

I Believe in Who I Am

by A.J. Hayes

Sometimes people from different countries who speak different languages may feel alienated when they come to a new country like the United States. One of the problems is not knowing English and not understanding the American culture. I remember a time when my Grandma Kim had this similar experience. I call my Grandma “Ma”, which means mother in Vietnamese.

When I was about two years old, my Grandmother was taken from her own home in Vietnam and brought to the United States. She came to live in Moreno Valley, California during the Vietnam war. I think in the beginning, she probably missed her home and didn't feel comfortable here in a new land. But she had my mother, my aunt Michelle, my sister Amanda, and me to comfort her and to teach her new ways.

In the beginning, she couldn't speak English, so we helped her learn English along the way. Now that I am ten years old, she speaks, reads, and writes in English, but still with a Vietnamese accent.

My Grandmother explained to me one day, “It doesn't matter that I speak a different language or that I come from Vietnam, I still believe in who I am.” I've always remembered this.

During the time when I'd play baseball, she'd motivate me and cheer me on. “Go A.J.!” When I made the GATE program, she said, “Great job, A.J.! Always try to do your best.” She has always wanted me to improve my life.

In my own life, like my Grandma, I've been taken away from people who were my friends and family when times were unstable. But it was Ma Kim who made me feel stable during those hard times. Each time I left, I learned new things along the way. Ma Kim helped me learn the different parts of me. I am one fourth Vietnamese, one half Mexican, and one fourth Caucasian. Without these parts of me, I wouldn't be who I am today. I am proud to be who I am! And I will always try to be as courageous as my Vietnamese Grandmother, Ma Kim.

Even though people run into tough times like my Grandma, I believe they must always look deep inside and believe in who they are. I know I do! I shall always believe in who I am!

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