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## Thinking Globally: College Admission Essay Sample

Recently, my family unearthed a home video on an old Beta tape from when I was three years old. In the video, I was sitting on my dad's lap with a globe in front of me, and he was asking me to point out different countries. "Where's Vanuatu?" or "Which one is Fiji?" he would ask me. Sure enough, there I was, pointing to the little island nations. Undoubtedly I promptly forgot their locations after learning them, because I certainly don't remember them now. But looking at that tape reminded of some of the unusual aspects of my childhood.

My father made sure that we learned about the most obscure societies, and vociferously denounced mainstream American culture. His theory was, if it's what everyone else thinks, it must be wrong. I can't remember a time when he was not constantly telling us how much better the Chinese do this, how much better the Russians do that, or how much more polite the Japanese are.

My sisters and I did not immediately appreciate my dad's cosmopolitan view of the world. Like most little kids we just wanted to fit in; we enjoyed eating at McDonald's and listening to pop music, not eating somewhere "interesting" (which invariably meant trying something we could not identify) and listening to Global Beat on NPR. However, our dreams of being normal were not to be realized. When I was five, we moved to Okinawa for two years so my father could do his post-doctoral research on the birds of the Ryukyu Islands. With barely two weeks notice, we had to give up all that had become normal for us and move to a place where we stood out so much that people on the streets came up to ask if we had dyed our hair and if they could take pictures with us. Even in this foreign environment where we longed for home, my father still did not allow us anything familiar or mainstream. There are lots of American restaurants in Japan, but of course we were not allowed to patronize these purveyors of Western culture. We had to eat at the tiniest mom-and-pop places my dad could find.

Through it all, my dad never stopped telling us how wonderful Japan was and what a great experience this was. Eventually, I actually started believing it. I attended local schools and made friends despite language and cultural differences. What was once foreign and scary became comfortable and sometimes even enjoyable. At the age of five I was probably not conscious of it, but Japan and my father's incessant glorification of Eastern cultures helped me form a mind that is remarkably open to other cultures.

As I have grown older, I have learned to think critically about my dad's pronouncements, and to understand that he was prone to exaggeration, whether for the sake of argument or to counter prevailing cultural chauvinism. I learned to take everything my dad said with a grain of salt, but

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there was almost always some truth to his tirades. The Japanese really are more polite than we are, not to mention the fact that they make better cars. If I had taken everything my father said at face value, I would have seen nothing but the flaws in American culture and the good points of Asian culture. Obviously, there are good and bad aspects in both, and avoiding looking at the whole picture leaves one with a sort of tunnel vision that is not open-minded at all.

While my childhood experiences made me particularly sensitive to and appreciative of other cultures, they failed to make me equally aware of the importance of open-mindedness within our own culture. I confess I was guilty of a similar sort of tunnel vision, but on a micro scale. In part as a result of living in a liberal college town, I assumed for a long time that being open-minded and being liberal were the same thing. I knew in the back of my mind that conservatives existed, but to me they were only this vague, non-specific entity that I assumed dwelt somewhere in "middle America." I did not have to deal with them, and thus assumed that they held their beliefs only because of ignorance. A lot of Davisites share that opinion. Liberals, myself included, often criticize conservatives for not being open-minded. But by not trying to understand the other side and instead simply writing it off as being "wrong," I made myself just as closed-minded as the most Bible-thumping of moral conservatives.

My father taught me how to be accepting and welcoming of other cultures, but I had to teach myself how to be accepting of my own culture. The perspective I share is no doubt a little bit that of the little girl pointing to the island nations on the globe, but it is also that of the Davisite who is no longer afraid to encounter differing opinions.

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