

# THE 2019 LIVING BOOKS OF LUTHER BURBANK HIGH SCHOOL

**CURATED BY PAM BURIC**



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## **INTRODUCTION TO LIVING BOOKS**

*“There’s no greater agony than bearing an untold story within you.”*

*– Maya Angelou*

The Living Books project at Luther Burbank High School aims to help students tell their stories in a safe, nurturing, and healing space. This project came from the idea that our students, especially our English Language Learners, have traveled incredible journeys, and in those journeys, they are witnesses to life’s difficulties that continue to impact their sense of connectedness and belonging. It’s the hope that by providing space for these living books to be told, students can begin to heal, deepen their sense of connection to others, and be affirmed for their strength and resiliency. For the Living Books authors, we hope that telling your stories will serve to mitigate and lessen the pain and begin the process of healing. For the readers, we hope you will hold an embracing, safe, affirming, and healing space for our authors, as they gift you their stories.

This project was championed by LBHS teacher Pam Buric and her 12th grade students, whose living books are reminders that stories can deepen our empathy, provide a sense of perspective, be a powerful source for healing, and empower diverse voices to be heard. These “Living Books” have been generously shared with the LBHS student community and were featured at the 2019 CASEL Cross District Convening in Sacramento.

To maintain the authenticity of voice and writing style, only slight editing and formatting has been done.

# INDEX OF AUTHORS

<i>Alphabetical by First Name</i>	<i>Page</i>
Adi Batimala .....	2
Ahmad Farid Amin .....	3
Aliana Langidrik .....	4
Api Naruma.....	6
Charlie Figueroa .....	7
Dazhi Huang.....	8
Edith Carrillo .....	10
Jorge Carrillo .....	12
Jose Reyes.....	14
Leslie Servin .....	16
Lorie Clement .....	18
Nelson Anjel.....	19
Omar Samim .....	20
Pader Lor.....	22
Panha Ly .....	24
Ramin Mominyar .....	25
Sodis Nazari .....	27
Soline Samuel .....	29
Tapanga Sayalinh Yang.....	31
Trinh Tran .....	33
Youzhi Zheng.....	35
Zainab Omar.....	36
Zuhairha Khan.....	37

## Coming to the United States

by Adi Batimala

There are events in life, which can change yourself or the way you think. As for me, I think the huge change that happened to me was when I moved from Fiji to America, because I have to leave some of my best friends and family members. That was the hardest thing for me because my life involved these people as my backbone of my life's journey.

Then one afternoon, my grandparents called my father and they wanted to send him to study at the South Pacific Bible College because my grandfather had grown old and was not able to do hard works. This whole story wasn't clear to my mother because my father was working as a western division manager of water operations. My mother was worried about who going to pay the bills. My father decided to leave his job and go to study for three years to get his degree in biblical studies. The first week when my father left, my family members started to worried about who was going to pay the school fee for my younger brothers and buy lunch for us. Then one afternoon, I decided to grow my own vegetable garden bed to help my mother put food on the table.

My family life was getting harder each day because we didn't have enough money to buy things my family needed to use each day. I decided to dropout from school because there was no one to support me through high school years. I started to thinking about the negative side of dropping out from school and also added how my teacher treated me in class since I started to missing most of my classes. The next day, when I went to school, one of my teachers told me "Just stay home because you are useless." The whole time I was in school, I pretended nothing happened to me but inside me there were tears and pain that no one in that class would know or feel. That was my last day of school. I never told anyone, even my best friends who had known me from primary school.

My mother started to blame my father for the problems that occurred in my family. One Friday afternoon when my father came back from school to spend his weekend, he found that my mother was crying in their room alone, and my father decided to leave school. One year later, my father decided to come back home, applied for his old job and he accepted.

## **My life story**

by Ahmad Farid Amin

My story about immigration is a life changing experience, when my parents and I immigrated to United States. We had many security problems. There were a lot of explosions, suicide attacks, and kidnappings in our home country. The circumstances of my village, which is located in Dushi district Baghlan province, were very bad, because my dad had worked with one of the American construction companies as an engineer. We could not go to my province and village, because there were groups of gunmen. They are fighting with government forces. For example, in 2016, when my grandfather passed away in Kabul province, we had a funeral ceremony in our village Zohrabi, Dushi district, Baghlan province, and my dad did not join the funeral ceremony because there was a group of gunmen, which was very dangerous for him.

At the end of 2017, we came to United States with my family, where one of my father's friends lived. He helped us in the beginning. In the beginning, we had a lot of problems. We had transportation problems and language problems because when somebody asked me a question, I did not understand because I had limited language. Also, I had problems with the culture because we eat halal food. One thing I had always struggled with was that I did not know how to make an appointment, or how to speak with English speakers. We had a car in Afghanistan and my father had a driver's licence in Afghanistan, but now we do not have to transportation to school. Sometimes, we walked to school, as we did not know how to use the bus or train. One of our friends helped us by taking us to regional transit. We got regional transit ID and the school provided us bus stickers. In United States, My dad was not allowed to drive without a California driver's license. After one month, my dad applied for a driving permit, which he got, and then he bought a car. After two months, my father took the behind the wheel test. He passed the test, and he got the driving license. With the language problem, my dad knew a little English. He took education in ESL school, he went there and improved his English. When we enrolled in school, we did not know English, and when somebody said something, I didn't understand what he said.

My country is still very dangerous. Two months ago on my country's election day, my cousin played cricket with his friends. A gunman shot a rocket at my cousin with his seven friends. My cousin and his four friends died and three of his friends were injured. That was a terrible day for all of us.

## My Story

by Aliana Langidrik

I was born and raised in the Marshall Islands and mostly spend my childhood there. The Marshall islands is also one of the islands that is also part of Asia and its located somewhere in the pacific. There is a lot of islands in the Marshall Island and the Island where i lived in was also one of them. Life at the Island is not really idealistic and doesn't really have enough resources or fancy things, but we didn't really mind because we had what we needed. People here easily get stressed or anxious, but there we don't because it's more stress free. Also, the tourists that go there really find it comforting and like what they're experiencing.

People rarely use cell phones because we don't have that much internet connection or service to go surfing on the internet. Since we don't use any devices, we play sports instead or go swimming with our friends. Sports is one of the main activity that we would do everyday and volleyball and basketball were the main two that we play everyday. We would usually play everyday from noon to dusk. Even the adults would come play with us. We would even come up with ideas of making our own team to play against each other and even made prizes for the team that will won the game.

Besides doing sports, we would also do other activities. We would do house chores like cleaning and cooking and even help out looking after our siblings. The mom is busy doing other house chores while the dad would go fishing for something to eat. The food that we normally eat everyday was rice and every kind of meat that we get from the ocean. We eat whatever meat that comes from the ocean or we buy canned meat from the store. We don't have many fruits and vegetables that grow on our island, so we only have a few to eat. The water that we drank is free because it's from the rain. Every house has their own water tank for their water. We have two tanks that is for our water and the other one is for us to take shower. The government only provides our family to have the water tank for our water, and also, to build houses for the elders as they turn sixty. They only provide us with only these two things and for food and other things that we need we get it own. The only thing that we made a living out of was what we called copra. We usually get the coconut from the forest or the jungle and then what we normally do first is remove the husk from the coconut, then break it in pieces and let the flesh dry. After days of drying it you put it in a bag and then bring it to the store to trade it for money. Then the store owner then transport it to that place that needs it, and also trade it to get money. Other don't make it because they have a real job that they get good paid and don't need to do all that much work. The only job that are required there are teaching and being a business owner.

So basically that's how life in the Islands are. Life there wasn't too hard on us and also

was not easy but at least we survived with the little things that we had and what we don't have didn't matter to us because we're happy and that's what matter.

