

Advice

The greatest piece of advice I have ever received is from my parents. My parents raised my siblings and I to always fight fire with peace. While we had a very difficult time growing up as will be described, my parents always told us to fight back with kindness. For 16 years, I have lived in a small town in Southeast Texas, an area saturated with racist ideas, ones which have detrimentally affected my family. Ranging from racial slurs to vandalism to our house, it was and still is very difficult to cope. Nevertheless, my parents always stressed the importance of effort and viewed these petty crimes as trivial compared to their arduous journey as Syrian and Palestinian refugees. This “never-give-in” mindset is, thus, deeply rooted in me and pushed me over the proverbial precipice into the real world.

I was severely bullied for being an Arab Muslim throughout my middle school and high school years. I was berated with stereotypical insults relating to my background and compared to some of the most gruesome terrorists to dwell on this planet. Yet I never took these insults from my peers heavily until my first day of 7th grade in math class. Though I became accustomed to the actions perpetrated by my peers, what I did not foresee was the sheer complacency of my teacher. To add further insult to injury, she also treated me with contempt despite my best efforts in class. A pivotal moment that truly struck a chord in me was the day my teacher mockingly announced that my intelligence was not even on par with that of her infant daughter. Although the distress of such dejection wrought havoc on me internally, I refused to inform my parents, as I knew this was an issue, I needed to tackle head-on. As my teacher’s scorching remarks perpetually lingered on my mind, my aim to prove her wrong strengthened. I credit my Summa Cum Laude graduation from high school, my full-ride university scholarships, and my current endeavors to become a physician to moments like these experienced throughout my adolescent years. My success reminded me that I was able to succeed in this world and able to blossom when there appeared to be a drought around me.

These unique experiences instilled a drive in me to exceed the expectations imposed upon me. While it would have been easier to simply allow those around me to create a self-fulfilling prophecy, I knew this would have been a blatant disservice to the immense pain my parents endured to create the life and opportunities my siblings and I enjoy.