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Why Do I Worry So Much?

It is July 22nd, 2011, I am in my bed in the morning, deprived of sleep the night before. I was thinking about how the day has come; the day that I was going to the United States, a place that most people are excited to go to because it offers many opportunities to realize your dreams, according to what I've heard. Like most people, I have a dream as well, so maybe this is God's plan to help me fulfill it by sending me there, who knows? I knew I was going a year prior, but it did not hit me until this sunny morning. My mother has been crying ever since yesterday; she has raised my twin brother and I for nine years, and we were the only thing that she had, so I almost felt guilty for leaving. The day was filled with saying goodbyes to friends and families and eating my home foods because I thought that would be my very last time eating them again. I had six hours until it was time to depart to the airport, so I made sure to enjoy it as much as I could. Fast forward to my brother and me in the car; we are staring at the roads and places we have never seen in our whole life despite having been living in this country our whole lives; the thing is that we never really explored it. Numbness and confusion take over my body as I sit my nine-year-old self in the back of the car. When we get to the airport, my grandmother was already there looking excited, in contrast to my brother and I, which is understandable because she has not seen her son in four years. Once we get to the airport and check in our luggage, the wait is very nerve-racking as if a timer is ticking and a bomb is going to explode once I get on

the plane. The wait was so long that I fell asleep before take-off and woke up by the feeling of my grandmother carrying me inside the airplane.

The first plane ride was quick and blurry as I can barely remember any details from it. We departed at night, so all I remember was continuing my sleep which was extremely uncomfortable. I was woken up by the sunlight from one of the windows being open by another passenger and the unusual smell of some estranged food. I was starving, so I decided to eat something regardless of the smell. I wasn't very satisfied with it, and that is where my first sign of nostalgia began. I was profoundly missing the late morning brunch I would have with my brother and mother. I felt a butterfly feeling in my stomach meaning the plane was finally landing. After suppressing my tears while eating, we, at last, get off the plane in Brussels, Belgium. I'm in awe of how beautiful Belgium looks mostly because I was not used to such a clean and professional environment back home. The sight soothes my nostalgia for a moment and replaces it with excitement for what is about to come. The second plane ride felt even longer, and I felt even more anxious because I knew that at this point, there was no going back; when this plane lands, I'll be in the US. I started to question why I was not excited to see my father as most people would be; I guess it was because I never really lived with him. He would only visit on summer vacation every 3-4 years, so I have only seen him back twice. I was so used to my mother that I never really craved a father figure in my life. Nonetheless, he still played his role as a father by sending money for our school payments and anything else that we needed. At that time, I did not know the story of my mother and father; I don't think I even wanted to know.

When we get off our second and last plane in New Jersey, I see my father accompanied by a woman, who I guessed must be his new wife and their daughter. They greeted us with smiles on

their faces and were helping us with our luggage; however, my face muscles felt stuck because everything happened so quickly; just yesterday, I was in my bed, and now, I am in a different country with people I barely even know or seen in my life- apart from my dad, of course. After the brief greeting, we get in the car and start driving; the car suddenly stopped after 30 minutes, and it surprised me how fast we were already at his house; I realized I was wrong as soon as we got out of the car. I saw a yellowish orange-looking building with the words “ Popeyes” on it. I didn’t know why we were here, but I did not mind because it looked like heaven from my African perspective. As soon as we went inside, I realized that it was a restaurant that serves chicken- weird looking chickens. I had never seen a fried chicken with such a crunchy texture and orange-ish appearance. I was almost hesitant to bite into it as if something was going to ooze out if I did. The euphoria that ran through my body when I took the first bite was incomprehensible; my worries went away for a moment. Then, I ate the biscuit, and it soothed my stomach as if it was a medicine against nostalgia. Our table was filled with chicken munching, catching up on life, and talking about the wonders of America.

We get back into the car heading home for real this time. It felt so long that my worries started to linger in my brain once again. I was trying to use the sights and my surroundings to make me feel better, but it was so dark at night that I could not see anything. We finally get home, and we are welcomed by this stranger who I learned later, lives in the house as well. He greeted us with such a warm smile that it looked like he was waiting for our arrival for a long time. My dad’s wife, now my stepmother, walks me to my bedroom and lets me choose which side of the bed I want to sleep in. Once I decided, she says “ Well, the bathroom is over there in the hallway, so if you want to take a shower, just go there.” She said it with a very forced smile that I didn’t mind

or cared about, to be honest. I just forced a smile back and said “ Thank you”; of course, this whole conversation was in French, my native tongue. The night ends with us going to get settled in our rooms and taking up the atmosphere around us. It was a very ironic night because I was sleepy throughout the whole trip; however, this night, all I could do is let my thoughts keep me awake.

The next month, my brother and I celebrated our 10th birthday also known as our first ever birthday in the US. It was so festive, and many people who I didn't know came to celebrate. It was my first time eating cake and other foods such as pizza and burgers. That’s when it hit me; I realized that I was experiencing a lot of first times that made me realize that there is a lot more to experience in the world. I started to wonder why I worry so much all the time. Yes, I do miss my family and friends back home, especially my mom, but I have not lived with my dad, so I think there needs to be a balance between the two. I was slowly starting to embrace the situation. I started middle school the month after while learning English. It was a bit difficult to juggle school work and learn a new language at the same time, but after a year, I was practically fluent. I was thankful that I didn’t get held back for the language barrier. My brother and I were always the youngest in our class because we started school early back in Togo, but that didn’t stop us. Now, we graduated high school with honors and are going to college; it’s crazy how everything works out for the best. I was even able to go back this past summer to see my family and friends back home. Although I still miss them, I know that they are only a plane ticket away. Now, I am glad that I came to America and took advantage of the opportunities given to me, and I am learning to worry less and adjust to changes in life every day, step by step.

Memoir Reflection

The title of my memoir was “ Why Do I Worry So Much,” and it was about starting a new part of my life and moving from my home country in Africa to the United States. I described how I felt and dealt with the nostalgia and worry that came with it and how I adapted to this extreme change. In the past, I have never written a memoir before, so it was a bit challenging. I struggled more with the format of writing a memoir than choosing a topic to write about. It was difficult for me not to make it sound like a summary of an event in my life; rather a memoir is not just a personal event, but also what you have learned about the event. In the first few chapters that we read, the five elements of a rhetorical situation, which are text, author, audience, purpose, and setting were great guidelines in helping me figure out what elements are crucial to put in a memoir in general. After writing the memoir, I was very confident in the imagery that I have and my peers who have reviewed my writing would also agree as I have gotten great feedbacks from them. My main struggle, however, was which tense would be more useful for my memoir, which is why I used both past and present because I was confused. Now, I know to just pick one that sounds best according to what I am writing about in order to have a clear legible flow. Overall, most of my issues were grammatical such as using dashes incorrectly between two sentences. Writing a memoir is difficult if it is your first time, but I think it was convenient and beneficial to have it as my first writing assignment to apply what I have learned in my future writings.