Rahmo Abdi and Hanan Gumale
TRIO

Rahmo Abdi and Hanan Gumale met at South Seattle College. They are friends and TRiO peer mentors who will graduate with their Associate of Arts Degree this summer.

Rahmo (pictured on the right) and Hanan are immigrants who came to the United States in their youth. Although neither has lived in Somalia, both of their families share the traditions of the Somali culture which, like many other cultures, prioritizes education for males. Girls are valued for their worth as brides, mothers, and caretakers. Rahmo and Hanan defied the pressure to marry young and have stubbornly persisted in their pursuit of education.

For Rahmo, the love of learning began in her kindergarten class in the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. In school, she was introduced to singing and art which were joyful relief from the camp environment and her stepmother's harsh treatment. After her father's death, Rahmo was raised by her stepmother who clearly favored her half-siblings. "I loved learning from the beginning," she recalls. But as she grew older, her stepmother put up roadblocks to success at school, refusing to pay for her textbooks and demanding that she take on more and more household chores. Eventually, she demanded that Rahmo drop out of school after eighth grade. However, Rahmo studied in secret using her friends' school materials. Eventually, her uncle intervened and Rahmo was allowed to return to school. Moving to the United States renewed Rahmo's hope to complete high school. The Running Start program sparked the dream of a college education. Rahmo plans to earn her Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing. She lives on her own and supports herself by working as a Certified Nursing Assistant.

Hanan has five younger brothers and two loving parents. She is a vivacious and joyful individual who describes herself as "prideful and confident" thanks to her family. Hanan started school in the fourth grade. Newly arrived in the United States, she did not know English or even how to hold a pencil. She remembers being the only dark-skinned student in the suburban elementary school and when her English improved, understood the kids telling each other how her dark skin would give them "cooties" if they touched her during tag. It was a tough time, but Hanan's inner strength carried her through.

Hanan had to take two years off from high school to help her mother at home following the birth of one and then another younger brother. She could easily have dropped out of school. Instead, she took summer classes and pushed herself to catch up, graduating on time! This accomplishment was the proof that Hanan needed to realize her ability and to pursue a college degree. She plans to major in Human Centered Design and Engineering at the University of Washington. She is particularly proud of having completed College Calculus; "I never thought of myself as a thinker or as a math person before," she laughs.

Clearly, Hanan and Rahmo are only beginning to realize their remarkable potentials.

TRIO

As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.

TRIO Projects

The Federal TRIO Programs (TRIO) are Federal outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. TRIO includes eight programs targeted to serve and assist low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to postbaccalaureate programs. TRIO also includes a training program for directors and staff of TRIO projects.

The recipients of the grants, depending on the specific program, are institutions of higher education, public and private agencies and organizations including community-based organizations with experience in serving disadvantaged youth and secondary schools. Combinations of such institutions, agencies, and organizations may also apply for grants. These entities plan, develop and carry out the services for students. While individual students are served by these entities, they may not apply for grants under these programs. Additionally, in order to be served by one of these programs, a student must be eligible to receive services and be accepted into a funded project that serves the institution or school that student is attending or the area in which the student lives.

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