

Where I'm From Essay:

Canada is an incredibly diverse country made of diverse cultures, ethnicities, and backgrounds. Moving to a new land, in the hopes of being raised in a prosperous environment. This is the tale told by many immigrants in Canada, as well as the story that my father has lived. "I wouldn't say I had a choice when I moved to Canada." It involves the possibilities and the what ifs. These things constantly make me question if I would still exist had these events not occurred. It all started, during the axis occupation of the Philippines.

My Great-grandfather served with the Philippine scouts, an American platoon. It consisted of Guerilla fighters against the Japanese. His squadron was far away from places like Corregidor and Bataan, which many saw as their last stand before being sent on the Death March. This stroke of luck is what allowed my Great-Grandfather to meet a civil leader against the Japanese who was actively against the Japanese occupation. This civil leader was also the grandfather of my grandma. "That's how they collaborated to continue the fight against the Japanese during WWII." This allowed my grandparents to meet, and with the birth of my dad, creating a story that is both confusing, and entertaining. That is a tale for another day. My dad was told that

this place called Canada, in which several family members lived, would give him the chance to be more.

My dad arrived in the Great White North when he was seven (1982). His grandparents felt that he would be given opportunities not granted in the Philippines. It was not really something my father would be able to refuse, as even his parents believed that he would have a better life here. “I’d argue it didn’t really guarantee anything.” I occasionally feel the same way as my dad. When many immigrate, they are using it as an escape or the chance at a better life, (the case of my dad) yet many immigrants are not as successful as they would like. He wonders if he had stayed in the Philippines, if he would have become something greater than what he is in Canada. He feels that his choice was stripped away from him; the possibilities are endless. “To tell you the truth, I still feel I would’ve been a totally different person, but I’m still thankful for what I have.” My dad did not know anybody in Canada and had to learn a lot on his own. He did not have a father figure, living with his mom (biologically his grandma) “Learn it quick, if you can’t, move on.” These words are what got my dad through most of his life. He has always had this mindset, especially when raising my brothers and me.

Many years later, my dad would meet my mom in the Philippines. He was chasing a childhood sweetheart. This would not work out the way that he had hoped,

but you could say that it was for the better. I wonder if I would still be writing this piece had she been my mom? Would I still be here? My parents would get married in 2000, having kids in 2004, 2006 (me), and 2008. My dad wanted to be the father that he never had. That was a vow that he made to both himself and my mother. Due to my dad facing many challenges during his upbringing his ways of teaching could be considered harsh towards a five-year-old whether it was the shouting or punishments but looking back it was necessary. He was quick to get frustrated with us whenever he tried to teach us, yet he would always be there for us. Bawling my eyes out because I could not read Cat in the Hat, will forever be a core memory. Unlike my dad, I have never been one to give up with things that I am unable to do. If I am unable to do something, rather than move on I try my best to attain a result that I am satisfied with. Whether it takes me seconds, minutes, hours, or days. If I fall, I will just pick myself up and try again. Stubbornness is one of my defining traits. My Dad and I have always been close, resulting in me becoming a mini version of him. Yet I am still my own person, yet we share many traits and values that his upbringing certainly affected. So, I look back at the stories he tells, and there were many chance encounters which built my dad into who he is today, which then affected the way I am today.

Whether it was the raging war in the Pacific, the life altering decision my grandma made, the opportunities given to my father or his failed romance. All these things influenced my dad, whether it was major or minor. "Part of me wishes I grew up in the Philippines, but I have to be thankful for what I have." In doing so, they influenced who I am today to be better than my dad. Not in a competitive way, but to build upon the foundation in which he has built, to learn from his mistakes and do better in ways that he was unable to do.