If i were to given a chance to go back then i would grab that opportunity because you can't compare the happiness that i experience back at the Island.

# **The Differences Between United States of America and Fiji**

by Api Naruma

Life has taught me a lot of lessons that has changed the way I view my life and the way I do things. And it made me a better person. Today, I'll been telling you the difference between America and my home country Fiji. America has a lot of different things like food, clothes, weather, people, religion. And that makes its great for me, because back in Fiji, you get tired of seeing the same people again and the same thing every day.

America have a lot of rules for us to follow and I know its there to protect us, but in fiji they don't care about the law and just do whatever they want to do. One thing that stuck out to me here in America is that all kids have to attend a school. If they are not in school or missing school, their parents will be arrested. But in Fiji, if you want to go to school, you can go if you don't want to you can and also in Fiji our teachers can smack us and give us punishment if we don't do your homework.

Another thing that I love about living here in America is that teaches won't smack you and also the food here in school is free. In Fiji, you have to buy your own food or make it from home and bring it to school. Back in Fiji, we had a lot of problems we were facing. For example, there are a lot of natural disasters such as hurricanes, tsunamis, flood, and the sea level rising because of global warming. A lot people died and lost their homes, and also, I have seen my grandparents crying because their house was damaged by the hurricane. It made me felt sad and angry at the same time, because they built that house together since the day they got married. And the government didn't even bother to help so my grandparents had to rebuilt by our own selves using bamboo and other metal materials to build our house. The hardest part was leaving my grandparents without helping rebuild their house. I am missing them and all of my loved ones. It made me angry because my parents told me that we are only visiting and that we would go back to Fiji. I felt that my parents betrayed me, and I didn't want to trust anyone. But when I was getting older they told me the real reason why they did it and it made me felt happy.



## **My Story**

by Charlie Figueroa

When I come to U.S from Mexico, I had to go through several things. I was born here in Sacramento, California on May 2, 2001, and I lived here for 7 years. I went to live in Mexico when I was 7 years old and I didn't come back to U.S. because I never had to come. The main purpose of coming to the United States was to learn English because I am a citizen of the United States. I never returned to the United States until the year 2018 when I came on vacation, and I was here for a month. I was working with my uncle in an air conditioning company, then I returned to Mexico and stayed for one and a half months, then I came back here to go to school in Luther Burbank High School.

In September of last year, I decided go to the school in the U.S to learn English and since I arrived and learned a lot. My teachers help me a lot, also my friends, for me to learn English is something very important to get a good job and to be able to communicate with people who do not speak Spanish. I arrived here on September 29, and on October 4, I entered into to the school in Luther Burbank and in the 5 months that I have been here, I have learned a lot more of English that I expected.

Another reason I came to the United States was for my safety because in Mexico where I live, there is not safety. The drug cartels are killing people and fighting for drugs and weapons that was another reason to come to me here.

In these five months that I had in school, I have made many friends and I get along with my teachers. I say If you want something try hard to get it, as I am doing, thanks to the support of my parents my uncles and my teachers because thanks to them, I am what I am today.

It is not easy to be here since I had to leave my family knowing that they are far away and I do not know if they are in danger or not. I live with my uncles, and I am still thinking if I am going to school or if I want to get a job. I may go back to Mexico or I may go to Texas. I still do not know what I want to do with my life.

I am currently in school and if everything goes well will graduate in June of this year, and that is my story of how I am here.

## My Story

by Dazhi Huang

Most of the people here have a lot of stories or experience. It may not wonderful, but it must have some significance for them. Although my story was not really perfect, it has a lot of significance for me. It changed my thinking about my past.

Before I came to the United States, I was a really naive boy because I was very young that time. My mother and I went to many cities in China. I remember I went to 5 different schools because of the way we lived life. We didn't have a choice, so my mother brought me to other places. At that time, I was thinking, why do I have this life? Why I can't have a normal life like most people? So, I was very uncertain, and I was thinking what about family is. So I hated my parents very much because they weren't being responsible for me. So I was a life without the "soul", I was unintentional in learning, living and life.

After I grew up, I came to United States to live with my dad. I remember one day, I had to make a call to my mom, I felt like a foreign child talking to her. I blamed her. Why didn't she give me a real life? And she told me a lot of things that I didn't think about before. She said, "I gave you the life that I could when you were a child. Your father left you and went to the United States. When you were sick, it was me, only one person, to take care of you, and when you were hungry or when it's meal time, which time was it not me cooking for you and making a lot of food for you? And I was the most one and only one who took care about you. I didn't wanted to anything from you. And I just want you to be healthy, to have a good future and be a good man." After talking, my mother just cut off the phone call. And I just fell into meditation. I was thinking, "Was my idea in error"? And then I compared my previous life with my current life, I got a very obvious result that is although my standard of living has improved, but my life has lost something. So I meditated for a long time and missed her very much. And now I know I need to grow myself and I want to give her a better life for "Mother's Love".

Between China and United States, I had a lot of friends in China, and we would always play together, or learning, studying. We talked about a lot of things that were interesting. We did a lot of things that we wanted to do, like we going anywhere that was interesting because it would grow us. So when I in was China, it made me feel like a child with no hesitation. But when I came to United States, it is different. It changed me and made me become a "cold boy". I longer liked to go out to play anymore. I no longer had a bunch of friends, because of this all here is exactly the opposite of China. And I know there's one day I need to grow to be a "Man". And I need to become aware of my own life and the way of my future. So, the first thing is making an accurate plan for myself, and preserve it everyday, and promote myself. The second thing that is to go to the college

and graduate, then I can easily find jobs, and I can apply for a visa to bring my mom to here. The third thing that is to supervise myself, and grow up more, more and more. I know there's something that makes me need to grow, and I know I can't be a happy boy and go back to my previous life. So I will be the person that I want to be. And I will do what do what I want to do.

The people who can succeed most depend on what did they know, what should they do and what do they need to impel. Will they succeed after? No one knows that, but they definitely will have a bunch of bitter stories behind them. Like me, now my first thing that is promote myself and bring my mother here. I believe I will do it and I can do it.

## My Story

by Edith Carrillo

My name is Edith Carrillo and I was born in August 27, 2001. I am from Mexico and also, Mexican. The first time we came here with my dad to Sacramento from Los Angeles with my mom. I was only 2 years old when my mom and dad separated from each other. When we moved here from Los Angeles to Sacramento. I was sad because I wouldn't be able to see my grandma more often like I use to. But the good thing was that we could still call her on the phone and talk and ask her how she has been.

I was born in Lynwood, which was where my mom gave me birth. Then my dad decided to move to Sacramento so my mom went to live there with him. My mom's very first job when we moved here when I was only two years old. My mom had to work in a thrift store then a few years later when I was a little older she worked in Goodwill and she still works there in that store. Our first home, where I lived with mom and dad was in a little Ranch farm, and then we moved into a mobile home.

Mexico City is different from Sacramento because it's a big city because there are lots of beautiful house in Mexico. And also, you could visit lots of villages there in Mexico. That's how it's very different from the city of Sacramento were my mom and I live now since we moved here with my dad when I was little girl and was in preschool in that time. I see lots of restaurants and also people cooking food in the streets when I go to Mexico in December with my mom. I hear cards, trucks passing and I smell lots of good Mexican food. One thing I don't see here is people cooking food in public in the street like I do in Mexico when I go see my grandma.

I think that I like living in Mexico more than in Sacramento because I could be free and hang out with my friends and go places. But I can't be free and do the same things I do when I visit Mexico. In Sacramento you have to see the same people and friends everyday but I hardly see my friends who live in Mexico. I could visit different places with my family and friends there but I can't because there not lots of places to really visit here in the city of Sacramento. And when I go to Mexico, I could visit more places with my family and over here in Sacramento I can't really visit different places like I do when I go visit my grandma in Mexico.

