Encounters with Discrimination: A collection of Writings by ESL Students at Mission College

Edited By Myo Kyaw Myint
This journal is dedicated to all my students who have experienced discrimination at one point or another in their lives and yet undeterred continue to strive towards worthy goals. They have all taught me so much about courage and perseverance.

This journal is also dedicated to my wife – Ohnmar Winn - whose unshakable belief in the wisdom of the Buddha has guided my approach to life and has led me to take both failure and success in stride so that I remain committed to the ideals of student equity and student success in the face of racism, sexism, and a few other negative – isms sweeping across our country.
Encounters with Discrimination

1. Introduction  Myo Kyaw Myint
2. Commentary on the Paragraphs  Myo Kyaw Myint
3. Bad Experience with a Cashier  Ismael C Vaszuez
4. Discrimination in the Workplace  Binan Du
5. Discrimination at the Airport 1  Mai Truong
6. Discrimination at the Airport 2  Jaspreet Kaur
7. Discrimination in the Classroom  Nanan Tang
8. Discrimination against Blacks  Huong Khong
9. Gender Discrimination  Trang Nguyen
10. Bad Experience at a Shopping Center  Phuong Van
11. Racial Discrimination while Shopping  Ei Phyu Tun
12. Discrimination at Work  Duong Le
13. Gender Discrimination in Korean Culture    Kate Lim
14. Discrimination at Work                Hoang Pham
15. Facing Discrimination                Khoa Vo
Introduction

When I started introducing topics, such as prejudice, discrimination, racism, and sexism in my ESL reading and writing classes, I was focused on capturing on how they as immigrants to the US might have encountered discrimination and racism and coming up with ways to help them cope with such issues in a positive manner that may lead to a better understanding of their rights and responsibilities in society. With that in mind, I had created a two-week module that basically introduced such terms as “racism, sexism, prejudice” and “discrimination” to my students with the help of articles and short videos. In particular, the students enjoyed watching and learning from popular videos like “Where are you from?” and “How Micro-aggressions are like mosquito bites”. At the end of the two-week module, students were expected to produce a short paragraph or a short essay that would describe an experience they or someone close to them had with regard to discrimination or racism. Since this module was used in a number of different classes of varying levels of proficiency, some students were able to produce the traditional five paragraph essays while others could only manage short paragraphs. I truly thought these essays and paragraphs would reveal how my students – mostly new immigrants to the US – have been exposed to the ugly truth about discrimination and racism and would mark the
beginning of a change in their attitude about such issues and would help them turn a negative experience into one that could inform them about their rights and responsibilities. I was both right and wrong. True, there were a good number of paragraphs that did describe in detail their own experiences or experiences of someone they knew as victims of discrimination, but there were also a number of paragraphs that dealt with discrimination practiced by the students’ families or even the countries where they came from. This “unintended consequence” of the project while totally unexpected was actually proof that the project had indeed worked since it showed that students were actually examining the issues under question quite deeply and were actually thinking critically about terms like discrimination, racism, and sexism. Since some of these students were only at the intermediate level in terms of English proficiency, I had had my doubts about their ability to understand such issues, but here they were writing of such issues from a perspective that I had not even thought of myself as an instructor. As you read their earnest, heart-felt writings, I hope that like me you will be pleasantly surprised by their views and ideas and will be able to look beyond their minor failings in grammar and choice of words to the deeper and more critical issues that they are trying to raise. Whatever you might think about their skills in English or the lack thereof, I truly believe that you will be touched by their courage,
humility and willingness to learn and positively engage with the new culture in which they find themselves. Their courage and their humility give me hope that despite the toxic atmosphere in which we all live today, we may in the near future be able to overcome all the hatred and all the animosity that seem to be enveloping this nation and emerge as a model society in which diversity is not simply tolerated but embraced and celebrated as it should be.
Commentary

