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The Open Arms

"Mrs. ENNAJAH, your application has been accepted." These words, spoken by officials at the U.S. embassy at Casablanca Morocco, literally changed my life. I was born in Rabat Morocco, and three years ago my single mother decided to sacrifice everything she had and immigrated to America, hoping for a better future for her three children. I was the only one who went to school, while my siblings had to work to support the family. While in high school, I have had some truly inspiring experiences that made me feel there is hope if you are willing to endure hard work. The most recent of these experiences was the job shadowing at AT&T.

While shadowing at AT&T, I felt so welcomed and cared for. Everything was organized, and this first impression showed me how dedicated and organized these people are. Next we enjoyed a perfect introduction about AT&T. The speaker with his charisma, and great talent at public speaking, made us all imagine what other great experiences we were going to encounter during the day.

Miss Mercedes, who was the AT&T employee volunteer, was one of the nicest people I have ever met. Ironically she herself immigrated to this country when she was a teenager; so I immediately felt a connection. She was extremely helpful, explaining to us every aspect of her job which, was actually the first time I was exposed to the experiences of working in the real world. She also spoke about education, how when she was in college, she had a full time job but was dedicated and focus on her schoolwork. I also observed the culture of the company. Everybody was addressed by their first name, they felt at home while on the job because everybody knows each other, and they enjoyed working with each other, which made me think about what kind of environment I want to spend my time working in.

On the way back home, I started reading the first pages of *Obstacles Welcome* (by Ralph de la Vega). Somehow I felt as if I was reading my own story.

The author emphasized faith in a better future and a good vision: "everyone needs a personal vision", he wisely noted that life will be difficult sometimes. At first, life in the U.S. was the worst experience of my entire life. My first three months in the United States were the worst three months of my entire life. No friends, no family, living in a 90 degree attic, and I didn't know the English language. But nevertheless, I had faith; faith that one day life would get better, that I would learn English, and that I would make good friends. I believed that one day I would look back and I would say "YES LIFE DID GET BETTER." It has now been three years that I have lived in the U.S. I am an honors student, a member of my school's National Honor Society, and on top of it all I will always use my struggles and the values that my family has bestowed upon me to be a better person, not only for my personal reasons, but for both countries, my family, my culture and my society.

The author's words are so true: "Courageous decisions and the willingness to sacrifice provide an enabling force to overcome the most difficult of obstacles." You must realize no one's perfect, no one's a natural genius-embrace obstacles when you're not sure of the outcome. My mother risked a high-class status, excellent paying job, family, friends and everything that she knew, for the hope of a better life and future in America. "...all that I believe today about how to make the most out of life traces back to that event, and to the month."

I know that success does not come easily "...If you dream big, there will be people who doubt you can make the dream happen...or resent you for shooting so high." However I am lucky enough to have a family and teachers who have helped me to reach my potential. As I put the book down, I looked out the window of the bus, and I felt tears of joy gathering in my eyes knowing that this ten year old boy made it through all of the obstacles he faced, and right there and then I promised myself that I WILL MAKE IT.