I like going to Mexico because I get to see my family I have not seen them for years but I live in Sacramento so I don't see them that much and that's why I wish I could move to Mexico instead of living here in Sacramento I really want to go back to Mexico because I would be able to see my family and friends more often and I could also help my grandma with chores because she can't do lots of things. And she needs lots of help to clean the house and cook that's why I would want to move to Mexico with my mom.

The places I see are different villages were my grandma lives in Mexico and she could just find a job there to help my grandma, and I would just come to Sacramento just to visit people when I can or have time and then just go back and maybe never come back to Sacramento again, just want to stay and live in Mexico.

So I want to keep on traveling with my mom to see my grandma for only one month. I would want to see her everyday in the morning and never get separated from her. One special thing about my grandma is that she cooks some good Mexican food and that she loves me a lot as much as I love her. I think one special thing about my family and friends is that they are kind and caring to me. When I go in December for one month, I see them. I wish that we could just go back someday to Mexico and live with my grandma and never come back to Sacramento. I just want to live there all my life. I don't just want to see my grandma for one month. I want to see her everyday in the morning time and wake up and cook breakfast for her each morning.

## My Story

By Jorge Carrillo

Coming to United States is not easy. You have to do many steps, leave your family and all that you have. It is really hard. We didn't come here because we wanted to; we had to leave because the cartel's war in my town. You can't be safe in the park, school or even in your house anymore, because these people don't care who gets shot or how people they kill. When you have to live like this, you are not a kid anymore.

I had to live through this experience to see how bad is it, and believe me, it is not a happy story. Before I came here, I was in high school, and it was my last semester in the high school in Mexico. My friend and I went walking to a friend's house to do our homework. At that time, it was very dangerous because these people could show up at any time, no matter where you were. My friend's house was 15 minutes walking, and we decided to walk because it was the easy way to get there. So we started walking and one car passed next to us with really loud corridos (mexican music that refers to traffickers). Then at the corner of the street, this car stopped because 2 Chevy Suburbans were coming really fast and then blocked the street. We were very scared and saw 3 guys get out from the truck with rifles and guns start shooting at these guys in the car. This happened right next to us, the only thing what we could do was to get down behind a car, hoping these guys didn't see us because if they saw us they would kill us.

For me the time that I was behind the car was like years. When these traffickers stopped shooting and left. I remember hearing how the driver said, "get in the car. We have to leave." I could hear these people in the car screaming for help. The only thing that my friend and I could do was run to these people in the car to try to help them to get out. When we got there, we saw one person dead, and the driver was walking to the street asking for help. The car was really destroyed by the bullets, I remember telling to my friend, "Look at the front of the car. It is destroyed. We have to get out here, Bro." there were almost 200 bullets in the car. We could smell the gasoline of the car and the blood from these dead people and the bullets.

We tried to run, but the people who lived there, told us to stay inside their house, so when the police came, we could tell them what we saw. It was really hard to decide what to do because I was just a 15 year old kid, afraid that these traffickers would come for us to kill us or to stay in the house with these people I didn't know, and do the right thing and talk with the police.

So, my friend and I ran to my friends house, and when we got inside the house, I started to cry. My friend's mom asked us what happened because we were running, and now I was crying. We told her what happened on our way to there, she told us to calm

down and call our parents to pick us up when we finished or we could stay in her home. I called my parents and they came to pick me up, they told me to not be afraid and that everything it would be okay. You could say, that I didn't do the right thing because I didn't talk with the police, but believe me, it was for me. After I lived through this, believe me, I was not a kid anymore.

I saw how one man got killed and almost lost my life. I was really scared because these men could come back looking for me, so I could not say anything. Of course, I didn't talk with the police because I knew that if I did that, I would be killed.

You could say, "Wow, this kid lived through a really grave situation, and he looks normal." Well, let me tell you, I lived through the situation as if it were something normal. I'm sure that you're thinking, "What did the Mexican police do in this situation?"

Well, these police are in the control of these traffickers who gave them a lot of money to not do anything about it. It is really hard to see how my country started going down, because these traffickers fight each other for control of that state, and started killing innocent people that had nothing to do with that. My parents decided that to come here was the right decision, and when I finished 10 grade of high school, they decided to come here. So I left everything in Mexico, my friends and family, to come here to have a better life. Then five months after we got here, my uncle called my dad and told him that my little cousin was playing outside his house with a ball and these people came to shoot the house in front, and they killed him. One little kid who was only 5 or 6 years old, could you believe that? Do you think this kid had something to do with these traffickers? This is what we had to live and when we lived in this situation, we could not do nothing about it, why? Because there only are a few Mexican police who are honest and do the right thing.

Coming here changed everything in my life, even when I didn't speak any English because I feel safe being here. I know it is hard for my parents to leave everything that they had built with their jobs to come here, but they told me that they prefer to start from zero so we can have a better life, than stay there with all the violence.

## **My story**

by Jose Reyes

The changes that happen in our lives can be for better or for worse. However, you have to think positively and take advantage of them. When I decided to come to U.S., it was a big change for me, but that was so important to me because that was my dream to come to the U.S.

I was happy living in my village with my family, but my life was very difficult because in my family, we were always fighting because of alcohol. My dad is an alcoholic, and he hit my mom almost always when he was drunk. He also treated me and my siblings badly. I remember, when he humiliated me in front of my friends, he called me weak, fagot, that you are useless, etc. That was something shameful, and it made me very sad, and I just wished I could go far away where I could never see him. Sadly, it was something that I couldn't do. He did not treated all my siblings badly, he preferred my older brother, who was just like him.

My older brother, also, drank a lot and sometimes, when he was drunk, he hit my mom if she did not give him money. He always was asking for money. That was a very sad event for me and my younger siblings. We just cried because there were nothing that we could do to help her. Fortunately, one day my mom got tired of enduring those mistreatments, and she decided to separate from my dad. That was good for her, but my siblings and I were in school and we had to quit going to school because we didn't have mom's support. She wasn't home anymore.

On November 15 2015, my brother who already had five years living in the U.S. decided to help my mom and my little sister to come with him. When my mom told me about it, I said to her, " Mom, you can't go without me, I want to go with you. " Then my mom told my brother about it and my brother said, " Yes, I want him to come, too. " That was my most happy day. I gave thanks to God. Finally, my dream became true, but at the same time was difficult because I had to leave my dad and my brothers who stayed with him, and I didn't know when I would see them again.

At the same time, I was nervous, and scared, because it was going to be the first trip I had ever made and some people had told me that this trip was risky and hard. It was that hard. The hardest part of my trip was to go through Mexico. Sometimes, we slept outside in the courtyard of some houses, and it was very cold. We didn't have any blankets to cover us. In the whole journey of our trip, we were very afraid that, we would be caught by Mexican immigration, and that we could be deported. Sometimes, we had to walk for several hours to get to where the van that going to take us was. We were about 25 people in the group and there was just one man who brought us. We called him coyote or guide.



He was a good person and he tried to take care of us, but there were times, when things got difficult. I remember that once we had to leave quickly because immigration was close, then he put us all in one truck that was very difficult because we were many people and we all came tight and on top of each other and we lasted traveling like this for three hours.

One day, we were about to arrive at the border of Mexico and the United States, the truck we came in was broken, and we had to stop. We were in the middle of the highway when the guys who were driving the truck started to run because two trucks of military came to us. Then the whole group started to run too. I took my mom's hand and we started to run, but my mom couldn't run that much because, she did not have the strength to do it. Then, they caught us fast, but fortunately let us go, and thanks to God all went well for us.

