

孩子，我想对你说.....

(AJY)

我很想对孩子说，希望时光能够倒流，我们可以重头开始。我可以重新学习如何为人父母，花更多时间了解你，与你一起同步成长。我会加倍珍惜我们共同的，认真面对我们不同的，让那不愉快的变成美好，让那美好的变成彼此的鼓励。

我很想对孩子说我为ABC (American Born Chinese)骄傲，读懂中国文化和美国文化的精华，走遍天下也不用怕。ABC 在崇尚自由和个性的大环境下与周围不同文化背景和肤色的孩子一起成长：坦率，大方，包容；又在严于律己的东方文化家庭环境里受熏陶，勤奋，努力，有责任感。

记得儿子七岁的时候，我中学同学来美国旅游，临睡前两个儿子特意来我房间拥抱道晚安。回房间后又大声地朝我们喊“daddy, mommy , I love you! “ 我的同学说她儿子从来没有这样对她说过话，这么贴心，亲切，催人泪下。这是美国文化给我们亲子关系的一大祝福。我虽然对自己的父母充满尊敬和热爱，也对他们无微不至地关怀；但是我却从来没有大大方方地拥抱他们。现在看到孩子们拥抱外婆时她脸上绽开的笑容，真的感恩美国文化的感染力和亲合力。

这种文化让我们在孩子小的时候能够跟他们有亲密无间的关系。但是等孩子慢慢长大后，这种文化里的独立自主慢慢地又以另一种方式影响我们与孩子的关系。记得有一天我叫孩子做功课，他们很恼火，说的话让我大吃一惊“This is America, if I don't want to do it, I don't have to do it. ”（这是美国，如果我不想做，我可以不做）。

等他们八年级的时候，我发现自己成了旁观者，看他们在另一个世界里如同陌生人。学校里很多孩子玩电子游戏着了迷，沉默寡言，一问三不知。交流沟通的最后通常以“never mind”（“就当我说什么都没说过”）终止。那时候我们的分歧争吵都是因为我批评他们玩游戏太多，而他们却认为Asian parents 限制他们的自由，不让他们享受生活。这种评论对亚裔父母来说是天大的冤枉，因为大部分亚裔父母爱子甚于他们自己，钱财时间精力全都花在孩子身上，他们才真的是没有机会享受生活。八年级的暑假，儿子突然对美国足球（football）感兴趣，准备参加校队，天天参加负重训练。看着他们还没有长开的身体，想着他们如何能够经得起其他高大强壮的对手冲撞，我们苦口婆心甚至搬家庭医生来做说服工作。但是他们铁定了心要打football，严热酷暑阻挡不了他们的斗志，每天训练，毫无怨言。

我开始对孩子感到茫然，对他们的变化手足无措。

怀着忐忑不安的心，我去参加孩子将要升入高中前的第一次家长会。大名鼎鼎的校长给家长们送的一句名言，让我震惊：“不要做他们的朋友，做他们的家长！监督他们！”（“Don't be their friends, be their parents, check on them！”）我如获至宝回到家后，马上响应校长号召。儿子经常在厕所里呆个一小时不出来，我们以前只是高声叫唤就算了。这次却突然让我们疑心重重，我先生敲了门没回应就推门而入。只见儿子怀里捂着一个东西死死不放。想到他一定是用毒品，我心里一沉，心口发疼。最后发现他是从朋友那借来了游戏机偷偷地玩，这才一块石头落地。

孩子的这些行为变化不仅让我对他们感到困惑，而且让我对美国学校文化风气把孩子从“天使”变成“魔鬼”深恶痛绝，怨气冲天，又束手无策。

高中三年级，当别的孩子都忙着修AP课，为升大学加大马力最后冲刺的时候，儿子又做了一件让我震惊的事情。他们告诉我要选修举重健美课，差点把我吓晕。我根本不理解他们的想法，直到别人夸奖他们的健美身材，我才明白原来家长认为重要的成绩并不是所有孩子想要的；而家长认为不那么重要的，却被这种年龄的孩子视为珍宝！

