

Immigrating at seven years old in 2009 with my working-class parents from Egypt to Brooklyn, I remember learning English by staying in front of the T.V. and repeating everything Dora The Explora or Sofia the First said. Later, going to daycare or Pre-K for free was only a possibility because my mom took a desk job nearby. My dad, as a taxi driver, would wake up at 3 am and come back at 5 pm, sometimes much later. As the oldest child, I began to understand that being a first-generation, low-income immigrant wasn't something everyone had to deal with. I was quick to learn about my family's economic status. I had the responsibility to go through life as the first, known as the "trial child" "the trailblazer" in order for my younger brother to have an easier transition through educational institutions..

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Immigrating at seven years old in 2009 with my working-class parents from Egypt to Brooklyn, it felt alienating when my mom would only bring us to a white doctor in the neighborhood who we barely understood. Even though we lived in a predominantly low-income SWANA (Southwest-Asian-and-North-African) and Latino community in Bay Ridge, we didn't see people like us in professional positions. We often didn't know who or where to go for help.

I remember as a child going to my physician, getting on the scale, and holding my breath each time. I anticipated the preceding conversation about how I needed to lose weight or that I needed to eat healthier food. But with my family not being able to afford much – needing to borrow clothes from the local church, eating canned foods, bringing home extra lunch from my elementary and middle school for my brother and me, or even running neighborhood errands for extra cash – it felt like my physician never understood what we were going through. I was quick to learn how diabetes, high blood pressure, hypertension, and obesity become prevalent in lower-income households. How the presence of bodegas instead of Whole Foods creates a food desert or how your zipcode decides your life expectancy.

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Hi! My name is Youssef El Mosalami (they/them) and this is my story. Mentioned above are the two different ways some of my environments at the beginning of my life shaped my lived experiences. From then I grew into recognizing my queer, non-binary and Muslim identities. The amalgamation of all these identities and backgrounds has made me excited to study Gender and Women's Studies and Middle Eastern Studies on the pre-med track as a second year at Pomona College. I'm passionate about health disparities and marginalized health care for refugees, queer, immigrants, latine, SouthWestAsianNorthAfrican(SWANA), and low-income communities.

Currently, at Pomona College, I'm a coordinator for Leadership and Engagement in Gender and Sexuality (LEGS) where we mentor local first-generation low-income black and latine queer high school students, a volunteer at Project Sunshine playing with pediatric patients virtually at hospital around the world, and community leader for aid organizing and abolition work. Additionally, I'm a Mellon Mays Fellow, a pre-PhD fellowship, from my work in Trans Asylas to support trans peoples in SWANA nations to write a research paper discussing Queer SWANA People's Past, Present, and Future to discuss the ways SWANA people have formed radical community care and how the Story of Lut, the history of Islamic intervention in Egypt, and European colonization impacted the views and actions taken towards queer people?

For more of my artistic side, I've played Castaño in House of Desires and the Playwright in The Last, Best Small Town through the Theater Department. I perform as a Bass in Ninth Street Hooligan A Capella Group, an actor in Without a Box Improv Group, and Ballroom Dancer in Claremont Ballroom Dance Company. Through my college experiences, I hope to become a better physician, advocate, community leader and a more socially present person :D <3. Thank youuu!!