

Hinkley Senior Turns Adversities into Aspirations

Hinkley High School senior Mandarina “Yassy” Mohamed understands the importance of maintaining a positive attitude in the face of uncertainty. Less than two years ago, life as she knew it became a distant memory when she took her first step onto U.S. soil as a refugee.

Not knowing a single word in English—not even how to say hello—Yassy, her parents, two brothers and eight sisters braved the challenge of assimilating to American culture. Their pursuit of peace began many years ago when they escaped their war-torn native land of Oromia to seek a safe haven in Somalia. Unfortunately, Somalia also proved to be dangerous, so they sacrificed stability once more, placing their hope in Kenya, where Yassy spent most of her years.

“Every morning and every night, people were murdered and girls were raped,” she shared. “My parents have endured so much to provide us a better life and give us freedom. I just want to pay them back for everything they’ve done and become a doctor to help people across the world who are suffering.”



Yassy assists students in class.

A Bright Future Ahead

To jumpstart accomplishing her dreams, Yassy became fluent in English, adding to the seven other languages she has mastered, and enrolled in the Aurora LIGHTS program to prepare for medical school. She also serves Hinkley as an international ambassador who tutors, translates for and guides students as they learn new customs.



Elena Oserow and Yassy

Yassy attributes her growth to Hinkley students and staff who she says embraced her in such a warm and welcoming way that they made the school feel like home. She now considers them family and regards her science teacher, Elena Oserow, as a mother figure.

“Mrs. Oserow never gets tired of helping me, even after school,” Yassy expressed. “She counsels me on personal matters and always reminds me to never give up. She makes me so happy because I feel safe when I’m around her. She’s like a friend, a sister and a mother to me, but what’s special is that she cares deeply about every student.”

With medical school on the horizon, Yassy states, “I want Mrs. Oserow to be right by my side the day that I become a doctor.”

Know a compelling APS student story? Share with us!
www.communication.aurorak12.org/newsroom/submit-good-news

