



## XIONG, KNOU

*Knou Xiong is a student at Wausau West High School. She works at the local East Bay company. Knou expects to go to college one day. She loves her friends as much as her family.*

My name is Knou Xiong and I'm 16 years old. My mother is Chue Yang, my stepmother, Yee Yang, father, Vang Cheng Xiong, and my grandmother is Youa Xiong. My sisters are Wang (Va) Lor, Chong (19), Dia Chang (18), Phoua (13), Bao, Mai, and Pa. My brothers are Nao Her, Vang Meng, NyiaGer, and Lee Tou. I also have a stepbrother, Tou Yee and a stepsister, Chao. The four oldest, my stepsisters, and my parents were all born in Thailand and Laos, but the rest were born in Wausau.

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

It's ok. It's probably because I am bilingual and I'm also learning other languages, too, so I can communicate with others. Some families are still trying to hold onto what's left of their old world and I respect that. But that puts restrictions on the way you make friends and how you hang out with them. Then some Hmong people go to church and some don't. So a girl who doesn't go to church isn't allowed to marry into a family that does. But a girl who does go to church can marry into a family that doesn't. The Hmong, I think, are sexist in a way because in our culture, guys are considered the dominant gender.

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***What do you know about your traditions and culture and how do you feel about them? (For instance marriage, shamanism, the language...)***

In a family, it's always good to have a lot of kids. This is because when daughters marry, money is offered to her parents based on the kind of girl she is. Whether she is smart, respectful, or not lazy, etc. The higher the offer, the better it is. It's like selling off your daughter to her boyfriend's family. Only special people can become shamans too. They are chosen from the God above before they are born to the human world.

***How was the transition from Laos and Thailand to America?***

I have no idea. I was only one so it was easier for me.

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

I guess it's ok, but there are still segregation and racial issues.

***How do your parents feel about it? (Being Americanized)***

I think my parents have a harder time adapting because they're still used to the traditional ways.

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

No.

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

I think it's harder for us because of the differences in the cultures.

***Which culture do you feel is more beneficial and why?***

I feel that both are beneficial in many different ways and I don't think that I could choose between them.

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

My parents are stuck with the traditional way of life. I feel that we could learn more about each culture from each other.

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

They've taught me many things, but I will use them in good ways that will help me and others.

***Why do people discriminate because of ethnicity?***

People probably discriminate because they don't understand what we say, the way we live, and our traditions. Some people do it because they're just arrogant and conceited. I have seen more discrimination since I moved to Kronenwetter, but I guess it depends on the people that you encounter.

***How do you and your parents feel about interracial dating?***

My parents are ok about it. At least they're not against it, but they don't have to worry, because I'm not very attractive.

***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 feel that it is a biased opinion. I have never been asked to join, and I think that people join because of their own reasons or they're just stupid.

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

I hope that in the future the Hmong will be widely accepted, and I hope that everyone can get along.

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

You're only given one life, don't waste it on drugs.