在儿子小的时候，我每天上下班，很少有机会同他们在一起，不知道他们每天在学校里经历了什么，想什么，需要什么样的帮助；所以他们完全是自己在两种文化中挣扎。每次我批评他们贪玩游戏不学习，他们就像着火似的跳起来说“你根本不知道什么是最糟糕的！”（“You don't know the worst!”）我一直不明白这句话的意思，直到他们上了大学才告诉我：高中同学酗酒吸毒的比比皆是，而他们老老实实仅仅是喜欢玩游戏而已，不受表扬反被批评，冤枉呵！可见家长与孩子的深度沟通有多么重要。

我以前觉得与长大的儿子之间隔着一座冰山；直到有一天与他们坐在饭桌旁聊天，我第一次告诉他们我从小到大的故事，最后在儿子站起来拥抱我的那一刻，我感到冰山在一点点融化。父母与孩子的代沟不完全是因为年龄的差异，更多的是因为彼此缺乏沟通了解。这种了解需要时间，耐心和适当的场合。

因为儿子的经历，我发现原来父母和孩子之间可以有另一种活法。不是家长居高临下把东方文化和想法强加给孩子，也不是让孩子用西方文化价值来刷新父母的理念；而是彼此打开心扉，花时间一起去面对挑战，允许并且帮助孩子经历这些挑战。

对东方文化的反叛再也没有比在我女儿身上的反应更强烈的了。虽然我们有非常亲密的母女关系，无话不说，但是她总是想成为纯美国人。她不喜欢别人说她是华裔。在这一点上，我不理解她，她也不理解我，但是我们同意对话（agree to talk）。她让我走进她的朋友圈，她的世界，让我看到并体验她每天所经历的喜怒哀乐和做为亚裔所要接受的

挑战和挣扎，做一个ABC不容易！我也让她走进我的世界，让她看到并体会我走过的每一步：从遥远的中国来到语言文化完全不同的美国，从零开始，打工，学习，工作，养家糊口，为孩子的教育和未来打拚，牺牲个人的爱好和享受；做一个亚裔父母也不容易。

女儿热爱英文及语法，对中文不屑一顾。我没有批评她，而是花时间和她一起读那些充满哲理，文化底蕴深厚的中文故事，让她不得不感叹中华文化的博大精深和魅力。一天晚上我们俩大声朗读“唧唧复唧唧，木兰当户织。不闻机杼声，但闻女叹息。问女何所思？问女何所忆？女亦无所思，女亦无所忆”我们互相对视，同时笑出声来。在那一刻，我知道她是一个自豪的ABC (American Born Chinese),也是一个顶呱呱的木兰！

Hear Me Out

By AJY

Hear me out, children.

I want to tell you:

I wish time could go back so that we could start over again, and I could learn from the beginning how to be an experienced parent. I would like to spend more time to know you and grow up with you. I will cherish our common views and take our differences seriously to overcome life's challenges together. We will erase the unpleasant memories and turn the good ones into each other's encouragement.

I want to say that I'm proud of you being an ABC (American Born Chinese)! Understanding the essence of Chinese and American culture and traveling the world need not be frightening. Having grown up in Western culture of respect for freedom and individuality and growing up with children of different backgrounds and skin colors, ABCs are candid, straightforward, independent, generous, fun-loving, and inclusive. Also having been nurtured by an Oriental culture of self-discipline, ABCs are diligent and productive with a sense of responsibility.

When my sons were seven years old, my high school classmate traveled to the United States to visit me. Before going to sleep at night, my two sons would always come over to my room to hug me goodnight. After going back to their bedroom (they shared one at the time), they shouted, loud and clear, at us: "Daddy, Mommy, I love you!" My classmate said that her son in China had never spoken to her like this and that it was so touching and tear-inducing. This American culture is a welcome blessing to our parent-child relationship. Although I am full of

respect and love for my parents, I have never openly embraced them. Now, seeing how happy my mom is when her grandchildren hug her, I genuinely appreciate the affinity and affection of American culture.

The openness and expressiveness of American culture allowed me to have affectionate relations with my children when they were young. Nevertheless, as my children matured, this culture of independence slowly affected our relationship differently. One day, I called my children to do their homework; as a result, they were incredibly irritated and snapped, "This is America; if I do not want to do it, I do not have to do it!" I was astounded by their blatant impertinence.