Now, my life is very different, all changed, but I feel so fortunate, to be in this country that has a lot of good opportunities for my family and me. We never know what is going to happen in our life, but whatever happens we have to focus in our goals and what we want to be in the future and being at this country, with this great opportunities, we can make that all ours dreams become true.

## **My American Dream**

by Leslie Servin

Since I came to this country, the days seem to pass even faster than lightning. I've been in the United States for two years. I still remember when I was in Mexico with my mom. And now I am here just with my dad. So, this is my story.

I lived in Tijuana, Mexico for almost my entire life. I usually lived with my mom, and I visited my dad during weekends. Once, my dad told me about he was planning to come to the United States due to the lack of opportunities and jobs for him in Mexico. My dad is an architect, and even for him it was hard to find a job. He asked me if I wanted to come with him. I remember I said yes because I know the situation in my home country. After the long conversation with my father, I decided to talk with Mom about it. She was so sad, but at the same time happy because she knew it was a good decision for my future. Then, on October 31st, 2016. We rode that bus of hope.

We got to Sacramento, CA on November 1st, 2016. I was so scared, I can still feel it when I think on it. I didn't know the language and culture. I was in shock. At first, we went to live with my dad's uncle. The first couple weeks were excellent, but as the days went by the things were getting worse. The wife of my dad's uncle was so mean with us, even when we tried to do not get in trouble with her. We got to the point that we couldn't even eat there. It was so hard because my dad didn't earn enough money during that time. Even so, we kept fighting in order to achieve our goals. Also, during that time something else was happening in my life.

Three girls fought me at school, and I couldn't do anything to avoid it. I remember I felt so bad because it was unfair, I was just studying when they came to hit me. It was during class time, we were doing something in the computer lab. The only reason they gave me was that I was talking bad about them. Everyone's eyes were on me when that happened. I felt so mad, something inside of me was burning. Although, my dad was even more mad than me because he knows me, I would never fight or get in trouble. He was so sad because I didn't want to go to school because I was embarrassed. But, I did get up and continued on my way, I looked for help to overcome this event and do not feel hate in my heart.

Otherwise, a few months later, we moved from that house because those vibes were killing us in a certain way. It was then when we met a super nice woman who helped and rented us a room in her house. We didn't live with her for very long because we wanted our own space, but I always keep her on my prayers. She is an incredible human being. I was having a really good time at the house, but on the other side, I was struggling at school.

Learning a new language is so difficult and stressful. Even though, it was more

complicated because during my classes some students didn't want me to be part of their teams because they saw me as an "English Learner". So, for them it means that I was not capable to do the classwork, I was pushed down a lot. But, I just continued, it didn't matter because I know who I am. In addition, I had it to take another year of high school because I wanted to go to college, and the only way is by applying for scholarships. We have no money to pay for college, so I decided to stay. I think I am better now compared to those days, but I would never change them.

Right now I just look back with a good feeling. I am so proud of myself because I didn't give up on my dreams, and I am still looking for them. At the same time, I do miss my family a lot, but I know they would be proud of me too. I know someday we going to be together again. Now, I already have so many stories to tell, but the most significant part of those stories are the learnings. I've learned so much from them. I feel glad to have gained experiences like these at my young age because I feel that someone can relate with my story, and have a kind of hope because we are not alone. Let's be and give love no matter how difficult the life has been, and over all we need to learn that no one has more value than someone else. Proudly dreamer.

## When Parents Passed Away

by Lorie Clement

I was born and raised in the Marshall Islands, and it is where I spent most of my time with my parents. When my parents passed away, I was only 12 years old and my life back then was so full of stress and pain that you can't even imagine.

I was living my best life with my family in the Marshall Islands. Those times were like a treasure for me that I could keep forever. My dad passed away first when I was only 12 years old. He was a policeman and he was promoted to become a chief, but a few days later he became sick. Nobody knew what was happening to him or what his sickness was nor did they know how to cure it. Few months later, he passed away, and it was the most devastating moment for me and my family, especially for my mom. Sadly a few months after my dad's passing, my mom was diagnosed with depression and lost her battle shortly after.

When I came to America, I saw a lot of differences between my country and being here in America, because in my country, I saw that there are only coconut and fine trees, and not that many people and not that many buildings either or cars, But here, I see many huge buildings I had never seen before, and cars different kinds of styles, I see a lot of people walking by me and different kind of skin colors. The sky is so beautiful, not like the sky that we have. The sky in the Marshall Islands is hazy because they burn paper cups or plates, and it ruins our weather. The air that I was breathing in was refreshing. When people talked around me, it was different from my language and I got confused. In my mind, I thought they spoke the same language I speak, but it was so different. I wish my parents were there to see what I saw, but I know they're looking down from heaven.

The day before leaving my country, I visited my parents graves. As I was sitting next to my parents, I could not help but cry. My heart was full of sorrow and despair. I was trying to understand why God had taken both of them from me. At this point, I was starting to lose hope, but then I realized from now on, everything I do, I will be doing it for them. I sat there wishing my parents were still there with me. With my eyes still wet from my tears, I laid down next to them and fell asleep. Before the sun had set, I woke up by my aunt's voice telling me to get ready for the farewell party that night. I got up and we both walked back home.

Living here in America with my uncle and his family is kind of hard for me because sometimes when I need something, I am afraid to ask because I was not as close to them as my family back home at the Islands. It is not like how I used to live with my parents because I got to get whatever I wanted and asked them if I could go wherever I want to go. But with my uncle I am scared to asked to go out with my friends because I don't know how his reaction will be, But after a year of living with my uncle everything is getting better and I'm getting to know them more.

## **Struggle in Learning English and in My Small Island Home**

by Nelson Anjel

Learning English in my Islands was very difficult because most of the teachers are from Japan, and it's hard to learn because of their accents. The only teacher I like from Japan was Mrs. Aki because she always brought me and my classmates brownies every two days. And the reason why she brought us brownies was because she didn't want my friends and I to cut class and go fishing.

In the middle of my 8th grade, my dad decided to send me to the United States to find a great education and try to learn more English because in my home Islands, there are a lot of teenagers who are the same age as me who really struggle. Most of them are pregnant at a young age or having a child, and it's so sad to see because they can't afford their baby's needs because they didn't finish their education.

When I first came here the first things that were hard for me was that I didn't know how to speak English, and the first time I went to school, it was hard because I couldn't communicate with other students..

One I wish I don't want to see was that I don't want to see a lot of people struggle with their families and who can't afford one bag of rice for the whole family. And it's hard to think about because most of the kids will be starving the whole next week because there's no money to buy food. And I wish that global warming shouldn't be existed because in Marshall Islands, there's only 1.5 meters of water and the whole Islands will be drowning and disappear. I feel like if the whole Islands will be drowning then us people from Marshall Islands are nothing without it because they are a gift from our ancestors.

## **My life story**

by Omar Samim

My story outline is about my immigration story. In Afghanistan, my dad faced to many problems. He knew enough English, and he worked almost 15 years with the U.S. army. Some of the terrorists didn't like the U.S. Army, and my dad couldn't go to his village and province, because if they knew that my dad was working with the U.S. military, they would've targeted him. One day, I still remember when I was 12 years old, my dad faced a bomb attack on his car. He was heading to come to home for his vacation, and his body got some injuries, and when he was in hospital, he didn't call home. He just called his older brother about what happened. My mom and my grandmother were shaken, and they were scared. They tried to tell my dad to stop working with the U.S. army, but my dad didn't want to stop working with them.

