

Western Region Essay Winner

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Monkey see, monkey do. Actions speak louder than words. One may lecture until they're blue in the face, but if they don't have the actions to support their claims, their words are essentially pointless.

I have not demonstrated leadership through the speeches I've made or how I've been able to talk to a crowd. Instead, I lead by example. My local Kurdish and Muslim community is relatively small. We're the first generation of Kurds to enter and grow up in America. Though reluctant to admit to it, we're a vulnerable group of people. Foreign to the customs of America, it's easy to be consumed by what we're strangers to and forget our roots. Though it is important to embrace this culture, we must know where we came from before we know where we can go.

Because I'm one of the older Kurdish girls, I've assumed the role of being a role model for the younger generations. I tutor several of them after school and am blessed to have them come to me for advice when facing a problem. My ability to manage my college-level classes, responsibilities at home, and part-time job serves as a standard at which they can all reach and exceed. By helping these girls, I'm making sure that they haven't forgotten why their parents came to America in the first place—to provide a better life for their children. I'm helping better the Kurdish community by making sure these girls help others and furthering their education. By teaching them to become leaders, it will in turn help the community of Harrisonburg.

Like Nannie Mae Berger Hairston once said, "I learned long ago that to make it a better world, it had to begin with me." I take this to mean that to become a leader, I must first lead by example. I must practice before I preach and show that my actions reflect my intentions and beliefs. When the monkey sees and understands, then he will do.