

## **Huan Xie**

### *Please Leave Your Ego at the Door*

We consider our ego as essential, this self that we have constructed. But let me tell you that you haven't constructed that self. Somebody has done it for you. People have told you whom you should be and whom you should not be, how you should move, how you should smell, and how you should do most of what you do?

Reflecting on my experience at the Emerging Leader Institute, this class has positively influenced me to discover the world and myself through anew lens. From the inspirations and encouragement found at ELI, I've begun to step out of my innate boundaries and to be mindful in observing my surroundings without any personal constrains, such as what I've been taught to hear, see, or understand merely because of my background.

How wonderful to step back and do what the Asian says: "Leave your ego at the door." Step outside of yourself and leave it there. That is the only way that new messages are going to come in. The self constructs enormous walls around itself for 'self' protection. It calls those walls reality. Anything that doesn't go along with what the caged self sees as real, the wall doesn't let through so that by the time the new perception comes in, it's back to what it wanted to be?

Appreciating cultural diversity has always been a part of my values, but I never had the courage to take a greater role in influencing others of what I believe in until now. For my ELI project, I have chosen the issue of promoting culture appreciation here on UK campus. In the beginning, I've encountered a few obstacles, which prevented me from making any progress in my project partly because I was intimidated to become

someone who has the characteristics that fit my definition of a "leader" However, from ELI, I've accepted a new way of defining what a leader is. Instead of seeing a leader as a dominating authority figure, which contrasts my leadership style, I choose to take a leading role, not to dictate but to teach something beneficial to my peers and to the community. My experience at ELI not only encouraged me to be more enthused in playing a louder part as a leader, but also more importantly, inspired me to open my mind to the world.

With the help of my mentor, Christine and the International Student Advisor, Karen, I have developed confidence in my ideas and I began creating and building goals that have definite outlooks. Although I have little experience in starting a project on my own, through planning and organizing specific activities, my project is becoming a success. My choice for promoting culture appreciation is by art. Art does not need any translation. Art is a free form of expression everyone can learn to appreciate with a willing heart. Because art and our way of life throughout history imitate each other reciprocally, by sharing art, we can share our heritage and our culture. Therefore, with the tremendous financial support we've gained from several International as well as American campus organizations, two art workshops have taken place with participation from a variety of culturally-diverse UK students.

One of the most interesting ELI sessions that has changed my mindset and inspired me to take the initiative to promote art and culture was the Mindfulness: Releasing Creative Potential session with Professor Lance Brunner. We learn from our experience, nevertheless, frequently we let our past dictate negative our perceptions of our surroundings. Even though it is necessary to learn from our mistakes, we should not

let those mistakes intimidate us, causing us to fail to listen and to receive the knowledge we can gain to further develop our character.

Although I've come in contact with many cross-cultural events, the Appreciating Diversity session reinforced me to take the time to re-evaluate and to pay attention to the invisible, unspoken barriers we construct between the so-called outsiders and ourselves. Sometimes the negative assumptions we intentionally or accidentally comment about those who are different from us simply because of race, nationality, culture, or gender, cause us to put a wall to isolate ourselves from discovering who they are and who we are.

"And so most of us continue through life seeing what we will to see, hearing what we will to hear, smelling what we will to smell, and everything else remains totally invisible.

All things are there. All we have to do to see them is to let them in, touch them, taste them, chew them, hug them, experience them as they are--not as we are."

—Sidney Jourard

So I invite you to leave your ego at the door and appreciate everything and everyone that craft you to be who you are.