

BAMM BAY AREA MOBILITY MANAGEMENT SCHOLARSHIP

In China I lived a small apartment in a city with a lot of traffic and pollution. I was never exposed to nature or art. After my parents divorced in China, my father met my stepmom in San Francisco through his work with an unscrupulous company, Amway Corp. He decided to remarry and take me to the US with him. I was sad about leaving my mother and my friends but I looked forward a new life in the United States.

I imagined that when I moved to San Francisco I would have a spacious home with a backyard, surrounded by friends and a family to come home to. In reality, I live in a home that is shared by three families, surrounded by neighbors who speak different languages and is literally bordered within 50 ft by two major highways and an off-ramp. My house is a surreal place surrounded by traffic, homeless encampments, and pollution. Additionally, surviving in SF is incredibly difficult because both my father and stepmother could only find jobs where English is not required and both of them work from 4pm-12am every week.

As a result, I hardly ever see my father, I have the responsibility of caring for my 2 younger step siblings and because of all the surrounding noise, I rarely get a good night sleep. Many days I wish I had a way to escape the city- because the city experience can control your mind.

At age 17, I arrived at MHS and was placed in 10th grade, meaning I would graduate at age 20. As I navigated through high school while trying to survive SF, during my

junior year I decided to learn something new and try new experiences. My ELD English teacher also spoke Chinese and was the coach of Mission's Dragon Boat team. He introduced me to his team during my first summer. Dragon Boat is one of the most important traditional sports in China that consists of 20 team members paddling through the finishing line with a traditionally decorated boat. I knew this was going to be challenging because I had never joined a sports team before.

Senior year, I was selected as the captain of the team. We also had a change in our coaches which helped us recruit more Spanish and English speaking students. This encouraged me more to actively recruit peers who were Latino immigrants. Often, many of our practices were in Chinese, but I made sure that we conducted practice in English so that all team members felt accepted. Now my team is combined with students from different countries and different backgrounds. I am proud to say that Mission Dragon Boat team is now the most diverse team in San Francisco Unified School District.

I learned how teamwork makes people successful. I have become experienced in communicating with people, to offer comfort and encouragement when they need it. When I won my first medal in this team, it didn't mean power, it represented teamwork. I found my values and friends in this team. Dragon Boat isn't only limited to China, and I am proud to help develop and grow it as a sport in the United States.

At the same time, I requested to be put in an art class and last summer joined the Outward Bound California with Youth Leadership Corp. On our grueling 14 day

backpacking trip in the majestic Sierra Nevada Mountains, I climbed 12,000 ft. We climbed to the top of Red Mountain and slept beside the King River. The blue sky, red mountain, green forest, pure snow and the shining stars gave me inspiration. In dark night, the shooting stars crossed the sky from east to west every 5 minutes, something I've never seen before. The trip culminated with a 24 hour solo camping, where I reflected on the contrast between the congestion of my daily life and the beauty surrounding me. I was inspired to use my art to express nature.

Afterwards, I came home with new passion and focus. I joined the Youth Leadership Corps, where we participated in monthly service projects all over SF. Additionally, when I returned to school this year, I asked my art teacher to recommend me to AP Art so that I could prepare for a future major in art. I feel like I finally found my passion, a goal, for my future. Before I moved to San Francisco, I was never exposed to nature or had the chance to experience the expression of nature and art. People forget the beauty of outside the city because of life pressure. I want to create my own style of my art that shows the intersection of cities and nature.

I have the confidence to do well in college classes even though I am first generation student. I started from the lowest level of English - English Language Development classes (ELD) and quickly transferred to Honors/AP classes. I maintain my GPA 4.0, got A's for each of my classes so I can be the model for my siblings and so my family will be proud of me.

When I am free I follow a program that under Community Youth Center is called Youth for Community Engagement to serve the community. I frequently visit senior

homes to do fun activities with seniors. I volunteered for tablet classes, helping seniors use their phones, laptops and catch up on technology. I went to visit Mid-Autumn Festival and Halloween events, I saw a lot of leaders with their volunteers holding the yellow line and standing beside every booth to ensure people's safety on the street. I also saw leaders that were standing on crossroads to conduct the traffic. They were wearing YCE shirt under the safety vests, holding walkie talkies. At that moment I realized I wanted to be one of them. In my junior year in Mission High School, I became the president of YCE club. I got the chance to organize people and serve the city.

Every new semester, my club does orientations about YCE to recruit people to support the city. I set up meetings to talk to volunteers about how are the events helping people every week and helping themselves to get leadership experience and community service hours. We also help newcomer students that are from China to know more about the city and make friends. I always talk about my experience with them, help them get use to the different education ideal and culture faster. When we meet the person who speak same language we feel more comfortable in a strange city.

In YCE, we have two main projects: adopt senior buildings and facilitate disaster preparedness training. Mission High School is in charge two of the senior buildings, where we go to senior buildings and do workshops and fun activities with seniors. A lot of seniors are waiting for us every month. Even though we only spend two hours with them, I feel they love this two hours and us. We spend our time to plan different

activities, prepare materials. Even though they are easy activities sometime those can be difficult for them, we would like to hold their hands and patiently repeat the steps. And we love to listen their stories, how their kids are doing, even about their dinner. We don't want them to be sad, but I want them to have someone they can share to. And we teach them about the disaster and how to prepare before it comes.

Disaster preparedness trainings are really important at San Francisco, we set up classes for senior and teenagers. We teach and remind people what to do before an earthquake or fire. I also took CPR training classes and earthquake class. I hope I can help people when the real emergency happen. I acted in a video about CYC earthquake preparedness and the video had posted on YouTube. I talked to my family about the preparedness and being ready for the disaster. I think our preparedness training will help more families and this city. I will keep doing it and I wish my actions and my experiences can inspire more people, they are going to love this city and join my club to serve the community.