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Personal/Narrative Essay-Draft 2

Coming To the United States

At about 43,000 feet in the air, as I was strapped to a chair, I question my parent’s decision of migrating from Yemen to the United States. Suddenly, a downward force startled everyone. The plane was landing but it felt like being thrown in the same direction. I heard the wheels of the plane braking making that annoying screeching sound and a bunch of flight attendants rushed out of the two aisles that lead to the pilot room. We walked the long hall that leads to the terminal. As I walked and saw the waiting area, it was diverse like a rain forest. Each group had its own way of communication. I did not like the place that we were waiting in. I thought I didn’t fit with the rest of the people who were there at that time. When I came to the United States, I had many things to deal with including speaking and understanding English, the way people dressed, and getting used to the climate change.

When people migrate to another country, they tend to have troubles with the language of the republic where they settle. I know this because it happened to me. It was hard living in the United States, a place where I could not understand or speak the language which happens to be English. I lived in Brooklyn, East New York where the language that was spoken around me was mostly slang. I tried to communicate with the people in my neighborhood, but I could not understand. My father had been in the United States since the 1970’s, and he had understood the language better than all of us. When people come to me to talk, my father had to translate it for me and I felt embarrassed and dumb. This was the worst feeling I have ever had in my life.

I started school late so that really made it even harder for me to participate with everyone else I was going to school with. I never liked school and my worst subject was obvious the English language. I would always get bad grades in any English-based subject that had writing, which included Social Studies, English, and ESL. The teachers would always try to talk to me and encourage me to participate, but I couldn’t understand them. I was always quiet in a seat in the back of the classroom. I would go home and struggle with my homework. I couldn’t understand a single thing that the teacher was explaining. The only homework that I enjoyed doing and completing was math. Trying to make friends was hard when they don’t know what you are saying, or when you don’t know what they are talking about, especially when the teacher assigns group work. You end up not put any effort into the work that is being assigned, which makes you feel useless. I felt very bad that my group had to do all the work while I sat and did nothing because I did not know the language. After a few years I began to progress in my ability in learning and understanding English.

One of my favorite things to do when I was a child was watching television, of which I strongly appreciated cartoons. When I was in my country, I recall watching “Tom and Jerry” and “Looney Tunes”, but they were translated into Arabic. After I came to America, cartoons became boring gibberish to me. They were all translated into the original language, which was English, and I couldn’t comprehend. After a few weeks, I started to understand what the characters were saying in the cartoons based on their body language. It was kind of annoying trying to watch something that you can’t understand so I would get a feeling of dullness.

Furthermore, stepping into America was stepping into a clothing show line. The country is full of clothing that gets the eyes rolling from its exotic colors to its fashion elements. This was a problem because where I come from, we don’t put on a fashion show outside or in the street. Since I lived in East New York, the streets were full of clothing, styles, and fashion. I remember as a child, whenever a new sneaker came out, my whole block was full of sneaker heads, meaning that they would travel a long distance and pay whatever the amount of the product. After a few years, I began to understand that everyone was born an original, a rich element that defines a person, and the worse thing to become was a copy or a follower. I used to see people wanting to become like a person because of their status in society sagging pants or by wearing expensive clothing. I did not like any of the styles so I decided to become me, an original.

I had no problem with the way I dresses in school because all the schools I went to were uniform schools. My friends from other schools would always tell me about how their schools were based on their clothing they wore. I had no problem with the way I dressed because I wasn’t a big fan of dressing up and looking professional. Mostly all the schools I went to had a policy that if anyone wasn’t wearing their uniform, they would get lunch detention or after school detention and nobody wants detention at the end of the day. As I went through all the years in middle school, I saw people being teased and bullied because of what they were wearing, but nobody ever bothered me about my outfit. Many people gave me respect in school and I have never been bullied. Standing your ground and being who you originally are is what gets you through life or through society.

Consider the example of a traveler who goes to the desert and doesn’t know what the climate is or how he can adapt to it. This was my experience as I came to the United States for the first time. My family and I came in the summer and the summer, in America was different from the summer in my country. For my country, it was mostly a dry hot summer that would cause a sun tan and probably give a sun burn to foreigners. The problem with the United States environment was not the heat of the sun but the humidity. The humidity makes you not want to do anything and just stay home under the A/C. This weather was very difficult to endure.

Speaking of weather, the weather in the United States was something I saw as unusual because of its seasonal change. This was very interesting to me because we don’t have seasonal phases in my country. My country behaves like the desert, which is hot during the day and cold during the night. The New York seasonal change was extra difficult to live through. I was surprised during my first snow storm, which covered most of my house windows. I just kept getting sick of all the weather changes that were happening.

Coming to the United States, I faced struggles in terms of the language, clothing, and climate change to which I had to adapt. It was hard for me to understand English and speak it, but I did make it through some failures and accomplishments. The way I dressed was changed, but not drastically, although I have worn clothing that symbolizes being adaptive while not being transformed. I have gotten used to the climate through my fourteen years living in New York. It can be hard to adapt to a new area, but after you have successfully gone through all the problems, you out of billions of people have made it.