He continued to work, and that job made his life in so much danger that he had to keep a low profile and also had to stay in a city away from home. Problems made it impossible to go to his own house and province because our province was not a safe place for my dad. For that reason, we had change our province to another province. That place was a little safer for my dad and his office was very close to his job. One of my dad's colleagues also faced these problems. He come to the U.S and he told my dad to apply for on immigration visa to come to the U.S. After a long time my dad applied for that. We were very tired from that program because it took a long time almost three and a half years, but my dad and all the members of my family never thought that we would come to U.S. because we thought it would be cancelled because it took a long time.

But finally, we got a message from that program that our special Immigration visa was approved at the end of 2017. Finally, we came to the United States because of security problems because my dad had worked with the U.S. Army. For that reason, we came here at that time. We faced many problems, such as, we didn't have any relatives here in to the U.S. For us, it was like someone threw us from the sky because everything was very different than our country. There were no relatives to show us what to do in the U.S.A. At that time, actually, our life started from zero, because we had a lot of problems like transportation, language, culture, religion, missing our food, missing our friends, and speaking was a challenge for us. How did we make appointments?. How could we to talk with English speakers, how to buy and where could we our Afghani food?. And especially for me, I missed my favorite sport, which is cricket.

A big problem that we can't forget was getting driving license. My dad had a car in Afghanistan, but when we came to here, we couldn't drive a car without a driving license. There was no way for us. My dad bought three bikes and that helped us a lot for transportation. It was very hard to go somewhere with a bike, but after a month my dad

my brother and I tried very hard, and we passed the driving paper test. Most of the people didn't pass the test on the first chance but we did. After that, my dad passed the driving test, too, and he took driving license.

I still remember my first day in the U.S. I was cutting my toenails with my foot on a glass table. The glass broke and I fell and cut my wrist on the glass. At that time, my dad and my older brother weren't at home to call them to bring me to emergency. We just had one phone that was with my dad and at home. We didn't have another phone to call my dad, and we had nothing for transportation. My mom got very scared, and she was very sad, but one of my neighbors understood about this accident. One good thing was my neighbor was a nurse. She called my dad, and she told him about the accident, and she asked if she could take me to emergency. My dad said yes, and my dad also came home very fast. She took me to the emergency room with her car. She knew where to take me, and I am very thankful to that neighbor because she stayed with me until midnight.

I learned from my life experience that no one is perfect in this world and everybody have problem in life we need help each other in community. life could be be challenging. Life gets easier if we keep working hard, and learn from my mistake. I have to know who I was, who I am where I am going to where I have to be in future. And right now I have nice family my dad finish medical assistant he study very hard than other people whom came from Afghanistan and my dad english was good for that reason he study medical assistant English was not my dad first language In class there was people there first language was English but my dad was in second position and he finished very well now he haired in medical job.

## **My Beautiful, Amazing, Hardworking Mom**

by Pader Lor

My mom's name is Lou Yang. She was born on June 4, 1968 in Laos. She was independent, hardworking, beautiful, amazing, caring, strong, loved, short-tempered, very scary at times (when she was home), overprotective, and she was the most important person in my family. She never had a good life in Laos, her family struggled all her life until they moved to America. Here in America, she met my dad and had 7 kids.

She was very scary at home and she liked to yell, hit, ground us, made us do chores (which all of us have our own chores to do), help her do her garden (she had so many plants), told us to pick our clothes up and put them in our rooms (which it was my little sister who didn't pick it up her clothes) and help her to make dinner (she made us help each other). She was very hardworking because she worked 24/7 without getting a rest or not eating enough food at home.

She loved her garden very much. She like to water the plants, cut the vegetables, and the green onion and mint.

Whenever we went out as family, my mom would pay everything for us. We got what we needed, like school supplies ,shoes, socks, clothes and everything we wanted. She was a mother figure to all of us, and she was the most important person in my life. Everyone loved her.

She was a very strong person because whenever she got sick, tired, sleepy, hungry or anything, she never gave up. She never celebrated her birthday, even when lived in Laos. The first time I remember celebrating anything was "Mother's Day." It was nice to show her that we love our mother with all our hearts and always will always love our mother.

There is a lot of things I want to say to her and I know she gone from our lives but I don't like how many Hmong people (which came from both of parents' sides family) kept saying that "She is dead." "She is never coming back to us." "She is gone forever." I'm so tired of it, so tired, so stressed, so mad, I'm just tired of everything and everyone's negativity. It's hard on us because she gone, our hearts are broken and losing someone in your family is sad, hurts, and make you mad. I feel like that everyday, every time and every night, but I always have to stay strong and support my siblings because they need me the same way I need them. My two older sisters and younger brother, they may not understand that our mom is gone. They have disabilities, but they know how to stay strong and are always so happy because they smile all the time. My mom loved them so much because those two were like her favorites because they needed her the most. Well, we were her favorite ones because we're good children too. We miss her, we love her and wish she could come back to us everyday.

There is something I wish I could say to my mother in a letter now that she gone....



“Hi mom. It’s been about a year since you were gone. How are you doing up there in heaven? Did you see grandma or did you meet her up there? Did you two talk, having fun or making a joke? :) LOL. I’m doing fine and so are the others, we are all doing great, always fight sometimes, always hang out, we go everywhere together, and talk about the past and about you. :) Lol. I miss you mom. I miss you a lot, we all do and wish you could come back to us because it’s hard on us now that you are gone. Dad got a girlfriend then got married 2 weeks ago, he was getting rid of our stuff and throwing them away, especially my stuffed animals and Wendy’s stuff animals too >:(, :( I’m just so mad and sad that you were gone, because this could not happen if you were here. If you were here, I bet you actually don’t care because you knew along that he would get married and knew he doesn’t love you because you always knew. Also, I remember you kept telling us that ‘Your dad is getting a new wife.’ When you told me this, I don’t care about it and so tired you kept telling us that because we heard a hundred time and you just have to repeat over and over again. Well, now that you gone I don’t have to hear it again and don’t have to listen too. One or two things I want you to know is that we are doing fine, we miss you, Mom, everyday and we aren’t killing each other just fighting sometimes :). I’m a senior to 2018-2019 now and about to graduate maybe in the next 3 months, which I don’t really want to graduate because I’ll be sad, crying and I’ll already miss my teachers :( . Once I graduate from high school, I’m going to college and I have no idea what are my majors are but I will find one someday. Right now in first year college, I want to continue my learning like English and Math even though I don’t like Math. Once I’m done in college, I might maybe find a job and help my family if I ever find a job. If you were here right now, I want you to be here for my graduation day and see me on the stage to get my diploma for the first time. I hope that wherever you and grandma are now, I wish you both can become my mom again and grandma again. And I wish we can become mother and daughter again. If one day, I had a daughter I will name after you Samantha Lou Yang (her full name). I hope that she is just like you and younger version of me. Because when I was small, I was being mean, and cried without tears. That’s what you guys kept telling me all the time :). Also, I hope she will grow up like you and don’t have to suffer like you do in the past. That’s my wish and I hope if there is a new life time, I hope that we can meet again and become mother and daughter again. I love you mom. Always and Forever.

Love your daughter,  
Pader Lor”

## **My First Time Came to The United States**

by Panha Ly

Today I am going to tell you about my story before I came to the United States. I was born in Cambodia. When I was in my country, my life was full of experiences, learning from mistakes and doing something wrong. When I stayed in my country, I left school everyday to hang out with my friends all night, and when my parent told me to do something, I never listened to them. When at that time, I think I hurt my family so much because I never listened to them. They hoped for me to go to school to be better student but I didn't do it.

