


People First

By Karen Zhang



在今年发生的波士顿爆炸案和旧金山空难中，均有中国同胞遇难，使得国人对两起事件的关注度较高。身在大洋彼岸的Karen，虽然没有亲身经历、亲眼目睹，但心中也有另一番感触，让我们来听听她对于美国处处“以人为本”的想法吧。



Early this year, the news of the Boston bombing shook the world. The tragedy not only injured over 250 innocent people, but also killed three others, including a Chinese student. Perhaps because the victim is Chinese—the only foreigner in the death toll^[伤亡人数], instantly^[立即], all Chinese eyeballs at home and abroad are drawn to the incident.


Now three months have passed.^[1] While China is coping with its sorrow for another tragedy in which two young Chinese died in a plane crash in San Francisco, there is the news that the family of that Chinese graduate student killed in the Boston Marathon bombing will receive US\$2.2 million in compensation^[赔偿]. You may have learned about that long before you read this article. But what I want to address is that it shows how Americans value life—even a foreigner is no different.

If one's life can be measured by money, the compensation given to the Chinese graduate student was too much by Chinese standards. The contrast of attitude toward life between China and America is drastic. I was not at the

Karen in America


scene when the Boston bombing occurred. But for the following two weeks the national news kept on showing touching images of how strangers helping strangers selflessly and how the handicapped^[残疾的] victims recovered with love from their community.

Not only that, upon the request of local officials, a foundation to assist the victims and families affected—known as the Boston One Fund—was soon established right after the April 15 attack. Unlike the government-mandated^[批准的] US\$7.1 billion fund for victims of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the entire fund for victims in the Boston Marathon bombing comes from private donations. Within a few months, the foundation has raised more than US\$60 million for the victims and their families.



By comparison, a number of children who died in the Sichuan earthquake five years ago, from the collapse of badly built schools, are still seeking compensation. Or, let's say if someone got robbed on the street, would you be the first one to stop the thief? Or would you falter over a possible weapon on the thief?

I may have gone off on a tangent^[离题]. In China, I would not trust the drivers to let me cross the streets, even when I have the right of the way. I am always warned I should look at the traffic but not the lights. In America, if you drive, for example, in the parking lot of a mall, you have to yield to pedestrians. Even though you have the right of the way, say at the change of a traffic light, if a pedestrian passes by your car, you have to stop and let him or her go.

No matter if it's from current events or my everyday life, I feel the true significance of “People First” in America. As Chinese often say, you should treat others as you want to be treated. 

注[1] 本文写作时间为2013年7月。
(作者观点不代表本刊立场。)