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# College Personal Statement

Like most children my age, I started primary school wanting to be a good child. I listened to what my teacher said and I followed her advice to believe and follow what adults said. However, as I grew up, my mother helped me learn to think critically and evaluate comments made by teachers, celebrities, and the media closely before taking a stance. Had I not learned this, I think I would be a different person today.

Back in 2008, Liu Xiang was considered a Chinese hero because he was the first Chinese male track and field Olympic gold medal winner, and the first Chinese sportsman who had broken a track and field world record. He was expected to continue his legendary performance in the Beijing Olympic Games. However, he ultimately withdrew from the competition. A magazine revealed that the reason why Liu withdrew was that he had compromised his practice by doing commercial activities, even at the expense of recovering from an injury. Almost everyone believed this story, including me and my classmates, and we condemned Liu for his behavior.

When I talked about this event with my mother, she was a bit more skeptical. She asked me to look for an argument to defend Liu. Convinced that the story I had heard was true, I did some research to persuade my mother. To my surprise, when I searched online for “Liu Xiang,” I found out that he had won several international track and field gold medals after having missed the Beijing Olympics. This was not consistent with the story that his daily practice and running speed had decreased after his injury and frequent commercial activities. However, I still believed the original story.

To help me continue to think critically, my mother then asked me what kind of injury Liu had had. I didn’t know at the time what the medical terms on the newspapers meant, so I did some more research. To my surprise, Liu’s injury that was mentioned in the newspapers would have been too severe for him to continue to compete. I realized that, although the story from the magazine seemed logical and persuasive on the surface, I had been wrong to judge and blame Liu without first ensuring that I had accurate information. I was confused. For the first time in my life, I learned that the information I was getting from my teachers and some newspapers was not always accurate or unbiased. My mother helped me cope with this realization and encouraged me to think about the potential reasons and justification behind others’ and media’s expressed beliefs before taking them as truth.

Several years later, I was considering pursuing my college degree in the United States. When I was searching for information on Internet or asking for advice from my relatives, they either depicted the United States as an unparalleled place of beauty and splendor, or a horrible place with series of shooting rampages. I thought about my mother’s advice and did some additional research. I read news from several different countries about the United States and talked to various international students studying in different regions of U.S. to ask about their experiences. In this way, I got a more balanced understanding of life in the U.S., and I made my decision to pursue my dream of going to college in the U.S.

Over the years, the practice of using critical thinking has become a significant part of my thinking process and daily life, not just a tool for making rational decisions. Either when reading about an event that doesn’t affect me directly, or when facing a life-changing decision, I use critical thinking to decide what I want to say and do. This has also helped me keep an open mind and show empathy towards people of various cultures and backgrounds. At this time, I am ready and I am looking forward to attending a university which embraces various cultures from all over the world.

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