A Little Late Is Better Than Never

By Kate Ruff
From Seattle

Growing up, I never realized the importance of getting an education. Going to college after high school was never discussed in my family and it was definitely not in my game plan. Sure, I had friends who were spending their weekends studying for the SAT’s but I always thought, “Why bother? I’m not going to college anyway.” Similar to my parents, I immediately got a job out of high school and went straight to work. For ten years I lived day to day, paycheck to paycheck and just floated through life. Then one day, a friend of mine pulled me aside and encouraged me to go back to school. This person helped me to see and believe in my potential.

Deciding to enroll in community college in your late twenties was a difficult decision to make. I was so embarrassed. I felt like everyone was looking at me because it was obvious how much older I was than everyone else. I’ll never forget walking into my first class, English 101, and being surrounded by a room filled with 18 year olds. My first thought was to turn around and run out but instead of giving into my fears, I stuck with it and chose to get over my pride. I knew deep down inside that I had to start somewhere. I was tired of “going through the motions” and I wanted to set myself up for success. For me, going back to school wasn’t just about getting a degree so I could build a career; acquiring an education also meant that I was simultaneously creating a confidence in myself. This newfound confidence helped me to believe that I could achieve anything that I put my mind to.

I have been at Highline now for three years, and although I still feel the urge to run from every new class I walk into, I feel very fortunate to have come as far as I have. There isn’t a day that goes by that I am not grateful for returning to school when I did and although I still have another two years to go before I obtain my BA, I know that a little late is better than never.

My advice to students who find themselves in a similar situation as I am is to stay focused on the end result. No matter how frustrating or difficult it may be at times, stick with it! I believe Earl Nightingale said it best when he said, “Never give up on a dream just because of the time it will take to accomplish it. The time will pass anyway.”
"Japanese food is always the best." This is what I had thought before I started my college life here. Since I have never been to any foreign countries besides the U.S., foods that are familiar in Japan were my only choice, and I had never paid attention to any kinds of food from different countries. However, my friends whom I met here taught me that “Food” can actually be one of the tools to know about other cultures, which I had never thought of. Since I came here last fall, I met a lot of people from different countries such as Vietnam, Thailand, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea, and so on, and I have always enjoyed hanging out and spending time with them. Although we come from different places, and our backgrounds are completely different from each other, we share a lot of happiness, sadness, problems, gossip, and all kinds of stories, and we laugh hard together all the time. But what is essential to bring us together is FOOD!

Thanks to America, there are tons of different kinds of restaurants around here, and I’ve had many chances to try different kinds of food that I had never tried. Since we are a group of different nationalities, someone in the group knows a lot about the food we try in the restaurant; for example, when we go to a Thai restaurant, our friend from Thailand explains to us what the most popular is or what it looks like. What is more, we can know a little background of their dishes such as what is traditional, is it for a special occasion or home-style, how they eat it, and some other things. Also, our Vietnamese friends often cook their home-country-style food and introduce part of their culture to us. How sweet they are! I am always amazed at their delicious food and kindness, and I love Vietnamese food.

I am so happy that I have such amazing friends here. If I had not been friends with them, I would have never tried Thai and Vietnamese food by myself. Now, Thailand and Vietnam are countries that I would like to visit. I cannot even believe I had never been interested in other Asian countries; they made me want to go there! Through this new experience, I realized that sharing culture is such an amazing thing because it makes my college life enjoyable and colorful. I would like to explore different cultures more and more from now on.
“Are you an international student?” was one of the most common questions people asked me during my first few weeks in Highline.

Flashback to 4 months ago, the calendar on my wall was written “December 18th 2012”. It was such a strange feeling to see my room that used to be so messy was almost empty. All I could see were two suitcases right behind my bedroom door. Here came morning, and I had to prepare myself to go to the airport. A part of me was so happy that I could finally have an opportunity to explore the outside world. In the meantime, questions kept popping up in my mind. “Am I ready for this new journey in life? Am I ready to say goodbye to those familiar faces that I have seen my entire life?”

Yes, I am ready; and I, Putthida Samrith, would be away from a place where I call “Home” for the first time in my life.

The moment when I was on the plane, I came to realize how beautiful my country, Cambodia, was by looking from down from above. The view from the window was getting smaller and smaller until all I could see was a cloud surrounding the wing of the plane, and the rest was just a memory.

