

### **Application Essay Example (Common App): Moving from China to America**

During every single return trip to China, I was constantly barraged by half-joking queries from my family such as “Are you Chinese? Or are you American?” or “Which country is better, China or America?” As an elementary student on vacation, I was rather pleased with the amount of fascination and attention poured onto me due to my mother, my father, and I having moved to America four years after my birth. I answered every time, without hesitation, “*Chinese! China!*” I loved being Chinese. I loved answering “You were born in China?!” with a proud nod. I loved communicating to my parents in a language that was exclusive only to us. I felt special, *unique*. My heritage was my identity. I believed what defined me was the difference between my culture and my classmates’ values. However, my unwavering loyalty to my heritage and sense of self began to quiver as I entered into a culture clash growing up as Chinese-American. It is through this convoluted path of growth, that I was able to mature mentally and emotionally, while coming to terms with being Chinese-American.

My middle school years became a major ordeal as the different cultures of my family and social environment contrasted so drastically. Suddenly, it became incredibly treacherous to be different. I was studying too much. Crude jokes about my treasured ethnicity began to sprout up like weeds, watered by students that were unaware of their racism. My efforts to join my friends and find my own social niche was heavily deterred by my parents’ efforts to keep me school-oriented. I felt as if I was expected to study day and night. My parents grew more worried due to my sub-par performance and I felt even more academic pressure. I began to feel ashamed of being Chinese and hated the academic lifestyle that I deemed too severe to be healthy. My morale and my class rank took simultaneous beatings.

After struggling through two and a half of years of high school with one foot in an academic household and one foot keeping a hold on what I thought to be a necessary—excessive—social life, my resilience wore thin. I realized that to truly do well, I must find what satisfies *myself*. I am the hero of my own story. There is no reason that I should define myself with stereotypes or expectations. I must make my own path, not follow the ideas of others. Why would other people's opinions matter anyways? What is most important is to work hard and be happy. From then on, I studied hard to make myself proud, not because my parents desired to see good marks. I have never been a football fan, so I spent my Friday nights with the company of a small circle of close friends. For the first time, I found balance. I felt truly happy. I no longer defined myself as singularly “Chinese”, but rather, as *myself*.

The term “Chinese-American” holds the connotation of a different lifestyle. The uncertainty of who I was, while I was growing up, exposed me to personal and social pressures between my Chinese culture and American society that led me to find identity in myself, rather than in my race. I am so thankful for my parents, who had the patience of raising me and growing to understand the differences between the two worlds that I lived in while I tried to find loyalties within myself. I am proud of being Chinese. I am proud of being American. I am so happy to have the lifestyle that I have, no matter what anyone says. Perhaps appreciation for a culture is best found when there is another to juxtapose with. I will visit my family in China again in 2016, and I will proudly tell them of my newfound identity: uniquely myself.