

**March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

**2020 Recipient**

**Displaced Women's Stewardship Essay**

Over the course of my childhood, I was constantly told that education will be my pathway to success. I think that this had much to do with the fact that I was a refugee, and my parents were excited by the opportunities that I would have in the future. Due to my environment and my own desire to learn, I always invested my all into my education. I started attending the University of Utah right after I graduated from high school. Immediately, I was hit with my reality. I did not come from a wealthy family, but rather a displaced family and I knew that funds would be a constant concern over the course of my studies. Therefore, I worked all throughout my undergrad and funded my own education along with the help of some scholarships, including the Women of the World's Displaced Women's Scholarship. I received the scholarship in my last semester at the University of Utah and it proved to be vital in allowing me to complete my final semester and earn my degrees. With the help of this scholarship and the Women of the World, I was able to graduate in three years, complete an incredible internship at the International Rescue Committee and start my career at a local nonprofit by the name of Utah Health Policy Project.

I often think about how this scholarship allowed me to acquire a BS in Political Science and Gender Studies within my three-year goal. I was eager to finish my undergraduate studies and start working so that I could provide for myself and help my mother out. I went into the University of Utah with this goal in mind but was unsure if it was possible due to events that occurred in my second to last semester. My mother had a kidney transplant, and I took on the responsibility of caring for her as she recovered. This meant that I needed to be home with her 24 hours a day, 7 days a week over the duration of 2 months. Therefore, I was unable to continue working and needed to quit my job. I lived off my savings for a while and when my last semester came around, I was struggling to come up with the money for my tuition. Before I received this scholarship, I thought that I would not achieve my three-year goal.

In my last semester, I completed an internship at the International Rescue Committee. I was an intern for the Spice Kitchen Incubator Program. The program would assist refugees and displaced individuals with starting their own food businesses. In this position I was able to help a

lot of displaced women that were also business owners. I would assist in empowering them and helping them navigate the complexities of starting your own business, essentially breaking down the barriers that lie between displaced women and their ability to be economically and financially self-sufficient. We would help displaced women share their knowledge and skills through the establishment of their food business, each with a unique and beautiful past that brought them to this point.

After graduating from the University of Utah, I got a job as Health Access Assister at a local nonprofit called Utah Health Policy Project. As a Health Access Assister, I would help people in the community acquire health insurance such as, Medicaid or Obamacare. There are various barriers in place that prevent displaced women and disadvantaged communities from receiving the health benefits and assistance that they need. In my position, I was able to learn how social welfare programs work in the state of Utah and developed key skills to working with underprivileged communities and working towards educating them so that they can be self-sufficient. This was the first fulltime career job I ever had and the first time I felt a sense of financial security in my life. I was finally earning a comfortable wage and I was so happy because I felt that all I had worked for was paying off, however it could not have been done without this scholarship.

As of recently, I got a promotion at and I am now a Community Outreach and Enrollment Organizer. In my new role I oversee relationships between our organization and our partner organizations. I ensure we are upholding our end of contracts and agreements so that we are best serving our partners and clients in the community. I also do outreach work in the community to develop new relationships between our organization and others in the community. I am tasked with extending our reach so that we can continuously assist various minority communities in the state of Utah. I am currently strategizing ways that I can increase our exposure in the displaced and refugee communities. We already help displaced and mixed status families, along with refugees from various countries such as Iraq, Iran, Burundi, South Sudan and many more. I feel that this scholarship allowed me to achieve my educational goals so that I could move on to making a difference in my community. In the past year, I have acquired hands on experience and seen the impact of my work on members of my community.

Overall, the Displaced Women's Scholarship has made a significant impact on my life. I have been able to achieve my goals and pay it forward within my community, including to displaced women, like myself, within the community. The entirety of my college experience was a constant back and forth of stressing about my financial state and my studies, this scholarship helped relieve some of that stress so that I could successfully complete my last semester. I am extremely grateful that I was chosen as a recipient and it increased my desire to pay it forward so that another woman like me could achieve her goals and hopefully, I could lend her a helping hand through the process. I can proudly say that in the last year I have made a difference and I will continue to do for the rest of my career.