When I was 5 years old, I lived with my grandma because my mom and dad separated. I didn't know what happened to them, and you know, it's hard for the kid who doesn't have a mom and dad to live with. Then my mom left me and came to the United States. At that time, I didn't know where my dad was. After I was 7 years old, my dad came to see me at my grandma's house. When at that time, I felt kind of sad and happy at the same time because I had so many question to ask him, but I couldn't.

The first time came to the United States, I didn't know how to speak English, and I saw a lot different things that I never saw before. Learning English in Cambodia is very different than American English. Learning English in Cambodia is very different because like when the teacher teaches students, they never speak English to the student. And when they give the words or when we have classwork to do, some teachers didn't explain what to do with it. In Cambodia, the teacher never cared a lot about the student. But in America, the teacher always cares a lot about the students. They never leave the student alone.

I remember when I got the first class at Luther Burbank, I was very nervous because I couldn't understand what the teacher was talking about. Now, I am very happy because I can speak and write in English. I want to study more English, because right now, I think my English not good enough for me.

Now that I understand English well, I feel like I'm ready for the next challenge. I always wanted to challenge myself to go to the college.

## **My life story**

by Ramin Mominyar

A life changing experience I had is when my parents and I immigrated in the U.S.A. The reason my parents left Afghanistan is that security was not good. I remember my brother wanted to go Germany. It was tough for my family. My mom was crying too much because all mothers have a big heart. Also, my uncle left with my brother. My uncle had experience in leaving. He lived in Dubai, but my brother had never gone one night from home to hang out. It was tough for him but, he learned how to live without family. After a few days, they crossed the border to Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey. They said they wanted to cross the river to in Italy. I saw in the news many immigrants drowned in the river between Italy and Turkey. I did not sleep that night. My family waited for my brother to call us. We worried too much about them crossing the river. After they called us, we were fine and didn't worry about them crossing the border from Italy to Germany because my brother knows English. He solved all problems by himself. After 40 days, he arrived in Germany. They never told us really what happened on the way because they didn't want us to think about what happened with them. One thing, my brother always encouraged me to study a different language and it has very much influenced my life.

After 2 years, my parents applied with immigration in the U.S.A. After one year, we did all the steps. Then the government of the U.S.A accepted us. Nobody knew we were going to U.S.A. The wife of one of my uncles asked me if I took flu shot. I said, "for what?". She told me you guys are going to America. I said, "No, look at my shoulder. I'm not getting a shot", even though that was lying because I didn't want to hurt them cause them to cry too much. When my dad got the tickets, he told my grandma and grandfather. It was very tough for my grandma and grandfather. The day we went to the airport, I still remember I was crying so much when I sat in the seat in the airplane. I thought that I would never come back to my country.

On May 23, 2017, we began our trip to the U.S.A. We got to Dubai first to the international airport. After 5 hours, we took another flight to the U.S.A. It took 15 hours in the airplane to arrive here. When we arrived, my dad's friend came to pick up us, then we went to his home to eat and rest.

The next day, I woke up. I was nervous because I saw different people. I thought about how they acted to me. Then I went ahead and asked them, "Could I play soccer with you guys?" He answered me, "Of course you can." I was so happy. My cousin told me, "Ask people if you don't know where is the store or school. They are very kind people they will tell you." Next day, we didn't have food to eat. I called my uncle. We needed food. He didn't come to show us where the store is, and he never came. I was so mad at him because he invited us to come to Sacramento, and he said that he would help us, but he

didn't do that. After 10 days, my uncle and another uncle came from Los Angeles to meet us. We told all the story of what happened with us so he told us not to worry. He had a friend here to help us. He was very helpful with us and showed us how to get a permit for a driver's license. He also gave me advice on how to improve my English.

I learned from my experiences that life could be challenging. Life gets easier if I keep working hard and learn from my mistakes. I will know what I should do now and in the future. I'm very excited to go to college. I know that will be a challenge to me, but I could handle it because I will use my experience I had in my life.

## Immigration

by Sodis Nazari

In this essay, I would like to talk about my family and what challenges I have faced and my family, so far the in this country when we arrived .

My own challenges and the challenges my family had here is we didn't know how to speak English. Another one of them was that we didn't have a driver's license for two years. When we came to America, our family expected my dad who knew how to speak English, and had driver license, to solve our own problems at school, daily work problems and appointments. When I got enrolled at school, I wasn't able make conversation with people, students, and teachers. I was the only student at school from Afghanistan. I had no friends from my own country to talk with and hangout with in free time, which was hard. I was always alone in school at in lunchtime and breaks. I faced many challenges when I started studying in a new country and, I never knew their culture. When I came here to Sacramento, the challenge for me was speaking the language, how to make conversation with people in school, with the doctor and with the native speakers.

While at my physical education class in the locker room, African American students were always bullying me and making fun of me for no reason. One day, I was changing my clothes and they came into me and were cussing. I went through and slapped one of them and began to fight students. Staff came into me and separated us and took me to the office. I couldn't say what happened to me so they called translator, He came and I told everything that was the issue, and they comprised between us to not bother me anymore. My opinion was about this challenge was speaking with those people that I didn't know and how they made conversation, and I began to hang out with native speakers.

The another issue I had struggling with it was writing English and reading English. I've solved these challenges because I memorized vocabulary, I worked on essays and many paragraph sentences. I listened to lots of grammar Youtube videos. Finally, I learned a little bit of English and how make conversation with people. The very last point of this challenge was learning about their culture, religion and the traditions.

Another challenge we had was that my dad went to my country for two months, I was sixteen years old, and he was the one had driver license in are family. We did not have a driver's license to drive to reach my family doctor appointments and some other issues such as getting groceries and other daily problems.

I faced to many challenges about getting my driver license. It was hard to get the first thing which was pink slip and. It was hard to get the pink slip because that was my second year in the United States, I had struggles as I said with English, and my English wasn't good enough to pass that lessons part, the quizzes and last exam. But fortunately, I passed that exam, although I failed one time. I had two chances to pass it. I did and got my pink

slip. I was supposed to hold that paper for six months until I turned the age of seventeen. The other challenge for me was the California permit. I read the DMV handbook hand for one month. All of it was in English and that was difficult for me. I finished it and reviewed a lot of websites, and I watched Youtube videos. I made an appointment and I went to DMV with my mom and dad. I went to the exam room. I held that sheet of paper for 45 minutes. I brought my paper to the examiner. She checked it, and said "Congratulations! You successfully did pass the exam." We returned to home and I took the DMV instructor for a 8 months. The requirement was to hold onto the permit for six months, I passed that 6 hour course, and I practiced with my parents 50 hours in a day shift and 10 hours in a night shift I made the appointment for my behind wheel exam. I went to Modesto to take the test, and I did passed that behind wheels exam successfully, and I got my California driver licence.

When I got my driver licenses my life situation changed than before. I felt like I'm a mature enough kid to take care of my business and take the hand of my family to help them. Before, while were had struggling with transportation, my dad was also at his shift work, my sister walked all the way to her school. Now, I'm dropping her off every day to her school, and my mom picks her up when she is done with school, now we are so happy because our life changed, and we do our daily errands and appointments by ourselves. We don't need someone to help us with the transportation and English then I became an independent person do all my staff by myself.

## **“When I found out I’m adopted”**

by Soline Samuel

When I found out I’m adopted, I asked my adopted mom why I’m not with my biological parents. She said my mom gave me up because she was mad at my dad. She wanted her friend to adopt me. It wasn’t my parent’s relative, but a friend that my family doesn’t know. By the time my grandma got to the hospital, she saw me with a woman she had never met. She asked my mom why that woman was holding me. My mom said she’s going to adopt me. My grandma took me away from her, and my grandma’s sister wanted to adopt me. So now, I’m with my adopted mom, my great aunt. I always say to myself that I’m lucky to be with her. I thought she was my birth mother because she treats me like her own child. When I was little, I was always confused why my adopted mom was angry when my relatives asked me about my biological mom. Where is she? How is she doing? Also, my grandma always got angry when my biological mom bought me gifts and took me with her.