Time flies pretty fast. In just a blink of an eye, it’s been 4 months already. The first few weeks I was here were probably the hardest times I have faced in life. It was not distance that hurt the most, but the trauma that followed. I was like a fish out of water. Everything I did, it reminded me of home. The laughs from people around me recalled those moments I had with my best friends. The smell of the fried chicken reminded me of a food from my favorite chef- my extraordinary grandmother. Going to Starbucks reminded me of my sister and the time when we shared a glass of coffee. Taking a bus reminded me of the most important person in my life who always drove me to school ever since I was in kindergarten, the one who has sacrificed everything for the sake of his children - my father.

Without a shadow of doubt, I knew I was homesick. However, I managed to overcome homesickness, and enjoy every single moment of my life right now since I begin to know more people and adjust myself to American culture just like the proverb goes “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.” I firmly believe homesickness is just a temporary feeling and distance is just a number. Sooner or later, I’ll see my family again and make them proud of how much I’ve grown.
I am an international student from Taiwan and this is my second quarter at HCC. It’s really special for me to have the experience to live in Seattle and it has given me a better understanding and appreciation of American students.

The Taiwanese student is very pitiful, for example, when I was a primary school student I had to go to the tutoring center after school at 4 pm, where we do homework and review the classes from the day. That place is kind of hell for me, the teachers are always fierce, and if you don’t get a good score on the test – watch out! – corporal punishment is waiting for you! Finally, when I finished the class, do you think I could go home? No! My mom sent me to enrichment classes! I don’t know how many times I fell asleep on the piano. Every day I felt tired, and I didn’t understand why they wanted me to learn that much. It was just too much for a primary school student!

On the contrary, American students are so lucky. My cousin, Anthony, was born and raised in Seattle. He told me he finished school at 2:30 and he just went home. He didn’t need to go to any tutoring center or enrichment classes. The only thing he needed to do was finish his homework, and then he could watch his favorite cartoons and play games with neighbors. In the United States, corporal punishment is not allowed. Instead, teachers always encourage students because, in the teacher’s eyes, almost all of them are good. They don’t want children to only study for the score; they want their students to learn from experience and mistakes.

The two systems are very different. American schools are not going to instill a lot of knowledge to children, but they manage to lead children’s attention outside the boundless ocean of knowledge. They let children know that life contains lessons they need to learn. Education doesn’t require children to allow the child to memorize a lot of formulas and theorems, but they does teach them how to think and where to find answers; they have never used the test scores to deny a child, but they encourage students to make an effort and commend children for thinking and making their own conclusions. It’s a huge difference between Taiwan and America.
Love is Love

Sexual orientation is not a new topic. However, there are many conflicts around this issue. I had the chance to observe a simple happy wedding of two boys in a small restaurant, so I will write something about sexual orientation in my newsletter.

I come from Vietnam, a small country in Asia where the traditional culture is very strong and people aren’t very opened-minded. That is why gays, lesbians and bisexuals in my country have a hard time speaking out about who they really are. I have a friend who is really nice to other people. He knew he was gay when he was in high school but he couldn’t come out because he knew that his family would be shocked. For a long time, he has been really stressed out and depressed. What had he done to deserve to live in this way? Sometimes, I feel really angry because some people think being gay is a kind of sickness. I have no idea why they think like this.

Even though many countries in the world have big movements to legalize same sex marriage, the rest of the world still sink in the arguments. I know that it could be strange when you see two boys walking hand in hand or a girl kissing another a girl, but if you spend one minute to think about love, you will see it’s normal. Because love is unlimited, love is infinity and we don’t have any rules for love. Love comes from our heart. Love is something we can’t control. So what is wrong when two people fall in love with each other? In addition, everyone only lives once so everyone must to take time to live in the best way that makes them feel happy. Everyone must live with who they really are. Thus, there shouldn’t be shame when a lesbian or a gay man chooses to come out and live their life. One of the most important things to remember is that lesbians, gays and bisexuals are all human beings, just as we are. They have the right to live, to love and to be loved in their way. When we deny their rights or discriminate against them, we deny our own rights and discriminate against ourselves, too. Meanwhile, scientists have proven that homosexuality is not a sickness. It’s natural. There is no reason to discriminate against them. We should accept them for who they are.

Today, I went to a small restaurant and I had the chance to see a big happy family that was congratulating the wedding of two young boys. I was really happy about that. They looked so young, so in love and so happy. Suddenly, I missed my friend so bad. I just wish that one day all over the world everybody will accept same sex marriage is as something very normal and beautiful.
PAST EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

HI HI ADVENTURE

PAINTBALL

SWIMMING POOL PARTY