

Guenson's Story



Guenson had always had a difficult relationship with his father, the only parent he had in the U.S. since he came here in 2004. In the middle of conflicts with him, Guenson broke into a house so he could wash his clothes. It would be a decision that changed his life forever.

He was arrested by ten armed police officers and incarcerated for nine long months. On the day he received news that he was eligible for release, his excitement was short-lived: he needed a note from his father saying that he had a place to live. When Guenson's father wouldn't take his calls or respond to his letters, he spent an extra thirteen months in jail.

When he finally left, he wanted to cry. He had waited a long time for this, but soon woke up to the cold reality that he was homeless. Guenson found that being homeless on the streets was as harsh as being incarcerated. He remembered nights when he walked for hours trying to find an abandoned home to sleep in. When he found one, he was too frightened to go inside because that's what sent him to jail in the first place. He finally returned his old home where he had lived with his father two years earlier. The house was barricaded, but the garage was unlocked. He found a mattress on the street and dragged it inside.

Guenson told us that he almost enjoyed sleeping on the old mattress inside his abandoned garage that first night, but other nights he wasn't so lucky. If he noticed police patrolling, he would be forced to move along – sleeping outside, exposed to the elements. It was then that he heard about Covenant House. Guenson shared this memory about walking through the doors for the first time:

"Unlike my own father, Covenant House welcomed me with open arms. When my blood family left me behind, Covenant House was there for me and the staff of Covenant House have become my new family. Being at Covenant House has changed the way I think and act. It has given me guidance I never found at home and courage I didn't know I had."

Ever since Guenson was young, his dream was to become a chef. With the support and encouragement of staff, he has found a job as a prep cook and loves it. He was quickly promoted, and was fortunate to work for an executive chef who took him under his wing. He is now on a path where he can keep working hard and fulfill his dreams.

Guenson moved into Rights of Passage, Covenant House's transitional housing program where he has his own apartment and support of our staff. He works two other jobs in addition to being a cook, and volunteers at the Covenant House shelter when he has a day off. He is always busy building his future. Covenant House gave him the support he needed to transform his life.

