

# THAO, PLA

*Pla Thao is a teenager living in Weston. She is attending Wausau West High School. She likes to go out with friends and just hang.*

***Please tell me about yourself and your family. Can you elaborate?***

My name is Pla Thao. I'm 16 years old and was born in Thailand. I have a big family and also like to play sports during the summer, if I don't work. I like to read and draw during my freetime.

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

Being a Hmong girl is good because it's part of me and it's who I am. My background helps me learn about Hmong girls' rights and wrongs. It gives me an opportunity to help and understand my parents.

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

What I know is that some of the Hmong languages/words are from Thai or Laos languages, too. The girls in Thailand get married at very young ages. Some marriages are by will, force, or the guy and girl did something wrong which leads to marriage. These traditions don't bug me much because I'm used to them. I hear about all this stuff and I know my limits. I even get lectures on it, so I understand and I learn a lot by listening to older people talk about their experiences, including friends and family.

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***How do you feel about being Americanized?***

Actually, my family isn't really Americanized. We still go by the Hmong rules and traditions, except for the young age marriage thing.

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

No.

***What is it like living with two different cultures?***

It really depends on whether they're prejudice or not. To me, it doesn't make a difference whether they're against me or not because I don't have anything against them. So I'm fine living with two different cultures.

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

My parents stick to the traditional way of life. I like them that way because they teach me about those things and it just helps me understand them better. If my family was Americanized, I don't think I would understand my parents and I wouldn't know much about my culture.

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

They taught me all the things that I should do and shouldn't do and they also taught me how to respect others.

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

No.

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

No.

***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?***

I believe that not all Hmong are in gangs. Reasons why they join are pure pressure, trying to look cool so they could fit in, stress, and of a friend being in one. I've never been asked to join one because they know I won't join.

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

I have a feeling that in the future our Hmong religion will be forgotten. I hope that our culture will last through generations so that the future generations will know and understand.