

# To Give or Not to Give?

Karen in America

By Karen Zhang



莎士比亚在《哈姆雷特》中有一个名句——“To be, or not to be, that is a question.”如今，Karen在大洋彼岸却碰到了这样的问题——“To give or not to give?”究竟是怎样的Culture Shock让Karen产生这样的疑问呢？

One day, I went to Radio Shack—an American electronics retail<sup>[零售]</sup> store—for a can of dust remover spray<sup>[除尘喷雾]</sup>. As I was ready to check out, the sales guy at the cash register scanned my purchase and asked me, “What’s your last name?”

*What?* I couldn’t understand what my name had to do with my payment. I looked at him and asked him to repeat the question. He did and I answered him unwillingly.

“What’s your first name?” He asked.

I felt strange but I dared not to say no. So I spelled out my name for him but I still didn’t know why he needed to know my name, my

home address, ZIP code, phone number and email address. I’m not used to giving out my personal information to strangers.

In fact, as a kid in China, I was always reminded not to talk to strangers in public, and to be discreet<sup>[谨慎的]</sup> about my personal information. Most Chinese are anyway. They’d rather introduce themselves by their family name. But Americans seem to be more open about that. They often introduce themselves by their first name or full name. If you hit it off with strangers, you may gain their trust and learn more about them. I’m told most American families register their names and phone numbers in the White Pages of a big telephone book that goes to everyone with a fixed phone. It’s an easy way to find people for free. My first reaction to that was: Oh, that’s dangerous! It encourages malicious<sup>[恶意的]</sup> crime.

That’s exactly what’s happening on the Internet. I have no idea how people can be so honest about themselves on Facebook and other social network websites. They put their age, gender, marital<sup>[婚姻的]</sup> status, interests etc., and sometimes even phone number and home address on their profile. Anyone who is a computer geek<sup>[网虫]</sup> may know how to steal their identity. Just that thought makes me shiver.

After the sales guy input the information on the computer, he said, “Okay, we’ll email you a ten-dollar discount coupon.”

Oh, that’s what all these questionings were about. I thanked him with a fake smile and left. I exposed my personal information just for a ten-dollar discount coupon! I regretted that I did not ask him why he needed the data. 🙄