

Hear Me Out Essay

My mother and father are significantly older than me by 37 and 42 years respectively. Because of that, I constantly felt like I have a generational gap with them. It wasn't until I left for college when I experienced missing them for the first time. Before college, I always felt like I absolutely could not wait to leave, because I felt very disconnected with them. As a Fujianese family, our lifestyle was different than those of my friends who were white, Hispanic, black, other Asian families, or even other Chinese families. I grew up very self-conscious and confused. I was constantly asking myself, "Why can't I be like every other kid?", "Why can't I go to the park?", "Why can't we go on vacation?", "Why do I have to spend all my time when I'm not at school, at a Chinese carry-out restaurant?" "Why can't I have sleepovers and birthday parties?" I was told that all Fujianese families that immigrated to the US owned restaurants if they didn't have a high level of education, so this is the way that we have to live. I was born in New York then my parents sent me to China to be raised by my great aunt. I was what they call a "satellite baby". Like satellites in space, these babies leave from and return to the same spot, usually in time for school. I was sent to China when I was 70 days old, then my dad came to China to pick me up when I was four. When I first came back to the US, I was very scared, I had to learn [about these] strangers that were absent for my childhood. They weren't [there] when I learned to say my first word, when I stood up for the first time, when I was sick for the first time, or even when I had an eye surgery. I called my great aunt "grandma" and my aunt "mom". It took me a while to get used to the new environment, but they still didn't spend much time with me because they owned a small Chinese carry-out restaurant where they worked from 10am in the morning till 2am at night. I also have an older brother who is fifteen years older than me and was born in China. I was born in the US after my parents immigrated to the US because of the one child

policy and my father really wanted a girl. My brother was already turning 20 when I met him so instead of being a brother figure, I grew up feeling as if I had three parents.

I was always a rebellious child growing up which irritated my parents a lot. They were expecting me to be a very mellow, intimate, and quiet child, but I was the exact opposite. My mother always asked me why can't I be like every other child who's close to their moms and tells them their little secrets. I couldn't. I never had a strong tie with my parents. I've learned to understand why they sent me to China but they were always too busy for me until two years ago when I went to college. It was never that I didn't want to be close to my parents, but that I was scared. My parents worked VERY long hours with my brother at the restaurant which contributed to their bad temper and lack of patience but as a confused and insecure child, I needed it. They would buy me whatever I wanted but they never gave me the form of love that I wanted and needed. I always felt that my parents didn't love me and felt very lonely. As I got older, I started to understand that the generation that my parents are from is very different than mine. On top of the generation gap, we also have a cultural gap they didn't realize existed until recently. They always compared me to my brother, but they neglected the fact that all three of them, my father, mother, and brother are all Chinese while I'm Chinese American. I grew up speaking English and participating in the American culture when I'm at school and with friends but [I come] home to a Chinese household.

My parents always expected me to be better than my peers. I distinctly remember once I got the highest score in the class, but it was a B and I was really excited to tell my parents about it but when they heard it was a B; their face changed immediately and yelled, "Why wasn't it an A?" My parents have always thought that I was too social for my own good; that I would rather spend time talking to friends than reading or doing homework. I never really felt them wanting to

get to know me for me but rather, they think they know me the best because they are my parents but that is not true.

One of the things that my mother did that bothered me a lot throughout my childhood was asking me to translate something then getting really mad when I didn't know what the translation was. Sometimes she seems to forget that an eight-year-old (at the time) has a limited amount of vocabulary. When I was in high school, I wanted to tryout for the badminton team, but my parents were strongly against it since they put academics in front of everything. After days of begging and reasoning, my parents finally gave in and allowed me to tryout. That experience made me realize even further the difference in generation and culture makes conversations more difficult.

Even through the different miscommunications and rough experiences that I grew up with, they have changed their way of thinking and I have learned to become more understanding of the way my parents comprehend things and make decisions. Now that I'm getting older, more independent and more mature, I've come to understand that most of the miscommunications and arguments could have been lessened if we tried to understand each other more; keeping in mind our differences with age and culture.