

What I Carry

Category: Immigrants

written by Ghazal Adibi | May 3, 2025

Inked onto my left shoulder is a pomegranate, its seeds cracked open and spilling out. Another one sits, just as defiantly, on the wall adjacent to my desk. It's a gift from my girlfriend, who painted it herself.

It's the national fruit of Iran. Oh, and also a super fruit, an antioxidant, if we're adding a healthcare twist. For me, it's a way of carrying a piece of home, and a reminder of how I've built a new home over the years.

I lived in Iran for a large part of my childhood, and when my family and I immigrated to the United States, I knew how lucky I was to be here. The narrative was simple: opportunity, freedom, a future.

But what no one really talked about was the invisible weight that comes with it. The pressure to succeed, to be both grateful and exceptional at the same time, to make it all look easy. To make my family proud.

For a long time, though, I thought one part of me didn't fit into that picture. Being queer felt like a crack in the image, and I kept it hidden, especially knowing how little acceptance there is back home. But over time, I've realized my queerness and my Iranian identity aren't at odds. They actually fit together in ways I didn't expect: both rooted in resilience, both something I'm proud of.

That's the beauty of being an immigrant: you get to decide what traditions you hold onto, and what beliefs no longer serve you.

This layered identity shapes how I show up as a medical student. I know what it's like to carry both pride and pain, to navigate unfamiliar systems, and to want to be understood. As I grow into my role as a physician, I hope my patients, especially those with immigrant stories of their own, feel seen and cared for.

The pomegranate reminds me that my roots aren't just something I carry—they're something I celebrate. Even as I move between two worlds, it's the part of me I never want to let go of.

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