

The Architecture of Advocacy

Redefining Leadership Through Culturally Aware Care

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March 13, 2026

When memory begins to fade, the last thing a family should have to fight is the test meant to help them.

As an international student, I know exactly what it feels like to be evaluated by a system that does not intuitively understand your background. For me, the stakes of cultural mistranslation meant losing points on an exam or feeling isolated in a classroom. Through my graduate assistantship in dementia research, I saw this same disconnect occurring in healthcare, with devastating consequences.

Standardized cognitive tests often lack cultural context. I realized that if an elderly patient struggles with a prompt, it is not always the onset of dementia. Sometimes it is simply a culturally unfamiliar reference. Families already navigating the heartbreak of cognitive decline were being forced into rigid clinical standards that did not speak their language or recognize their lived reality.

That realization demanded action. To me, community service is not just about volunteering hours. It means applying your exact skillset to solve a systemic failure that affects vulnerable populations.

I could not simply clean the research data and look away. I refused to let another family fall through the cracks of an inflexible system. I had to build a bridge where one was missing. That is why I helped create Wayloom. My mission was to make early cognitive screening not only widely available but also deeply culturally aware. I wanted to build a tool that adapts to the patient rather than forcing the patient to adapt to the test.

Building the technology alone was not enough. To ensure that the solution truly served the community, I had to step outside the safety of my own comfort zone. I began reaching out to neurologists, clinicians, and patients and speaking with them regularly to understand the human reality behind the data. Listening to their frustrations and hopes became the

compass guiding my work. This was where my real professional development began, along with my first serious test of leadership.

I am not naturally outspoken. Leadership once felt like a role reserved for extroverts. I preferred the quiet precision of writing code to the vulnerability of public outreach. Yet advocating for accessible healthcare required me to find my voice. When I stood on stage at the College of Computing DeepTech Pitch Competition and later presented our platform at Web Summit Qatar, I was not simply presenting a piece of technology. I was advocating for a better standard of care.

Standing on those stages was intimidating, but the experience reshaped my understanding of leadership. Leadership is not the absence of fear, and it is not about appearing the most confident person in the room. It is the deliberate decision that the problem you are solving matters more than the fear you feel while addressing it. It means accepting responsibility for an inequity and taking the risk of public failure in order to correct it.

I did not set out to become a public advocate, and I did not initially see myself as a leader. I simply began with a determination to ensure that cognitive assessments would not leave marginalized communities behind.

I came to this country searching for my own voice. Today, I lead by building systems that ensure others are heard clearly.