

### **My Taiwanese Background and Me**

Born in 1970 in Taoyuan, Taiwan, my mother lived and studied there for nearly three decades. Since she was brought up in the collectivist culture that typifies Taiwan and many other East Asian countries, my brothers and I were raised with individualist values from my father and collectivist values from her. Aside from constantly prompting my family to take our shoes off in the house, my mother's integration of cultural values has engendered my current perspectives on society. For example, the central pillar of collectivist cultures, group before self, remains omnipresent in my daily life, helping mold me into an effective, capable leader and driving me to numerous leadership positions in my classes and extracurriculars.

A vivid example that comes to mind occurred this past January, when I had to present a potential bylaw amendment to the Board of Directors of the Pennsylvania Technology Student Association (PA-TSA), one of my many extracurriculars that I participate in. The amendment, which aimed to limit the number of candidates that each chapter could run for state office, had been struck down by the TSA student delegation over and over again for the past 30 years, which didn't bode well for our chance to succeed. Even with the odds stacked against us, my friend Mark and I believed that this year was the best shot we would ever have at passing it since it was the first time in PA-TSA history that four out of the eight state officers were from the same chapter. Mark and I believed that given time, that same school could eventually achieve a majority on the officer team, reducing the amount of representation for the rest of PA-TSA. Serving to protect the interests of smaller chapters like ourselves, who would never have the amount of resources that larger chapters possess, I traveled to Harrisburg that cold January morning to present our amendment to the Board, and after some initial opposition due to clarification issues, it was eventually approved and posted for all of PA-TSA to see. At the State Conference, a fierce debate ensued during the business meeting, and we ended up passing the amendment by an overwhelming majority. This incredibly memorable experience, where I worked with many others to protect the organization from repressing the influence of small chapters, was only made possible due to the cultural values my mother instilled through numerous childhood lessons and many trips back to Taiwan.

Collectivist cultures, as stated before, emphasize the group over the individual, and this mindset has led me to place the well-being of others at a higher level of importance than most of my friends would ever consider, since they have only grown up in the heavily individualist culture present in the United States. For instance, my drive to pass this amendment was primarily influenced by the collectivist mindset of group before self, where I placed the future well-being of the PA-TSA at the utmost importance and fully committed myself to passing the bylaw amendment. Whereas before, influence over the entire organization was concentrated in a single high school chapter, now that influence is guaranteed to be spread among a greater portion of the organization, ensuring that those in power truly represent the interest of all members. This also upholds another large aspect of my mother's cultural values: representatives in power will take care of their constituents, and in turn their constituents will take care of those in power. Overall, my mom's Taiwanese, collectivist background balanced with my dad's American, individualist background gives me a unique, cultured perspective of the world, which in turn has led me to experiences, such as the passage of the bylaw amendment, that I would've never considered partaking in had I lacked my current worldviews.

Finally, the influence that my mom's cultural values has had on me will continue to affect me throughout my future. The values learned throughout my childhood will help shape how I interact with my future peers, coworkers, bosses, and more as I strive for the continued caring of others. Additionally, the leadership skills I've gained in part due to my unique background will help me immensely in my

future, since as a prospective engineer, I will have to put those leadership skills to great use as I manage, guide, and lead numerous groups and projects in the workforce. I believe that engineering is the perfect culmination of my cultural and personal values, as I get to solve real-world problems that could potentially benefit millions of people, and work with many fantastic individuals in the process. Ultimately, my Taiwanese background will have a huge impact on my future, and I wouldn't want to have it any other way.