

HER, NUBAKAAJ

My name is Nubkaaj Her. I was born on February 18, 1989 in Ladysmith, Wisconsin. Right now I am fourteen years old and I attend Wausau West High School. There are seven people in my family and we all attend the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

How do you feel about being a Hmong girl? Why? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?

I like being a Hmong girl; I enjoy being Hmong because I like the language. I also like being different. Some advantages are that you get to speak a language others may not know and do awesome traditional things. Some disadvantages for a Hmong girl are, you stay home most of the time doing mainly housework, etc... meaning not as much freedom to do things.

What do you know about your traditions and culture and how do you feel about them? (For instance marriage, shamanism, the language...)

Some Hmong traditions are okay...like the marriages, they're way different than American weddings, and I don't really like how it is but it's okay. Hmong funerals are really different too. It's a three day thing, so you can spend it saying your last goodbyes to the loved one and there are many more cultures and traditions.

How do you feel about being Americanized?

I think I like it better, because the Hmong culture is too complicated and too strict on everything.

How do your parents feel about it? (Being Americanized)

I don't think they mind, since they know how to speak English. Plus since us kids are already so Americanized.

Do you ever feel torn or trapped between the two? How so?

Kind of but not really, just that other girls get more freedom than I do. They get to hang out with friends more and just have more fun.

What is it like living with two different cultures?

It's sometimes stressful and complicated.

Which culture do you feel is more beneficial and why?

I think being Americanized is way better for me. I guess because most of the Hmongness inside of me is slowly fading, but it'll always be in my blood.

Are your parents more Americanized or stuck in the traditional way of life? And how do you feel about that?

My parents are kind of both; they speak English fairly well, at least a little better than most Hmong parents.

What have your parents taught you and how will you use it?

They taught me my manners and I will use it always throughout my life and all the consequences they gave my helped me learn from my mistakes.

What are your expectations and your parent's expectations for your future?

Mainly to finish schooling, to go to college, and to get a "job of my dreams."

"Yes, having a good education is very important to both me and my parents because to able to be successful in the future I'd have to study hard, to reach my goals and to be what I want."

At school or anywhere else have you ever felt peer pressure to do something? What was it and did you follow through?

Yes, actually I've been pressured to smoke just a few days ago and no I did not do it, because I don't think it's worth starting. Some friends I know actually regret even starting to smoke in the first place.

Have you ever been discriminated against because of your ethnicity? If yes, how did you feel and react to it?

I don't think so.

Why do people discriminate because of ethnicity?

I think they discriminate to make themselves look good.

What advice would you give to someone who wanted help on how to deal with their racial issues?

Just know that you're no different than them...that everyone was made a human being.

How do you and your parents feel about interracial dating?

I don't know about my parents, but I don't mind... cause I guess it's the love between the two that counts.

A stereotype is that all Hmong are in gangs, how do you feel about that? Have you ever been asked to join and why do people join?

Not all Hmong are in gangs. I mean yeah...there are Hmong gangs, but not everybody is in one. We shouldn't be judged by our race! No...I haven't been asked to join one, but if I ever did I wouldn't because it's just stupid... people join gangs to look cool and to fit in with their friends.

What do you see in the future for the Hmong? What are your hopes for them?

There will still be gangs and racial problems. I believe that if everyone learns to love one another and treat each other equally, we shouldn't have as many issues on earth.

Do you have any advice or words of wisdom to share?

Be yourself no matter what and just be proud of whatever race you were created to be! And always smile!