

## THIRD PLACE

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A woman that has impacted my life has to go to my one and own mother. My mom is my best friend. She has taught me so much in the 14 short years of my life. This may sound cliché, but my mom is the reason why I work as hard as I do. She helps me strive for greatness and I cannot thank her enough.

Phali Chhun is my mother. She is originally from the country of Cambodia in Southeast Asia. She is 47 years of age and her birthday is December 8th. Phali has gone through so much throughout her life. When Phali was only 7 years old, she was escaping her home country for safety. One day when she was doing her daily chores, her family and her were told to leave their home because the communist group of Khmer Rouge was invading the town she lived in. They had only 5 minutes to say goodbye to their neighbors and to grab only precious items they wanted. To flee their country of communism, they had to walk to Thailand. Walking was the only option since they Khmer Rouge didn't care about their own people. They could not walk to Vietnam due to the war that was going on. They tried their hardest to not be known. They knew that if they were suspected or questioned by the Khmer soldier, they would all be executed. They all wanted to survive. They all deserved to survive.

After a few months of running and hiding, they finally reached Thailand. In Thailand, there was a refugee camp hosted by the United Nations. When my mom got there, she described it as "a chance for new beginnings". She tells me that walking and running all those miles was worth it. She was able to see her family after being separated from them almost 1 year. They were all able to get on a plane from the refugee camp to Washington D.C.

Once my mom and her family arrived in the U.S, they began to go to school. My mother graduated high school in Washington D.C but she never went to college. Phali doesn't remember the name of the school she attended since it was so long ago.

My mom has impacted my life tremendously. She has taught me how to love myself and how to cherish the life I live. She is the reason why I continue to do good in school. I don't want to see her struggle when she's older. She's been through so much that by just showing her how successful I can be with my education makes her giddy with joy.

Phali Chhun has influenced me to be different and to be unique. She's the reason why my heart is so big and why my admiration runs for miles. We argue like cats and dogs, but I wouldn't change anything. Phali Chhun is my mother and words will never describe the amount of love I have for her. I am proud and honored to have her as a mother and a woman who's impacted my life.