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In my shoes, feel 100 kinds of lives

I was learning to drive with a learner's permit this summer. While I was trying to merge into a turn-left lane on Trowbridge road, a car coming from my left back crashed mine. The whole front bumper cover on our car fell on the ground after the crash. I stood by the car on the road, the police came and issued me a ticket. I asked him, "why?" He said, "It's your job to make sure what's going on in another lane before you merge into it."

I have been thinking about this crash all the time, even it's already several months away. The reason it happened is actually pretty simple, that car was driving in my "blind spot" while I even didn't know such kind of "spot"'s existence back then. On the other hand, I thought, isn't this accident also an interesting metaphor of our life far away from home in America?

When every international student is asked about why to study here in America, the answer would always be to get the most advanced education in the world and to experience another culture. Come on! There are also many other reasons, much more real ones. Some got here because he or she can't recover from the pain of an end of a relationship; some got here because he or she didn't get any admissions letter from any college in home country; some got here for the obsession he or she has for American TV series, so on so forth. Did we really think before we came here? Did we check the "blind spot"? Maybe you were just like me, even don't know the existence of the "blind spot" when looked at America from such a distance.
How different a person's perspective built up in its own culture, compared with others', can be very shocking. When a friendly American with an open mind tries to make friends with me and to help me adjust to life in America, I might be thinking about something totally irrelevant, like "What she says really doesn't make any sense to me." or "What the heck does she want from me??" Not knowing this new culture's norms and rules at all, we were just like newly born babies, rude and stupid. However, did you ever think about why people get so excited when they see a new baby? Because they see hope and possibilities. Just like a blank paper, you can write a poem on it, you can draw a picture on it, and you also can shred it.

Living in a new culture is hard. Everyday, "I'm sorry, what?" "Pardon me?" "I don't know what you mean." "Can you say that again?" are just like mosquitoes flying around my ears, constantly reminding me of how people see me as an outsider who can't speak in a way they can understand. This is the "blind spot", a sea of embarrassment, frustration and misunderstanding. We were all in it, and we all had choices. Few people managed to swim, most people left, some drowned. Different decisions then lead to completely different lives.

You can just stick to your own culture, just like what I did in my freshman year. I hanged out with friends from China, ordered Chinese food all the time, and what's even more interesting is, Internet as an information source can give me every piece of news from China in Chinese so I neither know nor care about what's going on in where I am. Sometimes I feel maybe studying abroad is just a change in geography back then.
You can also take off everything you get from your own culture and put on America. Avoid meeting people from your own country, imitate everything Americans do, disregard whether all of them are accepted in your own culture.

You can also forget about all the culture stuff, only focus on your GPA.

You can also give up on your purpose of going school in America, instead spend your time gambling in casino. (It really happened to one of my friends...)

Anything you want. We, far away from home, like a song says, can have 100 kinds of lives.

Whatever you choose, it's your choice. I just want to share with you that, once I decided to connect with people here and look at what's going on in this land, I learned so much. I learned how to open my mind and respect every person as an unique human being regardless of his or her background from my American friends; I learned to think out of the box and to develop innovations from the numerous successful businesses in America, like Apple, Facebook, Google; I learned the very, very respectable sense of equity in America from the people, how they elected the first African-American president in history, how they protest on the unfair treatment to immigrants, how they fight for legal rights of gay and lesbians, impressed me and made me so excited time after time; Most importantly, I learned to do what I love and love what I do. I chose a major which is most popular in China to study in America, but when I encountered the passions American students have for their majors, I wondered whether I do have it for my own major. I struggled for such a long time until finally I found the meaning of my major and what I can do with it, after which I
get a direction of my life, and I am enjoying what I am studying now and then.

I begin to love my life here. Yes, I do. I love food in Brody Square, I love indie clothing I buy from Urbanoutfitters, I love the fall of Michigan.

I love America. Yes, I do. When I meet people who keep saying "There's no culture in America." I would tell them "No, they just don't get burdened by culture as you guys do, and they are creating new culture which leads the world."

But, many things in America also make me to think. Like what brought this nation into this recession in which so many people are harmed? Should the energy of politicians be put more in arguing things or doing things? Is it really necessary to tease the wolverines in such a manner when they lost many points? :D I think, when I see people do things differently, then I developed a better understanding of many things.

When I overcome the blind spot, I found myself merging between the two lanes so easily. The two lanes both belong to me, the road in front me is much wider. Now I am free.