



MOUA, KAO FENG

Kao Feng Moua is a senior attending the D.C. Everest High School. She is eighteen years old and is hopping on attending UW-Madison as a premed student.

How long has your family lived in America?

We've lived in Wausau for about 10 years, and we've been living in Schofield for about 5-6 years.

So, are you the oldest or the youngest?

I'm the middle child. I have an older brother and three older sisters. I also have two younger brothers and two younger sisters.

What language do you speak most at home? And school?

English, at home and school. My parents want me to speak Hmong at home but we just talk in English because it just comes so naturally. And at school, I speak English mostly because everyone else speaks it.

I was just wondering what hobbies and sports you're involved in?

I like to read and I enjoy playing sports and just hanging out with people. I just learned to crochet; it's pretty cool. I do track and it's fun. I might join other sports next year like tennis or gymnastics.

What kind of music do you like?

I'm not really a music person. I'll listen to anything I think is good.

Do you think life now is different than back then, like in our parent's generation?

Yeah definitely. Living in America is definitely different than living in Laos. Even in America things are changing. There are more opportunities so it's definitely different.

Do you think there's prejudice and racism around today?

Yeah, personally I haven't encountered any racism or prejudice but I know it's there, and I know people who have seen it and gone through it, so it's definitely there.

Have you ever been asked to join a gang?

No.

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Do you know anyone who has? If yes, why do you think they join?

Yeah, I think I know people. Because they're dumb. There's no point in joining a gang.

Do you think gangs are affecting the image of the Hmong people?

Not really... no, because there are Hmong gangs but there are also Caucasian ones, so it's not just a Hmong thing.

What are your expectations for yourself?

I want to succeed in life, I want to be rich, and to be happy. Whatever I do in life I want to be happy.

What are your parents' expectations for you?

I don't know; they want me to succeed. They want me to be better with all these opportunities and whatever they think is best. But I really don't want to do any of that stuff.

Do you think you get a lot of peer pressure? If so, from whom?

I do, but I usually just do whatever I want. I really don't care what other people think. I get pressured by people my age mostly, maybe by elders once in a while.

Do you have any words for the younger generations and generations to come?

I'm not that old and I'm not that wise, but I would say the best thing is to be yourself. Do what you want and don't let other people tell you what to do.

So how is life for you being trapped in two cultures?

It's okay. At times I don't even notice it, but at times I wish I wasn't even Hmong. I'm really Hmong and I'm really American; it's kind of half and half. It doesn't really make a big difference to me. I play sports and do karate, track and all that stuff, but I also do Hmong things. I don't feel trapped but a lot of people do. A lot of people resent their culture but I'm okay with it; it doesn't bother me.

How do you feel about being a Hmong girl?

I like who I am, but I don't like the Hmong traditions like how the girls are treated so bad, they have double standards for both guys and girls and that's just wrong and unfair. But it's great being a Hmong girl. My parents give me a lot of freedom and I can do whatever I want, but I know that isn't so for other Hmong girls. I don't think they should be treated like that. My brother gets a lot more freedom than I even though I get a lot. It sucks with the whole double standards.

What have you learned from your parents?

I've learned a lot; how to cook and take care of things, I've learned to garden and they've taught me a lot of traditions. My parents are pretty cool, but at times it's like "I hate you."

Is school hard being Hmong?

No, it's really easy. I know I can do better if I try a lot more, but I really don't try and I should. The standards are lowered just because we're Asians. I don't think that's fair, but that's how it is. I think school is really easy. I don't put much effort into it but I should.

Was it hard when you moved here?

I was really little; I don't remember much. It was hard learning the language at first, but once I got a grasp on it, it got really easy and became like second nature.

Is it hard for you to date? I mean due to your culture.

My parents don't want me to date. They think all those chicks who date early always get married in their teens. They want me to succeed. They don't want me to date early and get married early. So friends are okay but dating isn't really a big thing. My sister dates and my parents don't do anything.

They lecture but they don't do anything, so it's not a big deal as long as it's nothing serious.

"There shouldn't be prejudice just because the person's different. We can be really cool you can learn a lot from us. And you just need to get to know someone before you judge them."

What do you see in the future for the Hmong?

I think we will become more assimilated into society and there won't be any more "pure" Hmong. I think there will be equality. There's supposed to be now, but there's still racism and all that. Some day there won't be.

What do you see in your future?

Right now I'm not sure, I know that after high school I will go to college. I want to be something; maybe go into the medical field to help people. But I really love track and I want to be a professional athlete also. So I really don't know what's going to happen, but I'll just go with the flow.

What do you want other people to know about you or the Hmong people?

I want other people to know that we're just as intelligent, just as cool as anyone else. And there shouldn't be prejudice just because the person's different. We can be really cool; you can learn a lot from us. And you just need to get to know someone before you judge them.

Do you like being Hmong?

At times I do, but at times I don't. Sometimes it's like, "this is really cool", and we get all these other opportunities. The culture is cool, but sometimes I hate being Hmong. I wish we didn't have to do this, but I'm sure everyone feels that way.