policy called the one child policy, where a family was limited to just one child. Since my mother already had my sister, I was obviously the second child. The short moment of happiness was now replaced by worried looks on everyone's face.

The policy was enforced in small towns like ours because the officers in the departments that controlled them were very strict followers of the policy, and they would force abortion if anyone pregnant with a second child was found. If the child was born, they would issue you a certain amount of fine, and if you didn't pay the fine, you would be sent to jail. Knowing the situation, the only thing that had to be done was to keep my mother hidden from the officers until she gave birth to me.

At nighttime, my grandparents called my three aunts to our house to discuss a plan that would keep my mother safe. The atmosphere around the meeting was very intense and at last, the meeting ended. They thought out a plan and it was that they would send my mother to each of their houses for a certain amount of time, but she would never stay there for long.

With the plan in mind, everyone left the meeting with a tense feeling.

My mother looked down at her stomach and whispered, "I will keep you safe, my child" as she sat on her bed that night and closed her eyes.

A few months passed after the meeting, and it had been very peaceful. My mother remained indoors most of the time and only went out to take in some fresh air and exercise, but as her stomach grew each day, her time outside became less and less. One afternoon, my mother was preparing dinner for my grandparents, when suddenly my grandmother came rushing in and told her to hide quick because someone must have snitched on them and the officers were right outside trying to find my mother.

My mother blanked out for a second when she heard the news, but quickly came to her mind and found a space between the stoves in the kitchen. She closed her eyes and put her hands firmly on her stomach trying to protect the unborn me.

Meanwhile, my grandfather was outside trying to persuade the officers not to go into the house. The tension began to build up. Finally, the officers got ahold of my grandfather and took him away.

When they walked away, my grandmother came in and told my mother what happened, and they contacted my aunts immediately.

One of my aunts had contact with an officer, so she bribed him in order to get my grandfather out of jail.

Then, my mother was transferred to one of my aunts' houses, and she hid there for the time being. Fortunately, nothing happened after that and my mother moved from one house to another, never staying for too long and never going outside during the whole time.

"It was a very challenging time, especially when you decided to come out weeks after your estimated time of birth. I guess that's when you began to become bad, always pushing me to protect you and care for you," my mother said as she flicked my nose and smiled at me.

I looked at her in her eyes and felt the love coming from her. I didn't say anything and hugged her tightly because there was nothing I could say. Hearing the story, I realize how hard it was for her during her pregnancy, how hard she worked to protect me, and how much she endured during that time. I guess that is what you call a mother's love for her child, when protecting him is what she would do no matter what.