Ramen Incident

Facing the fact that there is no cheese left in the once cheese-filled corridor, Haw proposes a search for new cheese in the maze. Hem however, comforted by his old routine and afraid of the unknown, knocks down the idea. As the result, Haw finds another supply of cheese, and Hem stay in the cheeseless corridor with hungry. Before the journey of looking for new cheese, Haw chisels "If You Do Not Change, You Can Become Extinct" on the wall for his friend to ponder. In his international best seller “Who Moved My Cheese”, Dr. Spencer Johnson taught more than ten million readers that the only way to deal with a difficult change in their lives is to move with the cheese and change with the change.

By the second I stepped into that plane, everything was suddenly changed. The people who sat around me were mostly whites, the questions the stewardess asked me were in English, the lunch I had was bread and cheese, and the destination of that flight was East Lansing, the United States of America, somewhere more than 6000 miles away from my home. After the plane took off, with a sense of nervousness I began to read
“Who Moved My Cheese” that many Chinese international students referred as a guide book. I was nervous not because of the airflow above the Pacific Ocean, and because of all the changes that waiting for me in the unpredictable future.

Just like what I feared about, first days in the United States were full of changes that I was unused to. Guided by Haw’s warning, I put my best effort to change to fit into this new environment. I accepted anything that the new society offered me to take and followed anything that the new culture regulated me to do until the “Ramen Incident” occurred.

One day, I was eating ramen noodle soup in my dorm. As the way I did in China, I sucked the noodle along with the soup into my mouth. My American roommate’s attention was pulled by the sound I made when I was sucking my noodle soup. He yelled at me “Dude, you eat so loud!” “Sorry, I am… I am just so hungry.” I responded apologetically. “Don’t worry, you’re my boy. It’s ok to me, but some people is gonna say you eat like a pig.” We both laughed. Behind my laugh, I once again decided to change again, not because I believed they were right and I was wrong, and only because I am different than people around me. I began to learn how to pick up the noodle from the soup with a folk, and then drink the soup with a spoon.
after I finish the noodle.

Couple weeks later, my roommate went home late and missed the dinner in the cafeteria. He pointed at a bag of ramen noodle on my desk and asked me “Hey, man, can I have one of your ramen noodles?” “Sure, just take it. I have other flavors over there if you like.” I pointed to the box under my bed. He said “Oh, that’s ok. They’re all tasted the same.” I was confused and said “No, they are not.” He insisted that “Well, all the ramen noodles I had were tasted nothing but a little bit salty.” Suddenly I figured out why my roommate can’t taste any flavor of noodle soup. I told him that “Unlike Italian pasta, there is no sauce on Asian noodle. The flavor of the noodle is from the soup, so if you eat noodle and soup separately, then you can’t taste anything except the plain noodle.” “Umm, that could be a reason.” He kind of agreed with me.

“Then try to suck both the soup and noodle together.” I encouraged him to eat the noodle soup in my way. “No, that’s… umm… that’s not gonna help.” He refused.

“Come on, man. Noodle soup is originally a Chinese food, ramen noodle was invented by Japanese, and this bag of noodle in your hand is made in South Korea. People from all of these three countries suck the noodle along with soup. You guys imported ramen noodle soup from Asia, so you should also import the way people eat it from Asia.” I kept persuading him. Finally, he tried it and he loved it.
The story ended up with that almost everyone I know in my floor began to eat ramen noodle soup by sucking the noodle along with the soup. This time, I didn’t change myself to fit into the environment, contrarily I changed the environment. Through this ramen noodle soup episode, I became realizing that Dr. Spencer Johnson’s cheese theory may work for businessmen, but it is not a good suggestion to an international student. International students are supposed to be a media where two cultures connect to and exchange with each other. Without any think and questions, blindly changing one’s self to fit into a changed environment can only make the international studying experience meaningless. If there is anything good in the new culture, you have to adopt it, but if there is anything good in you own culture, you have to keep it and introduce it to the new culture. As an international student, I am here to learn what Chinese culture lacks from American culture, and I am also here to give what American culture lacks from Chinese culture. By adopting from and also introducing to this new community, the community and I are both promoted. This is the beauty of the diversity, this is the beauty of the MSU international community, this is the beauty of American multicultural society, and more importantly, this is the beauty of being an international student.