

Kaleb Yonas

Bekah Broussard

English 110C

04/09/2024

A Little About Little Ole Me

My identity has been defined by my upbringing, experiences, and circumstances. As the focus in my life has changed, so has my mindset and identity. Although there are many labels and titles that my identity might fall into, it is constantly changing and evolving. As an immigrant and an eighteen year old college student in America, I constantly ask myself, “who am I?” and “who am I supposed to be?” Looking back at my upbringing, my family’s views on education and a degree heavily impacted my identity. So for a big portion of my life, my identity and who I thought I was supposed to be was centered around the idea of an education and attaining a degree and that was what I strived for.

Though sometimes I do wonder if this is what my true purpose is. To go to school, get a degree, get a job, get married, have kids, and buy a house the whole American dream. I know we all have our respective beliefs on religion and God but I can’t talk about my identity without shedding light on God and his relation to my life. One thing I love about America is the freedom we have to believe in whatever we want. In relation to this topic we are all free to believe what we want about religion and a higher being and all our opinions are all respected. For me though God has played a big role in my life of course I’m not saying he’s physically with me or helping do this piece you’re reading right now, but it is my faith and belief in him that has kept me going so far.

Growing up in America I was one of those kids who knew what they wanted to be in life early. I was also a realist and even though I might have enjoyed playing sports unlike most of my friends who were my teammates I understood that I wasn’t going to be the next Messi or LeBron. This caused my focus regardless of how much time I had spent on any field or court to be shifted towards school. Of course there were times when I strayed off the path of my pursuit of higher learning but those were moments that helped me grow as a person and a student.

Moving to the US was one of the most significant moments of my Identity. Adjusting to the environment of a first world country coming from a third world country was overwhelming at times. One of the things I had learned early here was that expectations are the killers of joy. America was not what I expected it to be. As a kid growing up in Eritrea, all I enjoyed watching were American films. Even though I didn’t understand a word of English I consumed American

television and entertainment almost everyday. The America I had pictured in my head was more like an Icarly or the Fresh Prince of Bel Air episode, both are shows that had heavily misguided my interpretation of American culture. This misguided interpretation of American culture would later come back to haunt me when I first entered school in America.

In my first summer here before my first days of American school I taught myself how to speak English. At the time me and my family were living in a small one bedroom apartment. We were just starting to make a place for ourselves here in America. We didn't have a tv that whole summer. The only thing me and my siblings could do for fun was go to the public library that was next to our house. That was how I unintentionally learned to read, write and speak in english. There was an old black lady that worked in the library that would help me and my siblings read and help us work on our english. Everyday me and my siblings would check out book after book to kill our boredom.

Although in those moments I hadn't realized how important reading and books would be in my life. I later came to realize that if my mom had bought a tv for me and my siblings that summer, my life wouldn't have turned out the way it has. I don't even think I would be here at ODU. This full circle moment is one of many that has replayed in many moments of my life. In conclusion my circumstances, experiences, and upbringing have defined my Identity, but it is also my faith and my pursuit of learning that make me who I am.