

Kass Morrow

I am not genetically Irish, which is a topic hotly debated between myself and one of my closest friends, who is extremely Irish. While I am not biologically Irish, although I may be slightly through my father's side, I still strongly identify as Irish, through my mom, who was adopted into a very Irish family. My grandma and grandpa were both very Irish, and through them, my mother, as well as my brother and I, adopted Irish culture. I feel connected to both of my maternal grandparents in so many ways, but particularly for my grandfather who I was never able to meet, our shared Irish heritage, which I gained through him, has been one of the strongest ways that I have been able to connect to him. I have been able to feel like I know him just a little bit more through laughing at the jokes that he would tell, and the stories my mom tells about the day she came home, which was St. Patrick's Day. My Irish Heritage, although not genetic as my friend would point out, has helped me remain connected to my grandparents. I also identify as German and Norwegian, two aspects of my heritage that I also gained through my mom. Although I was never able to meet my mother's biological mother, I have been able to connect to my mom's family on that side through learning about my German culture and heritage. I vividly remember learning how to make schnitzel and spaetzle in Germany, which not only helped me connect to my family there, but also helped me feel connected to my mom's bio mother. I have also been able to connect to my family in Norway, including my mom's biological father and brother, through learning about Norway and my Norwegian culture and heritage. I was able to find a whole part of myself through my family, and in turn, I was able to connect more with my family through learning about my Norwegian culture and heritage. I remember bonding with my uncle while fishing for mackerel, connecting with my grandfather on boat rides and tours around the town that he grew up in, helped to shape so much, and takes so much pride in. Through learning about Norwegian culture and the environment, I have been able to feel so connected to my family, and it is a link that I share with both my Norwegian and German family all the time, even when we are thousands of miles apart.

Immigrant struggle is a concept that has so many different meanings and connections, whether in this time or in history. Our country is undeniably what it is today because of the marks of immigrants,

whether those from Britain who came in search of religious freedom, those from Ireland in search of better life, or those from Asia also searching for a new life in the land of opportunities. Today, I most greatly see the immigrant struggle through the horrific treatment and challenges endured by those seeking safety and refuge. Whether on the Greek Migrant boat that recently capsized, killing hundreds, or at our own borders, as people in search of better life in their neighboring country are turned away due to racist stereotypes and assumptions. To me, the immigrant struggle is one fueled by hope, and often desperation, to be able to provide for your loved ones, or merely to survive. This hope, however, is not the struggle alone. The immigrant struggle is also marked by the pain and suffering that individuals may endure saying goodbye to a place they may have known for their entire lives, and potentially leaving family that they will not be able to connect with again. The immigrant struggle is marked by the rejection that immigrants face, as people tell them to “go back to where they came from,” and mark them as “aliens” on a planet they have called their own for all their lives. The immigrant struggle is one of great risk but hopefully great reward. To me, the concept of immigrant struggle is the enduring courage of individuals met with so many challenges, who still carry hope and endure at the possibility of a brighter future.