

陳俊嘉
410836073

The American Dream

Life in the United States is very different from that of Taiwan, the people are different, the food, hobbies, lifestyles, the list goes on. And I find it really intriguing that its such, that this world of us, despite how interconnect we are. Through the media, the daily happenings of the news and the ease of communication we are allotted with our electronic devices and social media, that we are still so incredibly diverse. New Mexico, the state from which I just spent a semester in, is just 1/50th of the United States, there are still 49 more state each with their unique landscapes and cultures. Thats incredible, I reiterate: its incredible! Thats why I believe if given the chance one should travel, not to the United States but in general. To experience what this blue marble of ours can offer, to see what humans and their ingenuity have achieved, because someone has to be there to witness it. This is my personal experience in the United States of America, New Mexico. The land of enchantment.

Some say it's actually the land of entrapment; due to its low prices and generally lower taxes some people are willed into living into this desert that occasionally produces methamphetamines in the form of shiny blue rocks. Once you are comfy your wages are so low that theoretically you wouldn't be able to live in the nearby states, those being Utah and Colorado; pretty expensive states. But I didn't feel trapped, no if anything I felt freed, like the world was truly mine. Being out of the country and studying, which gave me some leeway to have fun, since I don't have to work that much, really gave me something to go for. This time life truly felt like it was mine, and no one else's, maybe its the land of the free clouding my judgment. But it really did feel freeing as heck, like nothing could stop me and no one could tell me what to do. Because this life, of which I only got one, was up to me to live the way I wanted to live it. And live did I.

There is this one thought; some believe in reincarnation, some believe in a higher life after death and others believe in absolute blank, once you're dead that's all. And there is truly no way of telling which of these silly doctrines is actually right, but for me personally, it's the thought that consciousness is a gift. A big beautiful shinny gift, that only a few organism in this universe even get. Sure a rock in space still goes through a life, the motions of birth, evolution and death, but a rock doesn't know what happened, it isn't conscious of its own existence. We on the other hand are, and that gives us the chance to reflect and experience things no other object in the universe can. So why not make the most of it. So that's what I did, or attempted at least.

The first few weeks there were interesting, I was still trying to accommodate myself and mostly there was a nervous energy looming over me, since I didn't actually know how everything would go. I was truly afraid that it would be same old same old. Like this is all life has to offer. On this treacherous 30 hour flight to Los Angeles, and the Utah, I had a very nice 9 hour layover in the Philippines, where truly a worse airport there isn't. The lobby for the flights is locked to that one section with only two restaurants, so you are really confined to this couple of light lobbies with hundreds of people stuck in the same layover situation. Luckily, I was able to find a couple of Taiwanese people who were also flying to LA. Thats how I passed my 9 hours I made friends and tried to make the time go away occasionally sleeping and such. Turned out that one of the Taiwanese people, this girl named Tiffany could take me straight to my host family's house in LA. Due to unforeseen circumstance my flight was delayed in a way where I had to stay in LA for 3 days. They were lovely, taking me to many places in LA and really treating me like family. This was a completely random family I had never met, and luck would have it they knew my friends brother who went to the same university, which I found incredible. Like, what type of small ass world do we live in?

Well these three days passed with some adventures, like the apparently closed on Wednesdays Griffith Observatory, sad. But my time was up and Utah was next, I had a friend that I had previously met in Utah that I hadn't seen in around 3 years. And it was extremely comforting I tell you, that the second I saw him in his blue ford, that nothing had changed. Like sure we both grew up and matured, but man was it like old times. The golden times had not changed, he was still the same goofball and me too, just more mature. And on we went adventuring in the mountains and climbing our hearts away. These incredible winding canyons, gleaming red, orange and yellow with thousands of years of erosion. Soaring peaks of granite that would surround us, and these simply magnificent huge boulders that one could just climb. Never have I felt more at home, then with my home and these climbing problems in front of me. And that's how I spent my week climbing to my hearts content, eating crappy food and climbing some more. It was truly sad to have to go, but time was up as it always has to be and my next destination was New Mexico, the land of entrapment...