One day I was asleep and my biological mom came to my house while she was drunk and I heard her and my adopted mom talking and making jokes about me, and she told my adopted mom that everything about me, and that I took after my dad but not her. And she started crying, but still I was confused why she cried and saying that I don’t take after her. Everyday, I feel like she regrets giving me up.

When I was little, my real siblings and I didn’t have a good relationship. We always argued and fought everyday. I remember one day my brother hit me with a broom and my adopted mom’s sister, which is my real dad’s mom, got mad at my brother and hit my brother with the broom. After that, she told him that I’m his real sister but I was adopted. From that day, my brother never fought with me. My sister and I never had a good relationship, but now she and I are like best friends. Everyday, I told myself I should have not found out about this because my adopted mom treats me like her own daughter. She spoils me more than her own daughters.

When I was in 8th grade I was on my way to my house from school. By the time I get there I heard my adopted mom and her daughter arguing. She told my adopted mom why she always did everything even though I’m not her real daughter, my mom said it doesn’t matter if I’m her daughter or not because she was going to love me no matter what. I stayed in the living room and waited for my mom to come out. She came out and saw me sitting there and crying, she was crying with me and asked me if I was going to leave her. I didn’t answer until I stopped crying. I asked her is it true because I heard, but I was waiting for her to tell me. She said yes. After she told me, I didn’t know what to do. I wanted to kill myself because I didn’t want this to be true.

This is the reason why I'm working hard in school to make my mom proud. I told her that I will graduate from college and get a better job so we can go everywhere. My advice for all of you don't give up on your kids because you don't know how hard it is.



## Misjudge and Bullied All My Years

by Tapanga Sayalinh Yang

I have been misjudged and bullied all my years because of my appearance and personality. Other people view me differently and judge me because of my looks, personality and learning disability. I don't want to judge. I am not a judgemental person because I know all people special and I never want to see people mistreated. I want to see people treated right, the same way that others would want. It seems like people don't understand what others go through. It like crushing a bug on the ground, not realizing that it hurt them and they are living things, just like us.

I know how other people feel because people told me their experiences of what they went through. We don't always know what people go through. It is good to comfort those who are in bad day to ask them, "How was your day so far?" but you'll never really know. If we know what someone is going through, it is good for you and that person because it creates relationships. Many people have told about their experiences and I didn't realize what they experienced before. Some things that happen wrong to others will affect them and you later in life.

I remember one time in math class this boy got irritated by me because I was asking too many questions in class. I didn't know better. He started asking "Why do you keep asking a lot of questions? Are you stupid?" Then he told me "You're so stupid and that's why you don't anything!" That made me feel offended, but I let go and held back. He also said, "If keep this up, I will always pick on you for the rest of your life". I told my mom what happened during class. She listened to me and supported me, which helped.

I believe in life there are ways to change those personal things and that is doing the right thing. I believe there are many personal things that happen in people's lives that we never see in public. We do not know what happens to people and how they feel.

Sometimes, I understand that there is something wrong, but don't know to interact in some situations. Whenever you see someone in public, even if there something is you don't like about them, you can still treat them right. You figure out what is behind the problems and solve things. Whenever you are anywhere, you can do more than be bystander. You can help those who are defenseless. If you learn to stand for yourself and others, you and others can become a great union. Don't let someone take control of your life, or you will feel miserable, and others too.

I want find a way to make changes to help myself help others. Sometimes, it is hard to understand what is wrong. Others expect you to understand what they feel. I think people don't realize that not everybody can read your mind and know what others think. I have had personal issues, I have difficulty with control of my emotions and how I interact

with others. I wish we didn't have to deal with so many issues, I just wish we could all learn together and have peace. I also wish that all of the countries the whole world can be at peace.

## **My Dad**

by Trinh Tran

Everyone has a lot of struggles in their life. I am the same. I have a big story that I have to tell about my dad who has a serious issue. That is a cancer, the illness that no one wants. I had to face it because at that time my family just came to the USA. We did not have anything.

On November 17, 2016, my family came to the USA. We lived in my uncle's house in Eureka. After one month, my parents and a little brother moved to Sacramento to work. My sister and I had to stay there to finish the semester. During the time, my dad lived in Sacramento, and I heard that he was not feeling well, and I thought it was normal.

On June 27, 2017, I moved to Sacramento to live with them in a small house that my mom was renting. In that time, my dad went to the doctor, and they gave to my dad medicines, but he was not better. I did not know what happened with my dad because he had headache for a long time. I advised him to go to Methodist Hospital, then he went there and the doctor said he just had a headache. They could not find the issue.

On October 19, in the early morning, my dad's head hurt very much, and I called 911 for him. They took my dad to UC Davis and my mom also went with them. After 8 hours that doctor moved my dad to UCSF because my dad had important problem. That time, I just stayed at home, and I was very worried about him. I was waiting until the midnight when everyone was sleeping, but I was still awake because I could not sleep when I did not know the result.

My phone was ringing, it appeared that my mom called me, and I immediately picked up the phone. My mom said, "Hi, girl, your dad had the result already, and it is a brain cancer." I froze for a while. I tried to go to google to find out what is the cause. After I found out, I realized that why I did not know it earlier. I just sat down and blamed myself for not knowing about it. Why did it happen to my dad, but not me?. My eyes were tearing and tears were rolling down my cheeks. I cried silently because my sister and my brother were sleeping. I did not want them to hear it from me. I felt helpless when my dad had to fight against a serious disease, but I did not do anything for him. Anyway, thank God because my dad was just on stage one.

The doctor in UCSF started to treat my dad. He had to stay there one month, while they did chemotherapy for my dad. I did not know what that is, but it was hurt so bad, my dad said . My mom also stayed there with him because he has the illness about the brain, sometimes he forgot and his voice was so weak. My sister brother and I lived without my parents because they lived far away from us. I was very stressed, I had to take care of the two of them. Sometimes, I thought that I could not pass this time because it was too

much for me. I thought my dad knew that his children were waiting him, so he passed his chemotherapy, and he came back home with my mom after one month.

Finally, the doctor is healing my dad and he is better now, but he has to go to the hospital to get periodic examinations. And the cancer is still in my dad's head. I still worry about it. By the way, if you are weak you will do nothing. Be strong, even it is hard, you should try to do it because you are not alone. My dad has passed it because he has me and he has my family waiting him to be healthier. I love my dad because he passed a part of the illness. He tried hard for our family.

## **The Different Life Between China and United States**

by Youzhi Zheng

Before I came to the United States I lived in a small town with my family and we all enjoyed and loved the life there for many years before I moved to the United States.

The most fun time in my small town was the Chinese New Year. Before the New Year, Mom helped my brother and me prepare for it by taking us out to buy new clothes and new shoes. Everything should be new. And we loved that so much, because we wore everything new, and also, we could hang out with friends and show off with them. When the night time was coming, we asked the people who were our relatives for red envelopes (that had money in it) by say Kung Hei Fat Choi. We could use that money to buy firecrackers. It was going to be fun to light the firecracker and drop it near to someone when they don't know what was happening. At midnight, every family put out the fireworks and fired them to the sky. It is amazing when all the firework fire on the same time. And it lasted about a hour. In the New Year, we could stay up all night to do whatever we want. The New Year lasts two weeks and we got two months off for school unlike the United States, here only we get two weeks and it is boring. Well, I think it is boring for me, not everybody else. In the United States, during the New Year break I just can't find the fun in it. I guess I need more time to assimilate into it, to be the part of it so that I can find the fun and enjoy it.

