
LEE, NA

Na has a family unlike any ordinary Hmong family. She hopes you learn more about the Hmong culture and understand where they are coming from.

I have two families; my parents are divorced. I have a mom, dad, step-mom and step-dad, two brothers, two sisters, and a step-brother and sister. My parents were married in Laos, but we were all born in the U.S. My parents are rather young, so we are in our teens and younger.

How do you feel about being Hmong? Why? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

I'm proud to be Hmong, even though I'm only half Hmong. Being Hmong gives me something to have pride in and a sense of belonging. I have a high level of confidence in being Hmong and different. Even though I'm learning languages, being different and treated based on being something else are some disadvantages.

What do you know about your traditions and culture and how do you feel about them?

I'm not strong in this category. I was brought up with modern parents who barely showed us the traditions. We are all trying to re-learn the culture so we can pass it on to our kids. However, I'm not the best when it comes to Hmong culture and traditions.

How was the transition from Laos and Thailand to America?

I wish sometimes I could've done what my parents did and experience the difficulties of traveling and running away to survive. My parents always tell me they don't regret coming to the U.S. because it has given them more opportunities, such as education and work force.

How do you feel about being Americanized?

Being Americanized is in a way not bad, because my parents really understand me, my needs, and wants. It makes my life really easy and much simpler for my parents and I to communicate.

How do your parents feel about being Americanized?

My parents are Americanized to begin with. They want us to interact with both cultures and keep our Hmong in us while being Americanized.

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

Yes because I'm so used to American culture and when I'm at my relatives' homes I have to go back and rethink Hmong culture.

What is it like living with two different cultures?

Not bad; I learned to except both and understand the importance of both.

Which culture do you feel is more beneficial and why?

Living in the USA, American culture is beneficial because of our surroundings, but also Hmong culture because it's who I am.

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

More Americanized. I don't mind because they understand me and accept more things.

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

They've taught me a lot about being Hmong-American and I'll use it to teach my kids someday.

Is education important to you? Why or why not?

Yes, I believe it'll determine my future and where I stand 5 to 10 years from now. It's one of the opportunities my parents struggled to give me.

What are your expectations and your parents expectations for your future?

My parents and I expect the same thing; go to school, live life, find a job in something I enjoy, have fun, and be happy.

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

Yes, I have, but I just explain to them what I'm really like.

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

Get help and don't be scared to stand up for what you believe in. Be strong.

Why do people discriminate because of ethnicity?

I don't know why. I don't think there's an exact answer.

How do you and your parents feel about interracial dating?

My parents don't have anything wrong with it and I don't either.

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?

Gangs are dumb! I've never been asked to join. People do it to fit in, feel a sense of belonging, and mostly because of peer pressure.

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

My hope is that someday we will be successful in what we do, and be looked upon equally.

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

Stand up for who you are; you can do just about anything. Dream big, and remember we now live in a country with opportunities so take them and reach high.