"Culture Shock: Newcomer Story"

In August 2015, I left from China and first came to the United States as an international transfer student. After a nearly sixteen-hour flight, I arrived in Minneapolis-Saint Paul. I knew that I was going to have a fresh start in the Twin Cities, and I was excited to be a student of U of M.

However, like other foreigners, I experienced culture shock and I would like to share several cultural differences when I adapted to the American society.

Firstly, greetings are different between the two countries. Americans tend to greet people with a big smile, a handshake and even a hug. Sometimes, they would say “hi” to strangers or have a brief conversation with others. But in China, we hardly greet someone we don’t know. Facing the warm greetings in America, I was quite shy at first. I would avoid their gaze or not give any answer to them. While at present, I have got accustomed to the American ways of greetings. I would also start with “Hey, how are you doing today?” or even have a friendly talk with Americans.

Secondly, the food culture is another big difference. For instance, Americans don’t drink hot water. Instead, they drink ice water even in the cold winter. They often eat raw vegetables instead of stir-frying. I had my first attempt to eat raw carrots and spinach here. Americans have crazy love for cheese and cheese could appear everywhere. I also learned that there are various kinds of cheese, like American cheese, cheddar, mozzarella, feta, parmesan, and goat cheese. Moreover, the salty popcorn, the excessive sweetness in the desserts, and the huge size of drinks are all beyond my imagination. So I would like to make additional remarks on the ordering such as no cheese, less sweet, small size, even though I know it's weird.

Interestingly, the drinking laws in America are more strict. The legal age for purchasing or consuming alcohol is 21, whereas in China, there is no clear legal age for drinking. Apart from that, there is no tipping culture in my hometown since everything is included in the bill. While in America, I have to calculate the appropriate amount of tip to be given to the servers after a meal.

It is an interesting experience to fit myself in the new environment and I think I have already fell in love with here. I like the U in four seasons. I also like pizza, pasta, Chipotle, and I would like to try to make American-style food as well. I usually have coffee to wake me up in the morning. After a year and a half, I have found my own lifestyle in the Twin Cities. Thanks for this unforgettable experience and hope you enjoyed my story. Thank you.