

Hey Crazy English Speaker fans,

How have you been? As I was preparing for this issue's column, I thought writing you all a letter might work better than an essay because I do want to share with you some of my personal thoughts after studying in America for about a year and a half.

Something you may not know is that the keyword "China" arouses heated attention now in America. China's rapid development has impressed the world. In America, a large amount of news reports, books, and many other forms of media focus on China. Because of the booming economy in China, young Americans are learning Chinese in order to succeed in global competition. A few Chinese American writers to whom I have spoken all agree that China has become a hot subject in America. I think that it is a good sign for the cultural exchange between the two countries.

However, I notice that not many Americans really understand Chinese culture, particularly our everyday life in contemporary China. For instance, I am surprised that so few Americans have heard of my hometown city, Guangzhou, when I introduce myself. But if I tell them Guangzhou used to be called Canton, most people recognize it. I guess by now I am used to hearing questions about China which reflect the time of my parents' generation. The Cold War ideology still remains in the conservative Americans' minds. What pains me is that there aren't many contemporary Chinese voices in the English-reading society. For a majority of Americans, their image of China is shaped by native born Americans and overseas Chinese who lived in the yesterday of China. They have little knowledge of China today. They have con-



cern, fear and anger rather than joy, honor and hope for China's progress.

As much as we love the English language, we should not limit ourselves to only being a good speaker, but we should also try to be a good writer. I strongly encourage you to read more English literature and write *in English* about your life, your dreams, your thoughts, and about anything that inspires you or interests you. The world needs to hear the young voice of China. And you can make that contribution.

Let's work together. Good luck!

Best,
Karen Zhang (in Pittsburgh) 