

Khalid Alreqabi

Studying abroad is one of the greatest experiences of my life; everyone should have the courage to go abroad. My father encouraged me to earn a bachelor's degree outside our country, and he gave me the permission to choose any country I wanted. I was thinking, "What is the best city I should choose?". That night, I was watching Scarface, and I imagined myself in the movie between those girls and lying on South Beach. I went to my father and told him I wanted to go to Miami, Florida. My father said "I wish you would go to Cambridge where Harvard is". I laughed, and I said "No way, I think it is better in Miami, FL". My father looked at me as if I insulted him "Are you serious?". I mumbled under my breath, "Yes, father." Before leaving the room, he said "Forget about studying abroad in the United States since you want to play rather than study. I think it was my fault to encourage you to study abroad". I was shocked and angry because he changed his mind about supporting me to study abroad. I did not give up I talked with him many times in order to convince him. Eventually, with insistence, my father agreed.

In King Khalid Airport, I was very excited to go to Miami, FL. I felt like I was the first person in the world going to Miami, FL. My father and my mother were with me at the airport to say goodbye. They were so sad that I was leaving them for a long time. For me it was the total opposite; I was excited and anxious to leave. "Travelers must go to the gate I heard the airport announcer say". It was the moment to say goodbye to my family, it was the first time I saw my father cry, and my heart was beating strongly. I was ready for every thing except this situation. In my mind, I thought "What is happening to me? I

should be strong. Do not be weak”. I could not cry In front of them; I felt shy. On my way to the gate, I could not stop my tears from falling.

My first step in U.S territory was in Miami International Airport. I was eager to see Miami. I was in immigration to let them check my I-20. “ What is your name my friend?” Immigration employee asked. “My name is Khalid Alreqabi” I said. “What are you doing here?” he asked. “ Study abroad” I answered. “Why you do not study in your country?” he said. At that moment, I was afraid because I did not speak English very well, and his question was sensitive to me. “I do not speak English very good” I said. “Okay, you have to sit on this chair until I call your name” he said. I was overthinking the situation. I thought they might send me to prison because I am from Saudi Arabia. Joys flipped to fear. I was asking myself, “who could help me if something happened to me?” worse comes to worse. The Immigration employees called my name. Immigration employee was smiling and he said, “Mr. Khalid, you are free to go”, I felt comfortable after his words.

It was time to go out of the airport and let my dream come true. I took a taxi and I was on my way to go to my home. I tried to speak with the driver, but he speaks just Spanish just Spanish. I was wondering how he had a job in the United States when he could not speak English. While the taxi was driving on the road, I was shocked and surprised by Miami in a negative way. It was not the Miami like from the movie. It was different. I felt bad that I made a bad decision to come to this city.

We got to the neighborhood where my home was located.“ No Way” I said. “ What is the wrong, bro?” The driver asked. “ Is this the area where my home is located?” I asked him. “ Yes, this is Miami shores, but we call it Miami Shoes since it has no

shores.” After his words, I wanted someone to slap me to wake me up from this horrible dream.

I arrived at my house. Jeff was an old man who had the responsibility to take care of me in the United States. In fact, he mentored me like I was his own son, and I needed someone to help me get through this situation. Jeff has no family, but he was cooking, doing laundry, and cleaning his house. I was shocked since my father never enters a kitchen or cooks. Jeff respected my religion. When it was the time to pray, he stopped talking or speaking with anyone on the phone. He did not eat pork and drink alcohol in his house. One day, he invited his neighbor and his neighbor’s son to eat dinner with us. When I saw Jeff’s neighbor at the dinner table while we were eating, I remembered my family. That night I felt lonely. I missed my family. I wished to be with them having dinner and laughing like Jeff’s neighbor. I slept that night with a broken heart. Jeff noticed that I was not okay, and there was something wrong with me. “Khalid, are you okay?” Jeff said. “ I am fine, Jeff” I said. “ No, you are not, Khalid, you sound so gloomy to me” Jeff said. “ I feel disappointed, I miss my family” I admitted. He told me to remember that my family paid for me to reach for the stars and I had to move forward without any barriers. He said “What you face right now is one of the barriers and you should pass this barrier.” He convinced me with his words that he was actually my father.

In the end, studying abroad has taught me a lot about: patience, responsibility, and pure heart. I thought America would be like in the movie just having fun and going to nightclubs. In my opinion, there is no culture in America. Each home has their own culture. Back home if you do not speak Arabic, career opportunities will become weak. In America if I do not speak English, I will not be in danger. No one cares where you are

from or what language you speak. They respect you if you respect them. Everyone is helpful when you need help. Do not say that I am alone; everyone is next to me.