Bisrat Asefaw

BISAES 367A

Professor Dr. George M. Roberts

**My Autobiographical Sketch**

Growing up in an African household, education is seen as the key to unlocking the golden door of freedom. It is essential to increasing employment and income opportunities. My parents came to the United States to have a better opportunity for them and provide me with an opportunity that they didn’t have growing up. Trying to fulfill the “American Dream” that was highly fantasized about, they decided to come to the U.S. as refugees from Djibouti. Something that they were unfortunately misinformed about was who was able to benefit from the “American Dream”. The American Dream protected and gave economic, political and social support to white Americans while it neglected other people, specifically minorities. My parents didn’t have the same opportunities of continuing their education back home which is why my mom starts her education as soon as she gets here. Because of my daycare expenses, the living expenses, and rent, they had to work hectic hours to get money, causing her to stop her schooling and focus on getting money to support our family. My dad worked two jobs while I was growing up and my parents had to schedule their hours around me. While my mom worked in the morning, my dad would work in the evenings which made it easier for them to switch on and off on who was able to care for me.

Growing up, I went to a poorly funded high school. The environment of my school was horrible as it was infested with rats, had broken down ceilings that would occasionally leak here and there, had some lethal threats, and overall was an unsanitary environment. The classroom textbooks were worn out and because the teachers weren’t getting paid enough, we spent two months of our senior year without a pre-calculus teacher. Although my school was poorly funded, they still had many great staff and programs (college and career center) available to students to prepare for their future. Which is why I was given the opportunity and support to apply to universities during my senior year and I had the opportunity to get four scholarships to cover my tuition and board at the University of Washington. A quote that resonated with me in the book ‘Made in America: Immigrant Students In Our Public School’ by Laurie Olsen was how she mentioned, “Academic achievement is not just a product of intelligence, self-perception, and effort. There is an institutional reality that provides groups of students with different resources, different encouragement, different curriculum. And it results in tracking some groups of students into futures with far more opportunity than others” (Olsen, 13). This proves that the environment is an important aspect to a students’ success which will impact their future careers.

Although the U.S. is a diverse country, the healthcare system does not reflect that. Growing up, I can remember going into the clinic with my mom and having to translate Amharic to English so that she can communicate with the doctor well. Because most hospitals lacked the ability to provide translators, twelve-year-old me had to do my best to describe how my mom was feeling to the doctors. As of now, I have had years of experience providing assistance for mom whenever she is in need, but as health is an important necessity, I believe that the healthcare system should reflect that. As my parents came to the U.S. as refugees, there was a lack of dental coverage that hindered my mom’s ability to properly fix her teeth. Her teeth were in pain due to cavities and because we lacked the proper dental coverage and had to pay an intensive amount out of pocket; she wasn’t able to fix her teeth and had to result in getting them removed. The healthcare system in the U.S. neglects low-income families that don’t have the economic ability to afford liable healthcare.

Reference:

Olsen, Laurie, and Rebekah Edwards. Made in America: Immigrant Students in Our Public Schools. New Press, 1997.