



XIONG, COREY

Corey is a student at D.C. Everest Junior High. He likes to play sports with his friends and family.

Being a Hmong adolescent living in America is kind of hard, but also kind of easy and fun. When you're a Hmong, you get racial dislikes and comments from people. If one person does something wrong in the neighborhood or something really bad, the whole ethnic group gets blamed for it. You get a bad reputation even though you didn't do it yourself. If you just cause a little mistake the people already hate you, or say something bad behind your back. That is so stupid because you just did a little mistake, which you can always fix, or compromise toward things. Everywhere you go you get a face from someone who doesn't even know who you are, or even know that the comment they say towards you hurts. That makes you feel so bad in the inside because that's not how I am or somebody else is. Sometimes you get called names from people you don't even know that hate your guts so much. I personally get put down because they don't even know how I am or how I feel or do in my life. Sometimes though they cuss at you and they don't think twice about what they say. I think that they are saying it to prove how they hate the Hmong and me because I am one. That doesn't really make sense to me because some people are so friendly and helpful. Maybe that's how they want to be and act. Something else that they would say to us is, "Go back to your country where you came from!" and recently the phrase was, "Save deers, kill Hmong!" I don't know what their problem is, but that is so going over the line saying that stuff. That would make me so mad because if they use their common sense, they should know that the kids today were born in the U.S. and that it wasn't the Hmong person's fault because someone provoked him to do that kind of stuff to the people. I would get so mad and frustrated because I hate it when they say that. I just want to tell them, "Let's trade places for one day. You can be a Hmong to see how we feel when they get something bad spoken about them." Then I will hire some people to come up to them and start cussing at them to see if their self-esteem is put down or if they change their minds about us. I just want them to respect us for who we are. I feel so bad for myself sometimes when a person says bad things about an ethnic group. What they say to the person I feel, because it is also leading toward me because I am a Hmong myself. Everywhere I go I have to be careful to who I am talking to and where I go because you never know if that person you're going with or talking to can in the end do something very horrible to you.

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The Hmong culture itself is very fun, but also very unusual. The first part that I personally think is fun in the Hmong culture is the Hmong New Year that is celebrated every year in the Greenheck Field

House. In this New Year all the Hmong people gather together to celebrate the beginning of the New Year to come. They watch dances, eat Hmong delicacies, and socialize with each other and with people they haven't seen for a while. Another awesome and amazing celebration is July 4. The Independence

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Day when the Hmong choose to celebrate and the Americans. This celebration is held in St. Paul, Minnesota and I like that one the best. It has many store courts and different company of food courts. The bad part of this celebration is that Hmong people all over Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Illinois come and it makes it very crowded, but I think that it is totally fun and worthwhile for anyone that is not yet experienced with it. The unusual aspect of the Hmong that my family and other families celebrate every year is Hus Plplig (calling of the spirits) and we do Neej (calling the souls back to the body so the person won't get sick.) This is when my family and other families go to find a

shaman to help call the spirit in the spirit world to tell them to come back and not to go off and play with the evil spirits that could make you very sick, and in a bad case die. One of the other positive aspects that I think is the best in the Hmong culture is the delicious food that the Hmong people make and eat. Some of the foods that the Hmong people make are egg rolls, curry soup, tapioca dessert, white thick noodle soup, Asian sausage, and papaya. Egg rolls (Keb Yaub-as known in the Hmong language) have a crusty outer layer and inside have noodles, meat, and different herbs. Curry soup (Qhob Poob- as known in the Hmong language) has chicken, bamboo shoots, noodles, coconut milk, and water in it. Tapioca dessert (Nab Vam- as known in Hmong language) is a tropical drink that has syrup, coconut milk, tapioca seeds, and sweetener mixed together and is a popular dessert. White noodle soup (Qhob Plia- as known in the Hmong language) is a thick white noodle base that is very thick. It has herbs, peppers, and meat mixed together. There is also an Asian sausage, but it is basically the same as the standard American sausage. For one reason it is different is that it is a lot bigger and it has a little bit more flavor to it. That's what makes it so delicious. Another type of Hmong food is Papaya. It is made from unripe papaya fruit. Then it is sliced into many little slices that are pounded in a pounder. It is then smashed together with peanut, pepper, and other ingredients that make it good and tasteful. It is also very hot and spicy for those who can't stand the heat of it. There are many other types of Hmong food, but these are just some of the types of food that we eat and what I like to eat myself when I get the chance.

Living in America is very easy for me. I know the language very well and speak it fluently so the people to whom I'm speaking will understand me. I know how to speak the Hmong language very well also, so when I'm talking to a Hmong person and a Caucasian person I can switch between the two different languages to speak directly to the person that I want to talk to. Since I already speak two languages, English and Hmong, I learn different languages fairly easy. Spanish is the language that I'm taking in school and I think it is easy. I can speak in sentences and a little bit in a conversation to a person that knows it too, but I have to study a little bit. I struggle a bit because I have to remember how to pronounce the words and see if I'm using the right verbs with the right kind of sentence. So now that I'm starting to know a third language I am going to try to keep it up and try to get it right and speak very fluently, so I can say to people that I know three languages already. It can also benefit me when I grow up and try to look for a job to support my own life.

Being a Hmong living in America, I am faced with many problems and hatred toward the Hmong people and me, but there are also people who care and respect the Hmong culture. I can always pass the problem because I know and will try to succeed and no one, even the people who hate the Hmong,

can't stop my education from growing. I've always wanted to achieve as much education as I can. I also participate in a lot of clubs and activities to boost my education. I also join them so I can meet and have new contacts. I hope that in the future years to come that the people will change their minds about the Hmong and treat us with the respect that we give them.

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