



LO, KALEE

Kalee is a student of the D.C. Everest High School. She has been in the Wausau area all her life and hopes that one day she can travel the world and go to college. She has six siblings in her family. She enjoys spending time with her friends and family. Kalee sees teaching math or science as her future career.

Will you please give us some background information about yourself.

My name is Kalee Lo. I was born in Wausau, Wisconsin. I am fifteen years old and I attend D. C. Everest Senior High.

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

I speak English I'd probably say all the time. If I ever speak Hmong, it's to my little sister. Every once in a while I say it to my mom or to my grandparents.

Do your parents speak English well or do you have to help them?

My mom actually speaks English pretty well but I feel that she doesn't really want to know I think she would rather just stay in more of our culture instead of being involved in everything and seeing everything as how she should. But otherwise she can actually speak it pretty well. She understands a lot.

What about your Dad?

My dad passed away when I was younger.

Were you ever discriminated against in school?

Oh well, I personally feel that I wasn't. I do feel that in general the Hmong kids sometimes are discriminated against but I personally do not feel discriminated. I guess I never really have because I get along with most of the kids so it's normally all pretty good.

Do you think the schools do enough for the Hmong students who are being discriminated against?

No, I think that they could do a little more because I don't think that's fair. I think sometimes we're not treated as fairly as the other students who may have been involved because we have such... I guess we have a certain reputation from certain kids and that makes us look bad.

Do you think it would help if there were a class in school about the Hmong?

I think it would sometimes, that it would benefit some students but I think that for some students it would just not help them.

What do you think about gangs, and do they affect your image as a Hmong person?

What I think is that they just have family problems and so they turn to each other. They just somehow take their own problems and get into other people's problems and I think that's why there are so many problems between them.

Do they affect your image as a Hmong person?

Maybe not mine personally, but I think, in general it does because it gives us a bad image. But then I see what they're really going for. I do think that they make us look bad because a lot of people will stereotype that "everybody does everything the same" and I really see that as unfair.

Do you have more Hmong or American friends?

Well, when I was growing up I had more American friends. As I grew older, I started hanging out with more Hmong kids and right now I have more Hmong friends.

Is it hard to make friends with people who aren't Hmong?

No, I don't think so. I think that making friends should be the same with everybody.

What do you think about interracial dating?

I think it's perfectly okay. I don't see anything wrong with it, and I actually encourage people to because I think it will teach them more about different cultures.

What do you think the older Hmong generations think of it?

They probably don't like it because they probably see it against what they're used to. I guess when they were younger, they never really had interracial dating.

What kind of traditions do you still practice?

Well, we still eat the same kind of food, we eat Hmong food, and attend New Year's festivals and soccer tournaments.

How has being born Hmong affected your life?

Well I don't know because...well, I guess it's... I think it's more fun in a way because we have our own culture and it's different. We're a smaller ethnicity.

What are your parents' ideas of a traditional Hmong boy or girl and what are your ideas?

My mom thinks that we should all learn how to cook and clean, that we should help her and just know how to do everything that she knew how and just...I don't know... I guess... be more helpful. And for me, I see it the same way as my mom because I do believe that's how it should be, but I think that it should be personally taught, instead of just having them learn by themselves.

What do you think your parents think of a Hmong boy?

Well, I'm not really sure because my mom is very disappointed in the boys in our family so she hasn't really had one that has fulfilled her hopes, I guess. But I guess she has always wanted one that would be helpful, would understand, and could just make things easier for her.

What privileges do the Hmong boys have that Hmong girls don't?

I think that here they get to go out more; they're trusted more in leaving the house and going out. Then again they have an advantage by being closer to their parents.

What are your parent's expectations of you?

My mom just wants me to stay in school and be successful. She just wants me to help around.

What are your expectations for yourself?

I have very high expectations for myself. I expect myself to excel. Sometimes I don't because I slack off. I always try to change that. I want myself to be very successful in the future.

What do you think about Hmong marriages and being married young?

I don't think that we should be married young. I think that we should get married when we are ready. I think the purpose of a marriage is good and the idea is good, but I don't think it comes out that way.

If you ever have any kids, do you want to raise them the Hmong way or do you want them to be more Americanized?

When I raise my kids, I want them to be raised in the Hmong culture. That way they know where they came from and can teach their kids. I think that's important because I feel that more and more Hmong kids are getting more Americanized and that they're not going to know too much about their culture and it's going to get lost.

What problems do Hmong teens face every day?

I guess I feel there's a need for me to be always home and I want to go out. It's not that I don't want to stay home, I just want to be out as much as I am home.

What defines you as a Hmong?

Having a cool name.

"When I raise my kids, I want them to be raised in the Hmong culture. That way they know where they came from and can teach their kids."

Is it hard to live in two cultures?

Actually, I don't think so. I think it is pretty easy. I guess for some kids it is hard because maybe their parents are more traditional.

Do you go to church or are you 100 percent Hmong with every single Hmong tradition going for you?

We used to go to church. We pretty much stopped after my father passed away because it was my father's idea for us to go to church. I think either way is fine because it is just what they want to do.

Do you think each culture's morals are different from each other?

No, I think they basically have the same morals just expressed in different ways.

What values have your parents passed to you?

Well, my mother taught me that taking care of each other is very important because a parent might get very busy caught up in work and may not always be there. She taught us to look after one another.

What do you think the future for the Hmong people is going to be like?

I think that the future tradition isn't going to be the same as what it is. I think the tradition will be very faded and not as strong as it should be.