

## **Rasila Soumana Hama – A look into her past**

The University of Arkansas Fort Smith is a very diverse university. It has students from a variety of places. Rasila Soumana Hama is one student who attended UAFS that was far away from home. Rasila arrived in Fort Smith in October of 2010 from **Niamey, Niger**. She first went through ELS for three months to further her English skills. The program assigned her a host family that helped give her a glimpse of American culture. Due to her mother choosing the University of Arkansas – Fort Smith for her, Rasila was **pleasantly surprised** about how much she liked it.

In the spring of 2011, Rasila started her college career at Fort Smith, with her declared major as Biology. During her four years here, she became very **active on campus**. She was involved with many organizations including: Campus Activities Board, Student Government Association, Biology Club, International Leadership Council, Student Alumni Association, and African Student Association. Bringing African night to campus was among one of her proudest accomplishments during her time as a students at the university. Rasila believes that being a part of different organizations has helped her grow and broaden her horizon.

The Office of International Relations interviewed Rasila about her experiences here.

1. Question: What was your best experience while here?

Answer: I had so many memorable experiences here that I really don't know what to tell you. I have visited great places such as Washington DC, Chicago, Memphis, Dallas, Houston, OKC, Missouri, Kansas and so many more. I met so many people and make. I have conquered my fear of high rides, I even went scuba diving despite my fear of water. Overall, I enjoyed every single day of my experience. It was very educational, challenging and mostly fun. I do have one more thing to cross off my bucket list: Skydiving.

2. Question: What was your worst experience?

Answer: Being sick my first year here. I don't usually get sick, but when I do, I was used to being taken care of by my mom. For the very first time I had to do it myself.

3. Question: What was your funniest experience?

Answer: I really have to think about this one. I have had so much fun here that I just can't choose one. My first pumpkin carving, Christmas light show, Thanksgiving and so many more. Oh, my first time watching an American football game was very fun too. I had been looking forward to that game for a whole week. For me, football was just the regular soccer we play back home. Imagining my face when I saw what they were doing. That was definitely not what I was expecting.

4. Question: Were you ever home sick? If so, how often? What caused it?

Answer: Oh yes, so many times especially during the holiday seasons, school breaks and whenever I try cooking a dish from my country. About anything can trigger that homesickness, the smell of a food, pictures, the holiday spirit, social Medias, etc...

## A look into her present

This December, Rasila is **graduating** with her Bachelor's degree in Biology. She was asked a couple of questions concerning her success.

1. Question: If you ever had problems with your professors what did you do to resolve them?  
Answer: I don't think I ever had an issue with my professors. I regularly attended classes and turned in my assignments on time. When I do not understand something I just stop by their office and they are usually more than happy to help. I should however mention that it has not been easy learning to go and talk to my professors. Back home, they did not have office hours, and if you have a question you either ask it in class or go find somebody to explain it to you.
2. Question: Did you have any difficulties in any of your classes? If so, what were they and how did you survive it?  
Answer: The major difficulty I had was the language barrier. The English my professors used was way too fast for me to understand them. Also, due to my accent it was very difficult for them to understand me too, I have had to repeat myself so many times before they understand what I mean. The first thing I did was I talk to the teachers and let them know that I was an international student. Since English is not my first language, I asked them if they could slow down a little bit during lecture. Most of them did not see any inconvenient in doing so, but if that did not work I usually record the lecture and listen to it once I get home. That actually helps a lot, with both English but also mastering the material.

Due to her ability to overcome situations, Rasila's college career has been successful.

## A look into her future

Rasila is planning to go to **medical school**. She has applied to the American University of Antigua. She is currently awaiting a response. In her interview she was asked about her **overall experience here and advice** she would like to give to future International Students coming here.

1. Question: How has studying abroad at UAFS affected you, good and/or bad?  
Answer: Overall, the good and the bad together I would say they all helped shape the young lady I am today and they taught me some valuable lessons about life in general.
2. Question: If you could do it all over again, would you?  
Answer: You bet I would, in a heartbeat.
3. Question: If you could give any advice to future international students, what would it be?  
Answer: Hum, I am not really good at this, but I will try. I would definitely tell them to be willing to accept change, learn and immerse themselves as much as possible in the culture here, ask for help whenever they need it, study hard, but also enjoy their experience as much as possible. Family is not just the people you are related to by blood, it can also be very special friends and people you interact with on a daily basis.

Rasila Soumana Hama – A look in to her past, present, and future

Editor: Lanae Biswell

4. Question: When you think of UAFS what instantly comes to mind?

Answer: When I think of UAFS, I think Family, Education, Experience and Opportunity. I have been blessed in so many ways during my experience here.

## **Congratulations!**

The Office of International Relations would like to congratulate Rasila for all of her accomplishments here on campus. Thank you for all that you have contributed to our office and the international program. You will be greatly missed.

Best wishes,

OIR Staff

