

In *Call Me American*, author Abdi Nor Iftin tells the story of how he adapted and survived in war-torn Somalia and acclimated to a new culture in the U.S. Describe a time when you had to adjust to a new culture or environment. What were the challenges you faced and how did you adapt?

Tradition, honor, discipline, and excellence. Growing up as a daughter of a Hmong refugee, these are values that were instilled in me at a very young age. Living in modern America, I still encounter situations where I feel that it's just a little bit harder for me as a minority to adjust and approach life and to pursue a dream of a career in healthcare that I have had ever since I could see the world. How do I react and approach this? Honestly, sometimes, this is easier said than done. However, it all goes back to reflecting on core values and making sure that it shines brilliantly in all facets of my life. I would like to share and reflect on two significant examples.

In the fall of 2020, I was challenged by my Spanish teacher to look for new opportunities to expand my knowledge and interaction with other global cultures in the Global Scholars program. I volunteered to assist a professor in an ESL class for the semester. Starting out, I wasn't sure what to expect and wasn't clear on how I could add value to the education for the primarily Spanish speaking students that I would be helping. I remembered, showing up on the first day and after being introduced to the class, I could see questions in the students' eyes. They were probably asking themselves how a young Asian American was going to assist them with learning English in the class? It started with answering simple questions from students and interacting with them in Spanish and teaching them or translating it into English. As time progressed, I made really strong connections with these students. It was during this time that something clicked! They started asking more questions and asked for

details on my life and culture. We shared information on our families, our cultures and our dreams. It was beautiful to see the similarities and establish those connections so that we could both grow stronger in life. It made me realize that we are all the same and that at times, it was just a different approach or perspective in life that differentiates us.

For my second example, I would like to share my story. Higher education for the female Hmong population is typically lower than males and is not often pursued due to marriage at a young age or other personal obligations. While this trend is slowly changing, I still face challenges and questions from family members and friends. How can I balance my life as a wife and mother as a doctor in the future? How can I contribute to the family and clan, if I am not readily available due to work? These are good questions. The biggest issue that I have faced is that they don't know how to respond to me when I tell them about my educational goals because they never had the opportunity to pursue higher education or if they did, they dropped out or it was difficult for them to finish. I had to seek knowledge and encouragement from others outside of this circle. While I am saddened by this, it also provided me an opportunity to break this cycle to challenge myself to share my experience with others. In addition, I want to share my passion and further develop my leadership skills through mentoring and other leadership opportunities at school and in my personal life. Outreach has done so much for me in this area with my family and friends. Female family members and friends now see me as a source of inspiration. They are comfortable with talking to me about seeking higher education. It opens the door to open communication in multiple avenues. I now assist in mentoring and leadership activities within my community. I am dedicated towards advancement.

I hope that this short reflection gives you a deeper view of the two challenges that I have shared and how I have adapted to overcome them. These experiences make me stronger, more resilient and even more determined to carve the way to inspiring a brighter future for both myself and others in the community. In the end, I can attest that I can now proudly add to the values that I initially shared. I can now carry forward

and add courage, authenticity and vision. I will use these in my life to build value in the community. To promote growth and respect in all that I do.