



LEE, JULIE

Julie Lee is currently a freshman at D.C. Everest Junior High School. She loves to play basketball in her freetime and is very good at drawing. Julie plans to go to college out of state; she's not sure where yet, for she has many years left.

My name is Julie Pa Lee. I am fourteen years old, and I've lived in America all my life. Ever since I was little, my parents have always told me to go far in life and don't do anything bad. Till this day, I still carry on with these words. Since I'm the oldest child in my family, I want to be a good role model for my younger brothers and sister. I want them to know that there's more to life than partying or screwing up their life while they're still young.

"Being a Hmong person means a lot to me. I know that not everyone knows about the Hmong culture, but it's my generation's duty to help others know who we are."

I try to do my best in school so other people can look and see me as a good person. In the Hmong culture, if a female screws up her life, other Hmong people will look at her as a bad person for life. I don't want other people to look at me like that. I know that a lot of Hmong people try very hard to accomplish their goals. I'm one of those people and I don't want my culture to be forgotten. That is why I try so hard to be recognized. Being a Hmong person means a lot to me. I know that not everyone knows about the Hmong culture, but it's my generation's duty to help others know who we are.

In 8th grade, we had to do this project called "National History Day." We do research on a topic and go to competitions. There are seven categories and my category was individual performance. My topic was on the "Vietnam War" and the "Hmong Rights". I worked really hard on this project and I'm really happy I went far. The first competition was at school, then regional, then state, and then national. National was in Washington D.C. I made it to nationals and was the only Hmong/Asian person representing Wisconsin. I was proud of my accomplishment.

When I went to Washington D.C., I was expecting to see a lot of Hmong people from all over the place. I thought it would be cool to hang out with them and share our experiences, but when I got there, I didn't see any Hmong people at all. Sure I saw a lot of Asians but they were either Chinese or Japanese. I met this one lady from Korea; I thought it was neat, but still...no Hmong. Maybe there were Hmong people there; I just didn't see them. It was disappointing, but I met a lot of people with different backgrounds, so it was cool. A lot of people from other states thought I was Chinese because they've never heard of Hmong people before. I met these two Chinese girls; I thought they were Hmong but when I asked for their last names, it was different from the Hmong last names. That was when I found out they were

Chinese. Then they asked if I am Chinese and I said "no." I told them that I am Hmong and they started asking me questions about the Hmong people because they've never heard of the Hmong culture before. I was surprised that not even other Asians know what the Hmong culture is. This is a reason why I want to bring out my culture. I was at National History Day to represent Wisconsin and my culture. I believe every culture should be known.

People often ask me why I'm so happy. I smile at them and say, "Because I am." But really, it's because I'm proud of who I am. I don't ever want to change my background because there's racism. I don't ever want to change who I am because there's hatred. I am a happy Hmong person and being happy brings out the best in me. Being happy all the time doesn't mean that I don't have my own problems, because I do. I know that a lot of people are trying to stop the racial problems today; I'm glad that they are. I don't know why people hate anyway. Just because one person of a different race did something wrong doesn't mean that they can hate the whole race. That's just wrong and I think all races are beautiful. Like people always say, "The inside is what matters."

"Just because one person of a different race did something wrong doesn't mean that they can hate the whole race. That's just wrong and I think all races are beautiful. Like people always say, "The inside is what matters.""