

BRCC 2020 Scholarship

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Growing up in a predominantly Moroccan household, I was subjected to a cultural mindset that was against women sports. Not only was it a toxic mentality that held me back from doing things I love but it was also a controlling way for parents to not allow me to run track. The idea of women being active and around men was a long back mentality carved in my parents' culture. To them, running track was an unladylike activity and a "waste of time", they only cared about the education part of school and anything unrelated to that was unnecessarily distracting.

Even though my parents were strongly against the idea of women sports. I still held into my own beliefs and love for running. The first time I ran without stopping, it was almost by accident..., the pain I had that gloomy night was unbearable to the point where I felt ease and freedom running with no destination. The feeling I had was an awakening to become my own self with my own voice and passion. I wanted to try something new and break out of the gender norms in my own family.

There will always be people in our lives that we call heroes. For me, my biggest influence is my aunt. She has always been the type of person to face up to challenges and oppose mistakes, she has taught me that passion has no gender and that toxic beliefs can be changed. My aunt is a marathon runner in Rome, and after she heard the news of my parents ban, she was one of the main people to step in and call out my parent's mistakes. She has opened a door for me that I wasn't able to myself. And because of her, I finally got the chance to try out for my school Track team.

Ever since then, I have been running cross-country, indoor and outdoor track for all 3 years of high school. But what many people don't understand is that track is not as easy as it looks like, the hard work, dedication, and consistency one should have plays a big part in being successful in this independent sport. The harder you work, the better the outcomes. Seeing my aunt proud is what kept me going through the hot, rainy and snowy practices, and even though she was thousands of miles away, her presence and impact on my character allowed me to continue to challenge myself every day and try new events in every meet. My aunt was the cherry on top in my journey. With her support, I learned to set goals while running, I also learned to never get intimidated in the start line and to never underestimate my components. She has taught me the importance of conquering and moving on to the next challenge. And I hope that one day I can influence people the same way she did to me.