When they were in eighth grade, the situation worsened. I became an outsider in their world. Every student in school was crazy for video games. They became agitated and unresponsive. Our quarrels often originated from my criticism of their addiction to video games and ended up with their condemnation of Asian parents for focusing too much on grades instead of their children's feelings. In the summer before entering high school, my sons suddenly became passionate about football. They were so adamant about joining the high school football team that they did weightlifting and running every day, rain or shine. Worrying about how they could compete with other players that were much taller and stronger than they were and the risk that was involved, I tried everything I could to stop them from playing football. In spite of my effort, all my attempts failed; they were fixedly resolute to join the football team.

I was at a loss and felt incapable because I was not even able to understand my children. Deeply frustrated, I went to the first parents' night for high school. There, a famous principal offered advice that shocked me: "Don't be their friends; be their parents. Check on them!") With that information in my mind, I went home. My son used to spend a long time in the bathroom,

which bothered me but never caught my attention until that night. My husband knocked on the bathroom door and then forced the door open. I noticed that my son was clutching something tightly in his arms. "He must be using drugs," I thought. It made me speechless. In the end, we found out that he was merely playing a video game that he borrowed from his friend! What a relief!

These unexpected changes in my sons' behavior not only perplexed me but also made me angry at how schools and society have converted our children from "angels" into "devils." When my sons were juniors in high school, other children were busy taking AP courses to boost their last chances of being accepted into better colleges. Instead of following suit, my sons did something that astonished me. They informed me that they were going to take weightlifting and bodybuilding elective courses; I nearly fainted! I couldn't comprehend their thoughts and reasoning until others praised their strong muscles. I learned that what parents consider essential might not mean anything to children while what parents consider unimportant may be similar to treasure for children.

When my sons were little, I worked every day and rarely had any opportunities to talk to them and know what they went through every day in school. They struggled through cultural conflicts all alone. Every time I reprimanded them for playing too many video games, they immediately jumped up and shouted, "You do not know the worst!" I could not fathom the meaning of what they said until they told me after they departed for college: many of their classmates at their high school were addicted to alcohol and drugs. They believed that as parents, we should have been satisfied with their staying away from alcohol and drugs instead of censuring them for playing games.

For a long time, I felt a gradually widening rift between my sons and me until one day. I was sitting at the dinner table and chatting with them. I told them for the first time my story about growing up. I felt the breach shrink the moment my son hugged me after my tale. The gap between parents and children is not entirely due to age difference, but lack of communication and understanding. This mutual perception takes time to build. It requires time, patience, and the right occasion.

Because of the journey that I took with my sons, I found another path that parents and children can seek to live in harmony. Parents shouldn't yield to Eastern culture and impose its ideology on children, nor should children force Western values on their parents. It is about opening one's heart and accepting each other. Let children fail and surmount impediments by themselves.

No one worries about heritage rebellion from children more than I do for my daughter. Although we have a close-knit mother-daughter relationship, we dissent on many issues. We agree to disagree, however, and keep conversations open. She let me into her inner circle of friends, as well as her world, allowing me to see and experience the joy, anger, and sorrow---experiences, trials, and struggles in a teen's life. It is not easy to be an ABC!

I also let her into my world, permitting her to see and acknowledge every step I traveled. I came from distant China to the United States without money, friends, or relatives; I studied while working part-time; I worked hard to feed my family, and I sacrificed personal interests and enjoyment to provide the best lifestyle for my children. Being an Asian parent is not easy!

My daughter loves English and grammar; however, she doesn't like learning Chinese at all. I had every reason to deplore her and persuade her, but I didn't. Instead, I spent time with her, reading Chinese stories that were full of wisdom and charm. She was impressed by the richness

and depth of the Chinese culture and literature. One night, we both read aloud a poem about Mulan. At one moment, we both stopped and laughed so hard. From then on, I knew and espoused from the bottom of my heart that my daughter was a proud ABC (American Born Chinese), and was also a fearless Mulan!