

Where Do You Come From?

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Third Place—Essay Competition

I come from the son of a man who farmed all his life. A man who worked in fields filled with sun and sweat. Orange mangoes taunting him from treetops—fruit that wasn't for him. His fruit instead was his respect, his money, his job. He was able to farm and come back to his wife. Their son was a man who wanted better. More than being in fields all day, working the same cycle. He wanted to be educated. He wanted to aid the people in medicine and health rather than provide them food.

I am the niece of a man who stayed behind in India while his brother moved across the world. I am the niece of a man who inherited all his family's land because of birthright and had no choice but to manage—a man who had his future planned out from birth. A man who connected with his niece while over 8,000 miles away, even though he was never able to see her. A man who built his own home for his family, designed completely by him.

I am the niece of a farmer, who had the skills of a carpenter. I am the girl who took Construction Technology instead of Health Science because it seemed “fun.” A girl who ended up enjoying it, going as far as competing at a state level. And while I enjoyed the art of building and designing, I had to keep it to the side—like my uncle, I had other callings. For now, I will continue to have a rigorous education, and maybe one day I will be able to flourish my skills in carpentry

and build a house of my own.

I come from the granddaughter of a man who wanted adventure. A man who sailed six months to Africa because he saw it being better than his farmland in India. A man who loved the new continent but came back—because family is always first. His daughter—engaged at fourteen—a maid, a cleaner, a cook, or as they would call it, a good wife.

I am the daughter of a woman whose marriage solidified her place in America. A woman whose role shifted from “wife” to housewife whenever her countries changed. A woman who did not know any English when she moved away, yet she was able to learn for the future of her kids she had to bear. A woman who was taught to do anything for family, even if it meant giving up her dreams—a pressure she passed down to her kids.

One day, my children will be able to say that they come from a woman who knows her roots. A woman who understands them, acknowledges them, yet is not afraid to expand them into other fields. A woman who will hold on to her culture, but will not let cultural stan-

dards hold her, nor will she allow them to lead her life. A woman who loves her family but will not sacrifice herself for the sole reason of “family.” A woman who is a mother, a daughter, a niece, a granddaughter, and most importantly: a woman of her own. △



Young Blossom

Emily Gambill

Photography