In the very first piece of writing, Ismael calmly relates his experience with a cashier who treated him with disrespect simply because he didn’t look “white”. His calmness belies the fact that such occurrences have become almost every day occurrences under this government. In the second piece, Binan recounts how she was mistreated at work by her co-workers who themselves were in the minority in the US. As we continue our struggle for inclusion and social justice, we must be mindful that the system in place is purposely set up in such a way as to pit minorities against minorities and that it is only by changing the system that we can all benefit. In the third piece, Mai talks about discrimination that takes place outside of the US. The story she describes is something that can still be seen today in many parts of Asia where racial profiling is the norm rather than the exception. Her story is a perfect foil to those in the US who like to point out that “they have it worse over there.” Mai is acknowledging that while discrimination exists everywhere, it is no excuse for us to tolerate it here or” there” wherever there might be. Contrast Mai’s piece to that of Kaur’s who vividly describes her husband’s treatment at a US airport for daring to wear a turban, and we will see that despite our claim to be a developed country, we still have quite a way to go where humanity and decency are concerned.
I am most disturbed by Nanan’s story of her friend because it tells me clearly that we still have a lot of work to do even at my own college where well-intentioned and well-meaning professors and staff do not always understand the plight of an immigrant especially one whose language skills are not quite up to par. The next piece by Huong continues the theme touched upon by Binan in her story of discrimination at work and again reminds us that until and unless we are able to dismantle the system and replace it with one that truly promotes social justice and equity for all, tensions among the different minority groups will remain high as they were intended to be by those favoring the status quo. Trang’s piece simply entitled “gender discrimination” is a sad but moving piece that illustrates how our ESL students are able to take a lesson on discrimination and turn it into a self-reflection. The piece by Phuong demonstrates once again how minorities can come into conflict with one another as they all compete to survive in a society clearly designed for the benefit of one race and one race only. The last and final piece by Ei Phyu highlights the kind of micro-aggressions and micro-invalidations that many of the immigrant students face every day.

The essays by Duong Le, Phuongchi Pham, Kate Lim, Hoang Pham, and Khoa Vo all deal eloquently and passionately with various forms of discrimination.
and instead of looking backward look forward to what our society could be if we were to one day eradicate all instances of discrimination.

For things to change, responsible people in our society need to follow the brave example of the students mentioned above and search deeply inside their souls and ask themselves the question – am I truly creating a society where everyone regardless of gender, race, sexual preference and social status are at least provided with an opportunity to overcome their problems and find success or am I intent on protecting the status quo that has allowed one race and one gender to dominate at the expense of other races and other genders. The answer to that question may well hold the key to the future of humans in general and to the future of the United States in particular. For those of us invested in student equity and student success, we can only hope to carry on the struggle no matter what the future may bring.
Bad Experience with a Cashier -

Ismael C Vaszuez

I’m going to share a short experience that happened to me. Months ago we went to celebrate a family reunion, and we wanted to have something to drink, so we stopped at a wine shop, and we decided to buy some wine. I was in line waiting to pay and after waiting around ten or fifteen minutes, it was my turn. The cashier who was white looked at me and started speaking in Spanish. I told her that I spoke English, but she continued speaking in Spanish. I felt bad, but I couldn’t stop her. Then, she asked for my ID. I showed her my ID from my country of origin. She refused to look at it, and asked for an ID from America. I told her the truth. I left my driver’s license in the car. She said, “go get it.” There were many people behind me, so I said “Do I have to wait in line again?” She said, “Of course.” She didn’t even say sorry. I already waited in line about fifteen minutes, so I didn’t want to wait another fifteen or twenty minutes. I had shopped at this place for a long time, and never had this kind of experience before. This was a new cashier and she was white. I told myself – “Don’t shop there again.”
I moved to the United States 3 years ago. I was working at a restaurant at _________ hotel. On October 9, 2015, there was only one customer sitting at a table in our restaurant. One waitress who was Hispanic came over to me and told me to take some bread and water to the customer. My position at the restaurant was cashier, not waiter or waitress. So I told her that I needed to do my business first. Before she had asked me to do many things not part of my job, such as cleaning tables, serving customers and mopping the floor. This was the first time, I said “No” to her. She was very mad at me and went back into the kitchen. I don’t know what she said to the supervisor because he came out and told me that I must not be rude with my colleagues. I tried to explain what happened, but the waitress joined us and started saying that I didn’t understand anything because my English was bad. They both spoke very fast and in Spanish, so I asked them to speak English and to speak more slowly. They both laughed and made fun of my pronunciation and said “Can you understand this? Can you understand that? No, you can’t understand anything...” I remember this until now. I cried for a long
time. After that day, they both gave me a hard time. I really want to do something, but I can’t do anything. That’s why I want to improve my English.

