

Do We Persevere?

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The consistency of human nature is the grit and determination put forward by those driven against the circumstances and challenges working against them. Through Code Girls, Liza Mundy delves into the lives of American women who helped the allied forces in the second world war through coding. Mundy details the challenges these women faced, as well as their efforts to persevere through them. Dot Braden saw many challenges, as she faced deep misogyny on account of her gender; nevertheless, she persisted in her mission and achieved great accomplishments and honors. Similarly, my father faced his own difficulties; an immigrant with no money, he came to America for a better life and with the eager hopes for success. With what seemed scarce prospects of a better future, he persevered against all odds. Where there are obstacles, there are those that fight to get over them; Dot Braden and my father both prove this through their tenacious behavior in pursuit of their goals.

Despite her natural intellect, hungered ambitions and prodigious mind, Dot Braden saw high chauvinism in her career of coding. The field at the time was seen as relatively trivial and women were only sought out so that men could fill the more “important” roles on the battlefield. When applying to these positions, the women were asked to submit passport photos; their employers considered physical appearance a trait of the same merit as intelligence. A scarce minimum of girls in the 1940s had completed four year colleges, and had limited job prospects; so when the opportunity to serve her country came along, Braden and many others rose to the challenge and

stepped forward in patriotic duty. In Braden's job interview she was described as, "attractive and well-dressed' as well as 'intelligent and nice'" (54). These terms should not have been paired together; Dot Braden should not have been judged on what she was wearing or what her face looked like. After all, adjectives like those were rarely used for male applicants. With a glass ceiling looming over her, Braden suffered greatly due to gender bias, false perceptions and irrelevant criterias that determined their place in the workplace; simply put, she was stereotyped and diminished on the simple basis of sex. Nevertheless, she fought hard and carried on; Braden cracked codes to find Japanese ships, which supplied their troops with resources needed to go on fighting the war, so that American forces could sink them. Her help allowed for an American advantage in the Pacific War, and her efforts played a role in the nation's victory. The achievements of Braden, despite the struggles she faced, is a testament to the will of those with an appetite for triumph.

Like Braden, my father saw great challenges, yet his pure determination and will to succeed overpowered any hindrances in his way. My father immigrated under asylum to America in 1985, after being quickly forced to flee India after riots broke out in persecution of his religion. His family was forced to abandon every one of their possessions, aside from the clothes on their back and little money, to cover the cost of a small apartment, used furniture and a month's worth of food. The beloved family farm was left behind for looting and pillaging, along with the cherished mementos of their home. My father, facing grave danger of mob violence, hid in the trunk of a car for safe passage to the airport. Cramped, petrified and completely in the dark, he held his breath on the journey and prayed for his life. He was barely sixteen. A day ago, he had been a

child. Forced to quickly grow up, he veered away from lamenting or mourning the loss of his old life and vowed to himself to make a new life for himself in the new nation. With no coat or proper shoes, he survived New York City winters and helped his family by working at the clothing shop that they had started, in order to pay the bills. While he stood out among his peers, as cultural differences separated him from his classmates, he excelled in school. My father achieved exemplary marks and participated in numerous extracurricular activities. His work ethic, despite stressful situations, to this date inspires me through his pure dedication to fulfilling his goals. Many people have told him that he could not succeed; he was a poor immigrant in Queens, with no familial connections, used textbooks and few belongings. Nonetheless, he was accepted to the University of Pennsylvania and went on to get his MBA. My father prevailed in light of every hardship that faced him; he fled his home and became a refugee in America, he worked in his family's shop without complaint and studied hard in school so that he could one day provide for himself and his loved ones. I am blessed to be guided under his influence and to witness these powerful qualities of his values and actions.

Dot Braden. My father, Jasjit Rekhi. These individuals fought uphill battles and won; each faced their own set of obstacles, yet had the stamina and sheer grit to push forward no matter what others believed of their futures. Braden fought misogyny in pursuit of her dreams of success while my father overcame harsh financial struggles while navigating his way through a foreign country. The constant of our lives is challenge; while we are not complicit in the obstacles themselves, we are given the choice on how to respond. Do we cave when things get difficult? When others scoff at

the possibility of us achieving our dreams? Or do we follow in the footsteps of Dot Braden and Jasjit Rekhi? Do we persevere?