

Multnomah County Central Library

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Growing up was a good memory. I grew up in a small village, very small village in the northern part of Ethiopia. It's a beautiful place and when I finished great war during the Red Terror I had to relocate to the capital at Addis Adabba. Have you ever heard of Red Terror? Thousands were thrown out into the street. It's not easy for a young person to see that, to go through that. The country was in a confusion.

So I went to the only free red library, Alexander Pushkin, and here I wanted to know about our people. We have an Egyptian ancestors, I have learned from books and from oral history. So half way through the year I saw a scholarship posted to the Soviet Union and Eastern Block because the Russians were helping our government. So I applied and was granting a scholarship to the Soviet Union to study other cultures.

So my curiosity took me to the library and then changed my life forever. I was 19, left my beautiful circumstances of Ethiopia, left my family. Very hard. But I had to do it, otherwise I would not be here. You know. My friends are not around any more. The ones that survived have been in prison, tortured. It's not a good story. All the Russians greeted us. It was beautiful, took us to hostel, fed us and showed us around the beautiful Moscow and then send us to our final destination. Which was Uzbekistan – three days bytrain. From Uzbekistsan I had to go to another state which is Moldavia, then from Moldavi I was transferred to Ukraine.

All the memories I have about Soviet Union were wonderful. They tried to please me because they knew I was angry. I told them I was angry that what they were doing in Ethiopia. We don't even know what was going on. Killing people, Red Terror. I was angry with the Russians like hell. I spoke my mind. And they treated me like a queen, the more I spoke the more loved me. I was supposed to study for 5 years in the Soviet Union. There was politics going and I left after 3 years and half. And then waited less than a year in Italy, accommodated by the Catholic Church inside the convent, beautifully. Rome.

Here I had access to the most beautiful library and learned about Helen Keller. That's the first time I read about her. So I stayed there. I had a chance to go to school in Italy. I didn't do it. My friend she told me, "Well Hanna, instead of learning Italian, let's go to America or Canada." So we did. I came to the United States. My English was poor. So I had to improve my English, so I went to the library again, listened to the tapes and also read about Ethiopian history, and learned about who we are, our customs, everything. And when the system changed, I went back to Ethiopia. I wanted to stay there with my family, but I could not fit, because I left when I was young. I could not fit. And it was very disappointing to see all the culture lost. Chaos. Rudeness, you know. Mischief. No trust. It was a totally different country.

I work, then came back to the United States, [unint.], I came through Portland, Oregon. And when I came to Portland, I walked into to North Portland Library and took all the free classes, improved my typing. Accessed the information and rewrite my resume a thousand times, you know, to find a job, I did, seriously.

I met wonderful friends. I love that picture, I always come to Central Library in Beaverton. I was very fortunate. Most of my family, friends, my country. People did not get this chance. I would like to be working in a library, and help people, and make a difference just like mine or more maybe. So that's my story I was [unint.] through a library and improve my skills and I'm here to tell the story.