



THAO, JOSHUA

Joshua is a 16 year old teenager who attends D.C. Everest Senior High School. In his spare time he enjoys dancing and playing sports. He believes that remembering your culture is a big part of who you are.

My name is Josh Thao. There are six people in my family: my dad, Lamont Thao, my mom, Belinda Thao, my sisters, Samantha and Bonnie, and my brother, Joey. My parents were born in Laos.

How do you feel about being a Hmong guy/girl? Why? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?

I love it. We're a minority and we can speak another language. A disadvantage is racism.

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

Marriage customs need to be changed; like if you bring a person of the opposite sex home you are expected to marry them. That should be changed.

How do you feel about being Americanized?

It's okay with me. I like it.

"Our traditions are good, but it's time we modernized some of them."

How do your parents feel about it?

It's hard for them but they are doing well with it.

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

Yes, I have to keep up some of the Hmong traditions and still keep up with America.

What is it like living with two different cultures?

It's not that hard and I have more opportunities.

Which culture do you feel is more beneficial and why?

Both are very beneficial, but the American way is better and more helpful in this country.

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

They are Americanized and it's good for me.

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

They taught me how to be good in life. But I can't use anything that they taught me about being what I

want to because they are forcing me to speed-skate.

Is education important to you? Why or why not?

Yes, you need an education to be a good person in society and to be able to survive.

What are your expectations and your parent's expectations for your future?

My parents want me to be a speed-skater, but I don't want to be one. My parents are trying too hard to push me in a direction but I'm not sure what I want to be.

At school or anywhere else have you ever felt peer pressure to do something? What was it and did you follow through?

Yes, but I told them how I felt and they dropped it. Smoking and drinking? Heck no!

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

Yes, I was pissed off and I almost got into a fight. Nothing happened though.

What advice would you give to someone who wanted help on dealing with racial issues?

Go talk to an adult or a counselor to see what should be done. Don't get into a fight over it. It just makes things worse.

Why do people discriminate because of ethnicity?

To make themselves feel better.

How do you and your parents feel about interracial dating?

I'm not into it and neither are my parents.

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?

Heck no. It's just because they hang out together. It sucks. Everyone always looks down on us. The teachers don't trust us, and they always suspect us of something. People want to join because they want to belong to something, or because people keep saying that they are either gangsters or nothing in life.

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

We will survive and keep some of our culture but become Americanized. I hope they remember our culture and language.

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

Remember your language and culture.