
The Issue Of Morality And Ethics In The Spirit Catches You And You Fall Down By Anne Fadiman

The moment had finally come, the call that Peggy and Neil Lia's Primary Care Physicians at MCMC dreaded to receive, and even I on the other end of the book was afraid to read. It was the event that would dramatically change the lives of the Lee's and everyone whom surrounded, cared for and loved Lia. That adorable chubby Hmong girl had gotten the worse seizure, one that unfortunately there was no coming back from or as the Hmong culture describes it as "the spirit caught Lia and she fell down". Lia who is four years old at the time slipped into coma after suffering from a grand mal seizure in 1986, what I see as the fate of Lia is a very short life span perhaps passing within the next few days or week.

Reasons to support my belief is the fact that Lia's father Nao demanded after only being back at MCMC for two days to have Lia's subclavian line be removed and all her medications to be discontinued also, to take Lia home instead of keeping her at MCMC for supportive care. Due to not having any brain activity Lia will no longer suffer from any more seizures however, she still needs to be monitored for other symptoms such as the fever, diarrhea and be fed through the nasogastric tube. Instructions that I don't know for certain if Foua and Nao will follow which are necessary to prevent Lia from dying from starvation, instead of passing in a medically acceptable manner.

The middle section moved the story along because it talked about the struggles the Hmong people faced, the many brave dangers that the refugees from war encounter during their escape from Laos and the conflicts that severed their trust with the US. The Hmong were told they would be "taken care of" if they lost the war but instead they felt that they were betrayed because thousands of their people died attempting to flee their homeland which they believe the US allowed and the two thousand that did make it to Thailand were denied refugee status. Similar to Lia's situation, this betrayal helps to explain why the Hmong were cautious to trust Americans because they believed that those in power failed to save the Hmong who trusted in them. Lia's former foster parents Dee and Tom Korda described an awful experience upon arriving to the hospital in which Dee recalled that the doctors wouldn't even look at Foua and Noa they only looked at us because they saw us as smart and white.

I witnessed discrimination in health care that involved the time my mother in law broke her shoulder and went to the Hospital. She does not speak English and was having a very difficult time communicating to the Nurse the pain and the incident that happened to her. My mother in law recalls her being very aggressive with her, pulling her arm that was in pain, smacking her lips and taking deep (annoyed) breaths, among other things. Upon my arrival, the nurse slightly changed her attitude towards my in law because I started translating and was an advocate for her, professionally speaking to the Nurse in medical terms however, we could see that she wasn't rude and unpolite with patient's her race. My husband had enough of seeing this kind of behavior towards his mother that he decided to speak to the Charge Nurse and explained the situation, the charge Nurse was very understanding and apologetic about the matter. She spoke to the Nurse and she started crying and admitted to the mistreatment, stated that her husband earlier that day had gotten into a confrontation with a Hispanic man at his job therefore she started taking her frustrations out on my mother in law. We are not sure what happened after

the confession, but I sure hope the Nurse learned from this because this type of behavior is not acceptable and nobody regardless of race, color, occupation, culture, or religion deserves to be treated this way.

What I learned from this section of the book is the History of the Hmong people and how they were a strong, united, and were fighters! It helps me understand the willingness for Foua and Nao to fight for what they believe is right for their daughter because it is based on our culture and life experiences that we judge the rightness and wrongness of actions relating to what a person should do in any situation. We view the events occurring around us through a system of thought, feelings, opinions and our worldview and beliefs of certain things however, just because we have culture differences doesn't make the other person wrong, they just view things differently from you.

In conclusion, according to ethicist Joseph Fletcher who stated that morality was what people believed to be right and good while ethics is the critical reflections about morality and the rational analysis of it. Ethics then is nothing more that a generic term for the study of how we make judgements in regards to right and wrong. Though reading some of the things the Lia's parents would do to "fix her" may be a cultural shock for many, it is what they thought was right for their daughter and I actually admire their bravery to fight for what they thought was right in a place and Country they knew nothing of and where their culture assimilated into the American culture. When all things seem to go the wrong way the Lees never lost hope and became even closer as a family than ever before and their desire to fight for Lia was bigger than any obstacle that came their way.