

I have always looked through the world from multiple lens. First, I look through the lens of being a Hmong daughter. Then I must apply the lens of being a student. I honestly have never thought of what it means to have character nor the importance behind it. As I searched up what character is, I began to seriously question myself on my own character and what it meant to me.

Growing up as a Hmong daughter in America has shaped my view of this world both positively and negatively. I have grown to appreciate the open mindedness of America, the fight for equality and rights, and the opportunities to better my education, and therefore, my life. I have also seen firsthand the hypocrisy of this nation, the ingrained patriarchal system, and the continued discrimination against any who are different from the model white skin. These are many of the issues I wish to touch upon, but I will focus on one. I will focus on my experience as a Hmong daughter and how I became, “innocently torn between two cultures” (Lor). In the Hmong culture, character is something that comes last. And as a Hmong daughter, I understood the words, last. Being a Hmong daughter in America has led me to see that both the Hmong and American culture have helped shape my own character. Although, I also began to acknowledge the fact that my culture had limited my character. I saw that Hmong daughters are like the rich soil that is stepped on, and also the very ones used to plant the seeds everyone worships, the boys. From the tender age of six, I had already began to cook and clean. I had been booted out of my parents room in order to make room for my younger brother, and then I knew my childhood began to slowly but surely disappear. I had no room for character, I was just expected to cook and clean, as that was a good Hmong daughter. So I forgot about character, and let my overwhelming cultural expectations take its hold on me. Growing up like this, I felt detached from my culture and myself. I could not understand what it was to be Hmong nor to be myself. I felt as if I was not happy and therefore, not complete. As I began to enter high school, my life

changed. I had become engrossed in my education, knowing that it was the only key to a bright future. I also began to become more educated on the issues with my culture and how I had dealt with it in the past. I was beginning to realize that I had to put myself as a priority, alongside my education, because I knew how lonesome it was not knowing nor exploring who I was as a person. The friends I made, and the teachers at my school, helped me to see that I am not alone in this battle to find oneself, and I have never been. This past year, I read a book, called Bamboo Among the Oaks and I soon came to a realization that I was both Hmong and American. I came to this conclusion because I saw that being here in America as a Hmong daughter has been my life story. And though I am torn between both, I have come to accept and acknowledge that who I am does not come entirely from one culture, but from both. I can not isolate nor pick and choose where have my cultures have both touched me.

I asked myself, who am I? And I came up with this; I am Keleenah Txihlub Yang, daughter of Ka Yai Chang and William Yang. I am strong yet weak. I am a mighty warrior, who always falls but will always get back up. I am gloriously me, and proud. This epiphany has helped me truly embrace the two cultures, and myself. I am always going to continue to struggle with both cultures but now I have a sturdy wall and belief inside me, of who I am, and this will continue to help me in my journey towards more self discovery.