

Rodiayh's story

...in her own words

“ My ancestors recounted they came to Somalia in boats. They were the minority group and were not recognized as Somali residents or Somali citizens. My father and mother grew up in this fertile land as a farmer. Cultivating the land was the only job for our people.



When the war broke out in Somalia, the minority tribes were the weak and powerless group. Their men were killed, their women were captured, and their children were raped or displaced. What could these tribes do other than to leave the homeland, loaded with the scars of war not erased by time?

My parents were among the displaced who fled by boat to Yemen. My parents left to Yemen with three children: two were their children and the third one was my cousin whose father was killed and whose mother was captured. And so, my parents were the only family in his life.

It was here in Sana in Yemen that I was born in 1995. And then I had another 2 brothers younger than me so all of us are 6 kids and my parents now living in Yemen.

I love Yemen a lot and I loved my neighbours. I love my childhood even though it was really hard. My Dad went back to Somalia because his mother was sick. Our life become harder without him. I had to leave school and start work with my mum in a restaurant. Life was getting much harder and then the war started there so we left for Indonesia. For a while, we live in Jakarta where we cannot work or study. It was like our minds were in a prison: we were bound and could not grow and think. We lived in Indonesia for three years, hoping to reach a new city to start the first pages of our new life.

So, we decided as a family unit to travel by boat to Australia: like our grandparents before us. I came to Sydney when I was 18 years old and I went to study in Bankstown senior college.

It was hard for me because I hadn't studied for so long, and the language was also hard. I couldn't make friends because most of my life since I was child, my life was not always stable. I did not know how to make friends. And I wasn't coming to school on time or everyday – even though I loved to be educated.

please turn over...

I used to love writing stories, and there was a teacher at college who loved my writing, so she suggested to me that she would bring someone who can help me in my study and join me in coming to school.

This is where I met Ms Chris from Mercy Connect. Ms Chris was the one who restored in me hope and confidence in what I write. She was to me like a sister, a closest friend and she still is.



Because she supported me, I began to love school and I could also make friendships and those friends stayed with me until my current day – all because of Ms Chris. Because of her help, I came First in Class in English study and exploring early childhood. I won first in story Competition in Years 10, 11, 12.

With Ms Chris helping me, I had the best three years of school that will not be erased from my memory for the rest of my life. She helped me in my Graduation Project. It was lovely work I did with her and now even though I have finished school, she is still with me as my 'life guardian'. She guarantees my practical and emotional life. She is always here next me when I need her.

I love her and want to be Australian like her. At the end, I want say Australia is the land I feel strongly I belong to it. And it's a land of people who have big hearts, humanity and love for others. I hope to God that every refugee coming to Australia will find a loving person like Ms Chris. **”**

“Rodiayh's strength of character and warmth, her creativity and loyalty to friends and amongst the many reasons why I love this young woman.”

**Christine (Ms Chris)
Rodiayh's Mercy Connect mentor**



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