If was greeted by this mid 40's kinda nerdy looking man, and his mega nerdy son. They helped me carry their luggage up their CR-V, which apparently had been totaled no less than 3 times, and we headed to their home. A charming New Mexico themed house made of adobe, well stucco and concrete, but it looked like adobe. And they were amazing, they treated me like family and helped me along so much. They showed me their daily routines and told me about their lives, took me to the zoo and some of their favorite places in New Mexico. It was really wholesome, although I would not recommend the zoo, it had a couple cool exhibits but it was overall quite average. Life in New Mexico was interesting it was full of what I would call, "ranger" people, or people who are really up to everything. And New Mexico despite being smack in the middle of conservative-land was actually really progressive and liberal. It had a basically free education system, free transportation and despite its incredibly high crime rate, a trying police force. It was impressive to say the least. I was lucky to make friends my first week with some of the church helpers in the area, which gave me the chance to loan an incredible road bike, by far my favorite possession, and join in many fun trips. My first week there I even went on a camping trip, which let me tell you was full of random misadventures. So the budget was for like 20 people but only like 10 showed up. Half of the people were mandated, so they didn't actually want to go, and mid trip our car got stuck in the mud and it was raining in this desert. But it was incredibly fun, I believe that shared grief is sometimes a lot of fun. To have this experience to share with someone, and I mean it was a storm that was brewing and half the other people had left already, the car got stuck in the mud, the pickup got stuck in the grass and we were basically just left for dead. I also smashed my foot with a container. Not a pleasant start to say the least, but in actuality it was amazing. Everyone was so hectic and energetic from the sudden rain and mishaps; we bought a few alcoholic drinks to celebrate this misadventure, and our dear friend's 21st birthday, and just partied the rain and troubles away. Next morning we woke up and left. In a newly non-intoxicated state, we were able to turn on the 4x4 which was really hard in the rain and intoxicated at night, and the mud was fully hardened so getting out was no issue. So the moral of the story, fun can be had anywhere and sometimes maybe just wait? And yeah, this was it, this was my camping trip the first week I was in New Mexico, and from there I realized that I was going to do great. I really felt the potential that this country had behind it, the freedoms it allowed its citizens to truly grow. School was hard, I took many credits, some of which were only auditory because I truly wanted to learn as much as I could. Days would consist of me waking up at 8am to go to calculus, and then doing homework on the side, whenever I had free time. At class, lunch, literally anytime, and it was exhausting, I literally had no lunch breaks, but it was worth it because at 4 after all my classes as over, even if I didn't finish everything school was done for me. I would go and do all sorts of fun things, rock climbing, hiking, partying. The world was mine and mine alone after 4. And this was an incredibly great strategy, it allowed me to be able to finish all my school work before Friday. And you know what happens Fridays. Every Friday I would party or go out, or attend a game, or go hiking or camping. Every weekend was full of enjoyment and fun. I was

truly living the dream, and the friends I made where by the handful, I knew some many people around campus that I practically felt famous. It was heaps of fun.

To end, one last story, me and a two friends, which I met that same day, where walking around looking for a party. The university was huge, which meant that I did not know at all where I was headed. And in this confusion we ended up walking a good 2 hours looking for the student center where there was supposed to be a party. I ditched some friends because I literally couldn't find the place and once we finally arrived it was over already. Like damn, so me and this french dude that would always try to teach you french and this Texan girl, who would later become my best friend there, but was also just a chaos tornado, just walked around until we reached some parking lot. And naturally there was this incredibly sketchy guy in his BMW, so doing the reasonable thing: I approached him and asked him if he could take us to a liquor store to buy some alcohol. He said everything was closed, but that he would hand out with us if we didn't mind. And we just chilled and talked and joked, it was really fun surprisingly. There was just four idiots standing in the parking lot just having a blast, and this random guy, just became our friend. He was so touched by our personalities that he went back to his car, and out of the trunk got us some tickets to a baseball game: front row seats. For free just like that. I can say that this was a life changing experience, giving me the confidence that I can truly survive and have fun anywhere. That life is in my hands and that everything good and bad that happens to me is up to me. That life has a lot to offer like the random adventures I just blabbered on about. Two out of maybe hundreds. Life was like a box of chocolates, you never knew what you were getting: sometimes it was bitter, sometimes it was sweet, but man was it delicious. An amalgamation of all the good and the bad, to give you a neatly wrapped experience. New Mexico, you charming devil, you sure enchanted me.