



YANG, MAI NHIA

Mai Nhia Yang is a student attending D.C. Everest Senior High. She likes to spend time with her family and friends. Mai Nhia enjoys watching movies. She would like to one day live a happy life with a beautiful family.

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

My name is Mai Nhia Yang; I was born in Thailand. There are twelve people in my family. Right now I am 16 and my family and I live in Wisconsin.

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

Some disadvantages would be if the guy/girl you're dating or want to date is a Christian and you're not, then you can't date them. Plus women have fewer rights.

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

I feel that my culture is kind of okay. The marriage shows that both sides of the family may respect each other in the future and so does the bride and groom. The Shamanism is that the family still kept the tradition that has been passed down for a long time, and still respects the ancestors.

How was the transition from Laos and Thailand to America?

Well I didn't have to travel from Laos to Thailand, but going from Thailand to America wasn't easy. They had to see if we qualified to be able to go to America and they had to check to see if we had some sort of disease that you might carry along the way.

How do you feel about being Americanized?

I don't care about that, because even if I'm Americanized or not, I'll always still be Hmong. Even though no one sees it, at least my family and I see it.

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

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

No, I never feel trapped. I always try to work it out if I get trapped.

What is it like living with two different cultures?

It doesn't really matter because we are still keeping our own culture, it's just that we are trying to live with the American style, since we are in America.

Which culture do you feel is more beneficial and why?

It doesn't matter because either one is still good for me, but I would more prefer the Hmong way.

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

My parents aren't stuck in the traditional way, it's just how life is and they want to pass the tradition down to us.

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

My parents have taught me a lot of things and when the time comes I'll know how to use them.

Is education important to you? Why or why not?

Yes, it's important. I want to prove to other people that I'm not just a Hmong girl, but an educational Hmong girl, and know my manners are respected by whoever respects me.

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

To be educated.

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

I have never felt peer pressure, but if they are true friends -- peers, etc. -- they'll let you through.

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

No.

Why do people discriminate because of ethnicity?

Some people discriminate because others have different colored skin, hair, languages, and came from different places.

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

Ignore what other people say because they don't know who you are and just be proud of who you are, yourself.

How do you and your parents feel about interracial dating?

My parents feel that I shouldn't date other people because their family members might not like me. All cultures don't fit theirs, and it's harder to deal with problems (if there ever are any).

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 think that gangs are really stupid because only stupid people join. Why do they want to kill other

Hmong people when they are claiming themselves "Hmong Pride." But then again other people shouldn't judge what people wear or the way they talk.

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

What I want to see in the future is that all those lazy people out there should get on their feet and find a job so the American people won't have to hate us so much.