What does it feel like to be a first-generation immigrant?

Here in North America, we have first generation immigrants living all around us and are an integral part of our society. But things are happening behind closed doors that one might not notice but affect their lives drastically. So, **what might it feel like to be a first-generation immigrant?**  In the Netflix comedy show *Homecoming King,* the performer Hasan Minhaj, describes what it is like to be a first-generation Indo-American Muslim immigrant in California USA. The Netflix sitcom *Kim’s Convenience* premiered in 2016. It stars two groups of Korean-Canadians and shows their experiences in the perspective of a first-generation immigrant in 2016 Toronto. **Similarly**, both *Homecoming King* and *Kim’s Convenience* help shine light as to what it feels like to be a first-generation immigrant. Both sources hint at the exclusion and language barriers; **However**, one can see how Homecoming King shows what kind of effect racism had on Hasan Minhaj and what he did to overcome it. **Meanwhile,** in *Kim’s convenience* the show tries to display how their cultural differences make their lives different than the other ones around them. **Ultimately**, one can see how being a first-generation immigrant may cause some to feel excluded and face a harder time then the others around them, however, some may choose to act in order to reduce these effects.

**Similarly**, both sources show the language barriers that the characters face throughout the course of the episode. In *Kim’s convenience* there is a scene where Mr. Kim has to communicate with someone from an egg production company. He tries to order 12 packages of a dozen eggs, but he just can’t seem to communicate properly with the supplier saying things like: “Look, if I only want 12 egg, I say “dozen. If I want 12-dozen egg, I say ‘12 egg.’” This ends up confusing the supplier, and he ends up being unsure as to what he is asking for. The process of buying something simple like eggs turns into such a hassle. *Homecoming king* shows this in a similar way to *Kim’s convenience* but on a more personal level. During Hassan’s childhood, his parents were separated as one was studying in India while one was with him in America. As well as this, his mother became pregnant in India and when she came back, she came back with Hassan’s new sister that is old enough to speak already. The unfortunate thing for Hassan is that she only speaks Hindi. This made her experiences with school, her friends and her brother a lot more difficult than it should have been. Hassan got to such a point of frustration with her that he exclaimed “You aren’t my sister!” (Homecoming king) out of anger. Siblings that could have had such an easy and happy childhood together ended up being a lot harder than those whose family have been speaking the native language for a while. They were siblings but the fact that one of them immigrated during a later period in their lifetime compared to the other one, communication and understanding of one other became difficult. This evidence proves both sources show difficulties in their life can come from language barriers as a result of being a first-generation immigrant.

**However**, *Homecoming king* shows what it’s like to be a first-generation immigrant in a different way than *Kim’s convenience.* Hasan Minhaj has multiple encounters with racism and bigotry in his life, and many of these encounters leave him feeling scared and affect the rest of his life. Hasan describes these experiences to the audience: While attending school, 9/11 happened. This incident sparked many different reactions from the American public. Primarily, emotions were fear and hatred, and a lot of those emotions were directed to the Muslim community. During the day, he and his family got a phone call right after 9/11 happened. On the line, a very angry voice appeared and the person on the phone threatened them to say they would find them and kill them. They asked multiple times “Where’s Osama?” *(Homecoming king)* inferring that since he is a Muslim he has to know where he is or who he is. After this happened, him and his family were scared for weeks to come. Someone had threatened their life for something they didn’t do. During another part of his presentation, he mentions a time when he planned to go to prom with a girl in his senior year of high school. The night of, he comes to pick her up at her house, but her mother comes to the door letting him know she changed prom partners. She only changed prom partners so the photos she would take that night would “look good” for her family from another part of the country. The only reason she decided not to go with him was because of his race; she knew the family in another state would think it’s weird if their granddaughter goes out with a Muslim. **Therefore**, this event proves to answer the question as he develops a hatred and grudge for her throughout the years. It left him humiliated. Racism played a huge role in the development of Hasan’s childhood and even his adulthood.

**In comparison***, Kim’s convenience* describes what It feels like to be a first-generation immigrant by showing what kind of conflicts they face with other cultures in Canada and their cultural differences in English-speaking regions in a different way then. The show has specific examples of this; One of those examples happens near the beginning of an episode when the Korean store manager sees a car parked outside in an illegal parking spot. Usually, he does not bother to do anything about it because it does not affect him and it’s too much of a hassle. But looking outside he thinks the car is a Toyota. Upon seeing that it’s a Toyota he immediately calls the police because “it’s a Japanese car” company. Once he realizes it is not a Toyota he decides to hang up the call and forget about towing the truck. This indicates that there is a clash between cultures and it influences his ideas and thoughts just because of a person’s heritage or in this case, even a car. During another part of the sitcom, two Korean friends are working their 9-5 shift at work and one of them pulls a prank on another which in Korea is called a “Dong chim” and get into an argument because of it. The other coworkers mistake this as some kind of sexual harassment and they have an entire work meeting because of it. The guys get really frustrated explaining it and it almost becomes a problem that they have to send to head office. If they were not first-generation immigrants, they would not have had to go through the confusion of the majority not understanding. This evidence proves that cultural difference plays a role in being a first-generation immigrant. It’s something they all live with.

**In the end,** *Homecoming king* and *Kim’s convenience* show an equal representation as to what it feels like to be a first-generation immigrant. They both show that there are problems that have to do with exclusion, cultural differences and language barriers that are the result of being a first-generation immigrant. *Homecoming king* has a better way of representing the effect racism had on him, and what steps he decided to take throughout his life to heal. But *Kim’s convenience* takes on stereotypes more than other potential issues and how even in a diverse environment, minority cultures still don’t get along from time to time. In the end, both do a fantastic job of portraying what it feels like to be a first-generation immigrant, even though some sources might show it differently than others and all of these have been proven to be the result of a first-generation immigrant. In the end, society should be thoughtful and show them that they deserve no less than any of the rest of the majority.

**Minhaj, Hasan. “Homecoming King.” 2017, Davis, California, USA**

**Choi, Ins. *Kim's Convenience,* Season 1, episode 3, 18 Oct. 2018.**