

Thaishaly Perez

The Future of South Florida

I sat by the mangrove tree while I watched my pet dog, Baxter chase the birds scattered around the backyard. Despite the cool shade the tree provided, it as well carried sacred feelings and memories from 50 years ago with it. Before passing away, my grandmother would tell me of her time as a young girl in the now sunken city, South Beach. It was very important for me to know of her life before and during the lost battle of the south beach sea as everyone had already forgotten it or did not survive it as my grandmother was the only survivor, alongside of my mom and two other civilians of the entire South Florida, and her home located in South Beach. My grandma was able to evacuate her home thanks to the many mangrove trees she had planted out of her love for them. After she passed away, I decided to plant my very own one in memory of her and in remembrance of a city dear to her heart.

Grandma left me with memories of Miami Beach as a whole, including north and south Miami. The salty breeze and wind followed her everywhere, in which was almost like an invisible friend to her in each of her adventures. Grandma was not always the type to adventure however. It wasn't until she had learned about Gloria Estefan and her song "Get on your feet" in which she collaborated with her husband Emilio, and his band, "Miami Sound Machine" that she felt motivated to explore Miami Beach and stand up to take action about the future of South Florida by planting mangroves everywhere. If anyone was curious about where grandma was back then, her mother would always tell them she was at South Pointe Beach, as it was her favorite place to be at. It was unique to her, as it offered panoramic views of Biscayne Bay, Fisher Island, Downtown Miami, and the Atlantic Ocean all in one. A combination of the sea and city was like no other. She celebrated each of her teenage birthdays there, with her family and best of friends. It was the very first beach she has ever visited in her life. For this very reason, grandma chose

South Pointe as her first area to plant mangrove trees as she wanted to protect this area that was dear to her heart the most.

If there was anything Grandma and I shared an interest in the most, it was music. Before it closed down, she would always visit Peaches Records & Tapes. Her and I agreed it was a taste of heaven as it contained nearly every album a person could desire. The closing of this place was a wake up call to always take a stand to protect the things she loved. When news of South Florida and her home in south beach potentially being underwater was announced, she refused to lose yet another thing that made her feel safe. There were many memories she had made in Miami beach during her youth that she did not want to give up without a fight.

The first time she walked her brand new puppy in Espanola way, her first date on the Fourth of July at the north beach bandshell, the Miami Beach Botanic garden that she considered to be her very own safe place as it captured the beautiful foreign scenery of Japan along with the astonishing nature, vibrant koi fish and turtles she loved dearly, the Lincoln road movie theater where she had laughed the loudest, and her high school, Miami Beach Senior High, where she met many people and learned the most at, were the most sacred and valuable things to her heart that she had fought for, but lost.

If I were to ask the people around me or the people at my school about these places, they would return a blank face. After grandma had passed away, I made it my mission to inform the world about South Florida, the places grandma held very dear to her heart in her home at South Beach, and had passed down to me to be knowledgeable of, and of the mangrove trees that still exist there that had managed to protect portions of her home, and her city moments before it had sunk. The mangroves planted outside her home allowed herself and my mother at the time evacuate her home and seek safety. My grandma always told me that did not need a superhero, as the mangroves acted like one.

I am now an influential speaker presenting Ted talks all around the world about the sunken city, and the places my grandma had held closely to her to large audiences. The world is no longer oblivious to the sunken city, and has planted over millions of mangroves all over the world, and thousands in each city as tribute to my grandmother's life and in remembrance to South Florida.