

**Halima Khan**

**Undergraduate Honorable Mention**

### **CROSSING BORDERS**

*“Speak a new language,*

*So that the world will be a new world “- Rumi*

I still remember when I was coming to America; I never thought my experience would change me as a whole. My experience at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte has redefined my perception of the world and the people therein. This is coupled with the beliefs and imaginations that I held before crossing borders from Pakistan to the U.S and the expectations of my stay in a foreign land. However, I give much credit to my parents and mentors from early years who taught me the virtue of embracing diversity and change. As a young girl I was always intrigued by other cultures and ethnicities as well. My life here has improved my understanding and appreciation of the diverse cultures practised by people all over the world.

Prior to joining UNCC, I have to admit I had fears and doubts about foreign institutions and students but this changed because I realised that I was never alone. I could see the differences between me and other students based on their appearances, the face, the language spoken and skin colour among other features. Despite the physical and identifiable differences, my American experience has made me believe that we remain the same regardless of the physical differences. This is because I undergo a similar experience with other students, thus, the reason I say that the differences are minimal if any. For instance, I sometimes feel lonely and

miss my home and the people back at home. This is a universal experience because the friends I have made in this school have confessed that home is always best. I have also realised that the difficulties I face in my life are similar to what my friends go through in their lives as well, here in America. The media has our minds so brainwashed that I would've never thought, that despite our physical differences and religions backgrounds we would feel exactly the same emotions.

Another impact of my experience is widening the scope of my friendships with people from other parts of the world. The differences I early addressed do not affect my association and appreciation of my friends. I have realised that all our engagements are in a cordial and friendly manner and not like strangers whatsoever. I strongly believe that despite the physical borders that we all crossed to reach this University and America; we in fact had to cross borders within our hearts.

After coming to the states I have realised that just "crossing borders" physically is not enough to enable me to gain much insight and experience in America. This is because; I may find it difficult to learn from others if am not ready to embrace other people, their cultures or ethnicities notwithstanding. That is the reason I count myself lucky because I found it easy to associate with other students and make many friends and accept everyone.

My Pakistan origin is however not without challenges. It is difficult to dispel the stereotypes in some students where our country is associated with the terrorism and illegal sects like the al-Qaida and the Taliban. I have however grown to live above this because my American experience has taught me to appreciate my roots and impact a change back home. My experience above all has taught me the things I share with other people, and the fact that it is through such travel that am able to know the common features between other cultures and my native culture. I

have come to conclusion through my ideal experience, that we all speak the same language when spoken through the heart; We all need to cross the borders with in our hearts, and once we allow our hearts to speak we will most definitely see a new world of understanding and love.