

# Burdens of the Past

Cultures are often a hefty change, from not only the setting being completely different but the language, expressions, and connections between people. I am Somali, same as Abdi Nor Iftin, and recently I traveled to Somaliland, a neighboring country of Somalia, and the country that became because of the civil war of Somaliland and Somalia. My mother is from Somaliland but my father is from Mogadishu, the country that Abdi Nor Iftin is. The culture and aftermath still lingers in the air of Somaliland, with the stigmatization of non-Islamic influences but the country has become a lot more American as well. In the corner shops you can buy multiple types of candy, and Coca-Cola and Fanta fills the refrigerator to the brim. Living there for nearly 3 months means I must not only just live there, but adapt and grow around the culture. I do not fully speak the language but I fully understand it (as confusing as that is, a majority of first generation immigrant children have this problem I've realized) and that caused enough challenges but the culture and small differences raised a multitude of problems.

While living there, on opposite ends of the street you could see the two extremes and the conclusion of the wars. On one side, seeing more than 20 people sitting on cardboard, eating khat from morning to night was more than normal. On the other extreme imperialism plagued the country with Pizza Huts and hotels from other countries, with litterings of bottles and boxes. Packs of dogs walked the streets, and hundreds of goats would walk around eating the trash off the ground. This was a weird environment and experience, and because we did not have a car we would always have to walk or use public transportation. This sudden change was normalized as the months got on. Because we had family from Somaliland living with us, we also had the luxury of walking family explaining the stores and giving context to what we saw, normalizing it more in our heads. This sudden shift felt more normal because of the explanation of how or why things were like that.

Another shift was the food, and this one was a bit harder to completely get used to. There was not food just being given, and all of the meat, rice, and vegetables that we wanted to eat would have to be bought at the marketplace. The best time to go to the marketplace would be extremely early in the morning. You would have to wake up at 6, and take public transportation some 30 minutes away and you would find yourself between a large venue of people. Those with tables would often show their goods, live chickens and vegetables, lamb meat being cut in open in front of you. This was very hard to get over, and if they killed an animal in front of me I would always look away. I would always come to the marketplace because I did not want my mother to go alone. Another section of the culture of food was food timings. There were certain times that everyone would eat, and we did not have cereal that we could make if we were hungry at 12pm at night. We ate breakfast, lunch and dinner as a family, and the scraps of food we did not finish we fed to the goats. There was no getting hungry after dinner, you would have to sleep and wake up at breakfast time for food.

Throughout the day, the mosque would always give the adhan and the sound would reverberate throughout the city. You could hear the sound of the mosque giving the adhan, whether it be 5 in the morning, or 10 at night. Every single day there was a prayer at sunrise, and sunset and 3 in between. After the adhan the majority of men would walk to the nearest mosque and pray. It was considered unholy and extremely rude to not be going to the mosque 5 times a day, so even if you were not the most religious type that was the place you must go. Changing my sleeping style to everyday having to sleep after 10 or wake up at 10 and go pray, and while sleeping wake up at sunrise to pray was exhausting. It would feel as if I never got a full night's rest. The way that I combated this was becoming a light sleeper. I would always sleep knowing that I would have to wake up early.