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THE AMERICAN DREAM

‘Ladies and gentlemen, we are now approaching Minnesota where the local time is 3:00 pm and the temperature is 18 degrees Celsius.’ The female voice in the background woke me up and I was in the United States of America. I come from Kenya, Africa and my whole life I have heard my people say you will find a home away from home and you will get used to it soon and everything will fall into place, and, above all, that is the best place you would ever want to be. It’s a golden opportunity and a ticket to the best life possible. I had to see this place and I was finally here. I do not disagree with them when they say it’s a ticket to the best life possible. I have found people and connected with people than I expected it, it’s my new normal to be away from home. I have had access to what I did not have access to like further and great education, but life can also take a turn and not be the best possible. I believe there is no better place than home, and nothing can replace your roots and where you come from. I also argue that moving abroad is not a great achievement as people say but being at your home and with your people is far better than anything else.

I looked at the clock and it was 8:00 pm and I sat at the edge of my one and only couch in the hushed embrace of my house and the hum of the refrigerator is all I could hear I zoned out and remembered my aunt saying, “You will be fine, and you will find home away from home.” My aunt’s voice receded as a gentle whoosh of air from the air conditioner from the corner of the room hit me and I was back from my memories. It was now almost 30 minutes later, and I had

lost track of time. I was alone and had no one to talk to. I could not call anybody from home since they were probably deep asleep and I could tell due to our time difference, and I craved to talk to someone, my family. This was not the first time I zoned out and had a feeling of sadness run through me. I would stay quiet for almost the whole day as I was too scared to talk to anyone and not assume I was a burden, or I was sharing unnecessary things that they were not interested in or rather did not care. I would tell my sister everything and since I could not reach her and if I did even through video calls the digital connection, like a delicate thread becomes hard due to network issues and the once smooth video feed stutters, freezing frames in a pixelated dance, distorting the familiar face of my sister on the screen into a mosaic of fragmented expressions. I'd rather see my family than have the silent sessions that I do not look forward to.

People I knew, friends and family were delighted once the news of me coming to America was known to them. A big party was held and instantly I became a role model and a mentor since I was coming to the United States of America. Some would say I was a guru all because of that. I was respected instantly, and everyone wished to be in my position. When I moved here ,I got a job in group home and I remember as I was standing in a room full of my coworkers at a work Christmas party where the families of my residents and my residents were present, I could not help but realize that something was up with me. I received curious glances that I could not help noticing. I could not tell if they were genuinely curious or genuinely interested in me as some gave back a smile and some looked away and whispered to their fellow people beside them causing them to all turn and stare at me. Oh! Some thoughts came to me, and I looked around. How could I not notice that I was the only black young female in a room full of white people. I was different. I did not have long, soft and straight hair in fact I had dark brown beads on my hair. Without jumping to conclusions, I wanted to try and believe they were looking at how

magnificently my short rough braided hair was. These were not stares I would receive at home or rather did receive. This was all new and letting that be a normal thing is something that I had to get used to. I hoped that the stares were about being the best in the room but that was not the case. If I receive stares and any attention, I want them to be of a good cause and not about being the different person in the room because of my skin.

New country, new culture, new people, new food, new relationships, new languages. I could not wait to experience all of this. I believed I would find it on my doorstep. I thought I would find it so much easier to experience all of this. That was not the case. I could not see people and by this, I mean I could not see who even stayed next door. We shouldn't live like this, even though everyone's busy trying to cope with life's struggles. No interaction, no visiting, no borrowing of anything and not even knowing the name is not something that should exist. Forget the name, not knowing what anyone looks like. What happened to love thy neighbor as thy self? Some will say it's better to keep to ourselves as it is a dangerous world and no one can be trusted but I emphasize on saying once you love and care and keep an eye on your neighbor as you would for yourself then such problems don't have to arise .Back at home, I would raise my neighbor's children and their children stayed at our place and if something ran out I did not have to do a quick run to the stores where I would end up wasting time and even getting unnecessary things. Nowadays, if I wave my hand to a neighbor, I seem suspicious, and I'm left wondering how we got here. I suggest we stop this. It's something Western culture should learn from Africans and other cultures—a wonderful experience: a healthy relationship with neighbors.

To my younger self I would say to Focus on the good. When you see the good in everything, it's hard to notice the darker side. Life becomes more fulfilling and energetic without a negative attitude. Looking at the brighter side and what my home country would not make me move away

from home. I would also have myself believe that everything does not look as what they seem to look like. Not all that shines is gold. Staying home, where you come from, is undeniably the best thing anyone could ask for. Being with your family and creating memories with people who understand you and love you for who you are is also incomparable. And as I go back and remember my first day which is vividly still lingering in my mind, I stepped off the plane, the chilly Minnesota air hit me, and I couldn't control my teeth clattering—turns out, my American adventure became cooler than I expected it.