The school is totally different between those two countries. In China, the students take care of the environment in school and the classroom. That's good thing, though, because it makes the student know that they have the responsibility for the school and outside of the school. And we take turns. We might do it once a month or even more longer. In the school of the United States, the students don't have to do that but the teachers do. The school rules also different, in the China the students stay in the same classroom all day. When this class over, we have ten minutes break after that we are back to the same class and wait for the other subject teacher to come and start the new period.

## **My Story**

by Zainab Omar

In this story I would like to talk about my family and my father. I know my father and I lost my father. I was born in normal family. I thought my family was lucky for having my father. My father was my hero. I grew up with lot of a challenges, but I was proud of having my father. When I grew up, I knew that my father is not that person knew and who I believed. My father was an addict. He used drugs.

When I saw my father doing those things, I felt broken. I felt like was older than my age. My father used drugs and alcohol every night when he was coming home. He was different person. When he was drunk, he fought with everyone and said bad words to my mother. My mother and my brother tried to tell him drugs were not good for his life. My brother told him drugs would take away everything he has. My father used drugs for fourteen years. In that fourteen years, my mother and my brother try to hospitalize him, but my father did not accept it. My father went to the hospital 10 times, but he did not forget the drugs.

When I was fourteen, my father was lost for one year. I didn't know where he went or where he was. My brother went everywhere to find him. We had lot of challenges in that one year. After one year, he came to home, but he did not say where he was. He made a case so we could come to America. My father told us that when we came to America, he would not use drugs any more. My family and I were happy. I thought my father would be my hero again.

After six months, we come to America. Everything was good until we found out my father still used drugs. When we come to America, in my family, no one spoke English. Just my father spoke English. He did not help us in any things because he was busy on his drugs. My mother did the everything by herself. Every night, my father drank alcohol. He bothered my mother and my family. He told my mother "I would take my children and I would take you back to the Afghanistan." He told my mother that she is a bad woman. We were tired of my father. Some nights, when my father did not come to home, I felt good because no one were there to bother us. My younger sister hates and my father she never called him dad.

One night, when he was drunk, he was bothering us. My mother called 911. The police came, and they wanted to take my father to jail but they didn't take him to jail because he told them, "I didn't do anything", and because we didn't speak English, we didn't understand what he said to them.

My mother was tired of my father. She told him she did not want to be any more with him. My mother and my father divorced. I lost my father. I try to live without my father, but life was terrible for me without my hero. Everything was different for me. My father went. I have not seen my father any more. I lost my father.

## **A Thousand Storms**

by Zuhairha Khan

To me moving towards a better life always involved traveling through a thousand storms. When one struck, it caused loss and left nothing behind but dread and long trails of disappointments. However, as they say, after every storm comes a rainbow and something like that happened to me.

On March of 2017, I migrated to the United States with my family from New Zealand. It was a long process and quite exhausting, too. Although this wasn't my first time relocating to a new place or a country, I couldn't help but feel heartbroken because the people and the things that used to mean something to me once were now completely gone. I remember sitting on the plane with my heart in my throat, holding the tears in, pretending to be strong. Watching through the round window, knowing just how alone I was now. No more friends, no more home, no more nothing. I clenched my shaking fists tightly trying to ease the throbbing inside my chest. As the plane gradually gilded higher and higher in the sky, my heart sank deeper and deeper in my chest. What used to be my home once disappearing beneath me as the surrounding fluffy clouds swallowed it up, mocking me, leaving me with nothing, nothing at all. I buried my head in my hands so no one could see me and let the tears finally flood, announcing the start of yet, another storm.

I hoped we would never move, but we didn't have a choice. Although life in New Zealand was exceptional, and I wouldn't wish for a better one, we still had to struggle so much, especially my parents. They sacrificed anything and everything to make more money so they could feed us and give us a better life. Still, that was never enough, and it didn't help that our family was huge, we were a family of eight and were struggling every day. I remember the bills would be overdue huge piles stacked high on the kitchen counter because my parents couldn't afford to pay it. We were blessed enough that some of our family friends helped us out, or I wouldn't know where we would be right now. My dad changed jobs for better ones and for that, we had to move constantly. We've lived in three cities, breezed through so many houses and schools that I've completely lost count. The places were always different, yet the problems remained the same. Whenever we settled in, and everything would be going right for once, the following day the storm would sweep in and strike again unexpected and shatter all my hope of finally having a home and life where everything was okay. It grew to the point that I stopped hoping because the disappointments that followed after were always too much to handle. I gave up on everything because I knew nothing was going to be the same again.

I wasn't at all thrilled when we arrived in the States. Everything from getting on the plane to getting off was a blur like I was in someone else's body watching the scene unfold

before me feeling trapped and helpless of not being able to do or change anything. It didn't help that I felt like an outcast. Nothing felt natural. I mean we didn't have a home where we knew we belonged no matter what. The fact that we had nothing hurt the most. We were lucky enough to have a place to stay, with our grandparents; however they're not the typical sweet grandparents some people are blessed to have. They're strict, judgmental and won't hold back on telling you what they think of you. Like the one time I was helping my nine-year-old brother out with reading because he couldn't read, and my grandpa heard it and stomped into the room, shaking his head and started shouting, "You're so dumb and useless! You can't even read! If you were my kid, I would have thrown you out by now." I was in shock because I couldn't believe how someone could be that heartless and say something like that to a little kid. I still remember the way tears had gathered in his small eyes, aching to come out. How sad he looked. How pathetic I felt. Some nights, I remember crying myself to sleep in the small cold room of my grandparents' house because I couldn't do anything. As the days went by, we grew more and more miserable in the house. We didn't feel welcomed there because we weren't, and I couldn't wait till we got out.

I prayed to God every day on my knees, crying my heart out for help and strength to get us through this, because I knew we had done this many times in our lives. We could do it again just this one time this last time. I tried to stay positive even through new problems. My parents found jobs that helped us out. We were able to get the essential paperwork done, and sure enough, we were able to get a house, our own home where we did belong. It didn't feel like home at first however as we started exploring outside more we found that it wasn't dull and dead looking as before because we weren't struggling with money anymore, we weren't trapped in a miserable house anymore, and we weren't going anywhere anymore. The storm had dragged in a rainbow, a rainbow we'll be forever grateful for because now, after so long, we finally had a home.

Looking back now at my experience, I see how it changed my life, changed me as a person. I used to be reluctant, always trying to hold on to everything because I was too scared to let go, but thinking back now and seeing what my family and I had to go through, the constant sacrifices and long chains of disappointments that followed after. Those have taught me to be more open and not to frown upon the miserable times, but to smile and look at them as a lesson to learn and grow from, those times are the ones we never forget because even after spiraling through a thousand storms, it seems to survive and stick around no matter what.



# **WHAT READERS HAVE SAID ABOUT THE LBHS LIVING BOOKS**

*(From the 2019 CASEL Cross District Convening)*

“Living book was a once in a lifetime opportunity - thank you!”

“I sincerely appreciated the living books time! Such a great way to uplift student voice.”

“I so appreciate the Living Books sharing and Kudos to their teacher for creating a culture of acceptance and being valued. “

“I appreciate the opportunity to hear the student voices through the Life Story Books!”

“I was moved by the student stories and their lived experiences.”

“So powerful and inspiration. The Living Books were incredible!”

“The Living Books was the highlight of the CDI for me.”

“The Living Books reaffirmed for me the power of social emotional learning and why it matters.”

***Our Deepest Gratitude to  
Pam Buric and the Amazing Living Books from LBHS!***



**We Are. We Belong. We Can.**