



KHANG, SHENG

Sheng Khang is a nineteen year-old student at D.C. Everest Senior High School. She started school later because she was older when her family moved to America. She enjoys spending time with her family and works a lot. She plans to go to college after high school, but isn't yet sure where.

Where were you born?

I was born in Ban Vanai, Thailand at a refugee camp.

Have you ever been discriminated against in school? How does the school help?

Yes, in school I don't get treated as well by the other students. Because I'm Hmong, other students don't want to hang out with me. I think there is racism against Hmong people because other races think they're better than us.

What language do you speak mostly at home and at school?

At home I speak 'Hmong-lish' with my siblings, but I speak Hmong to my parents because they don't understand English. At school I speak in English because that's the only way to get my point across.

"I think there is racism against Hmong people because other races think they're better."

Is it hard to be friends with other races?

Yes, sometimes they don't understand why I make the choices I do. They sometimes think that I'm weird. Therefore, I have more Hmong friends.

What do you think about interracial dating?

I think it's okay because we're all human. If we continue this "hate" then it'll never end. However, my parents don't like it, they think that it's wrong to date people of other ethnicity.

What kind of traditions do you still practice?

Shamanism. We practice "hub plig" (spirit calling) and "ua neeg" (traditional healing practices).

Would you raise your children with Hmong or American traditions?

I would raise them in both traditions, but I would choose to raise my children more Americanized because they need to "fit" into society.

How has being Hmong affected your life?

I get a lot of attention in class when the topic is Hmong. Outside of class I am looked upon as someone "lower."

What do you think about gangs?

I think they're dumb because they're just wasting their time; nothing is going to come out of it. Also, teens that join gangs lose their opportunity at a successful life. Their parents have so much hope for them and by joining gangs, they destroy their parents' dreams for them as well as their own dreams.

What is your parents' idea of traditional Hmong girls and boys?

My parents think that girls should stay home and do chores while the boys go out and stay out as late as they want. I think it's so unfair.

"I get a lot of attention in class when the topic is Hmong."

What is your idea of an ideal boy and girl?

It should be like the American way, where the boy and girl have equal rights. They can both do the same thing depending on their parents rules.

What privilege do Hmong boys have that Hmong girls don't?

Hmong boys can hang out with their friends all night and go anywhere they want. As for the girls, they can't stay out late and they have to be at a "specific" place so their parents can call to check on them.

What do you think of Hmong marriages or getting married young?

Hmong people who get married young lose their chance at a good life. They were given this great opportunity to prove to the world what they're capable of and then they do not take the opportunity.

What problems do Hmong teens face everyday?

Parents of Hmong teens don't understand them and think they're being disobedient when they're acting normal.

What defines you as Hmong?

My looks, traditions, and culture define me as Hmong.

Do you think that Caucasians stereotype Asians because of hair color?

Yes, because some of them think that Asians with blonde and streaked hair are in gangs.

What are your parents' expectations of you?

They want me to get good grades, finish school, go to a good college, and have a successful career.

What is your expectation of yourself?

I have the same expectations for myself, because who wouldn't want to get good grades and go off to college?!

Do you and your parents disagree a lot?

Not really because we have a really good communicative relationship.

What values have your parents passed on to you?

My mother always told me to work hard to get what I want. She said, "There are no shortcuts in life." There's also respect, which is a very big thing. My family thinks that before we can respect others we should respect ourselves first and then others. Most importantly, we should respect our elders because they paved our way to the 'new' world.