Someday I’ll change my life.
Discrimination at the Airport 1 - Mai B Truong

My sister-in-law and two girlfriends travelled to Singapore from Vietnam three years ago. They were all about thirty years old. They didn’t travel with a tour group, but were backpacking tourists. They had booked return tickets a week after their date of arrival in Singapore, and had made hotel reservations for seven days and six nights. They were very excited and expected to have a wonderful time. But when they got off the plane in Singapore, they were refused entry. They were put in separate rooms and queried. Without any explanations at all, they were forced to answer many questions, such as “What were their jobs? How much money did they bring? And “Are they married?” The immigration people and the customs people ransacked their belongings looking for something. After two or three hours, they were asked if they came to Singapore to engage in the sex industry. Of course, my sister-in-law and her friends were horrified. They were nice women in Vietnam and they were ashamed to be thought of as sex workers. Finally, they were denied entry into Singapore and forced to return to Vietnam. The people at the airport never apologized for their actions and to this day, the
government in Singapore maintains that there are too many women from Asian countries coming to Singapore to participate in the sex industry.
Discrimination at the Airport 2 -

Jaspreet Kaur

This happened when I was travelling to Canada with my husband for vacation. My husband was stopped at the airport security check due to his turban. While he was waiting in line for the scanning, a security officer pulled my husband aside, and asked him to remove his turban. My husband said to the officer, “Sir this is a symbol of my religion. It will be insulting to take my turban off, but you can use scanning device to scan my turban if you want.” My husband was trying to explain his religion and his religious values to the officer, but the officer insisted that he takes off the turban. The situation was starting to turn ugly, but fortunately another officer decided to call the supervisor. When the supervisor came, my husband explained again why he didn’t want to take off his turban. This time, the supervisor agreed to just scan the turban and when nothing was found we were allowed to board the plane. This story ended well, but both my husband and I felt bad that we were under suspicion just because he was wearing a turban.
Discrimination in the Classroom -

Nannan Tang

My friend told me about discrimination she suffered in a classroom. She was taking a _____ class at Mission. She said that when she tried to talk to native speakers in her class, they didn’t want to talk to her. She wanted to make new friends, but nobody wanted to talk with her. She felt that they disliked her because she was different. Sometimes, the teacher asked students to form groups for group work and no groups wanted her. Even when the teacher placed her in a group, she felt isolated because nobody in the group would talk to her. She wanted to tell the teacher and ask for help, but she didn’t have confidence in herself. Sometimes in group discussions, she had some good ideas, but since no one would listen to her, she was afraid to say anything. The few times she spoke, many students laughed at her pronunciation and some made fun of her. Maybe the teacher was too busy and didn’t notice or she noticed but didn’t want to say anything. Finally, my friend dropped the class although her grades were not that bad.
ENGAGE ME!
Discrimination against Blacks –

Huong Khong

My uncle has three children and they are all very nice, but one of them dislikes blacks. Usually he is kind to everybody and friendly, but he is not kind to blacks. Once we were invited to a birthday party. There were two black persons at the party. When Tony saw them, he looked uncomfortable. Then, the two black guys came over to talk to us. Not only did he not talk to them, but he also moved to another room away from them. I was embarrassed by this, but I could not stop him. I don’t know the reason why he doesn’t like black people. I asked him once. He said that they are unfriendly and surly. I don’t know where he got that idea, but whenever he sees a black man around our apartment, he watches him carefully. I guess he is prejudiced against blacks.
In my country there is gender discrimination. People think boys will be more helpful than girls. Many families are unhappy because they don’t have sons. More than 20 years ago, most families had a lot of children. They wanted to have boys as much as possible. If the wife gives birth to only daughters, the husband will be angry and want to divorce the wife. I used to see my neighbor’s family. They have four daughters and no sons. The husband was angry and was beating his wife and children very brutally. My family is an example. I am the first child of my parents. My parents were disappointed because I turned out to be a girl. That’s terrible. When I was a child, I had to wear boys’ clothes and style of hair like a boy. Some people thought I was really a boy. The second time, my mom gave birth to another girl – my sister. My father got really angry about that. He said if my mom didn’t have a boy next time, he would divorce her. Finally, they had a son. My father was very happy. Everything was back to normal. Now, I hope there will be no gender discrimination in my country..
Bad Experience at a Shopping Center -

Phuong Van

One Sunday, I went to the Great Mall. I couldn’t find the Daiso Shop. I didn’t remember its entrance. I saw a security guard in front of the store. I asked him for help. He said something very quickly and I couldn’t understand because he spoke too fast. I requested him to speak slowly please. He looked angry and said something again and again very quickly. I didn’t understand what he was saying. Then, suddenly, he turned around and just left me. I was hurt and confused. Later, my friends told me about that guard. They said he didn’t like Asians. He didn’t like to speak with Asians. I felt very bad. He shouldn’t be working at the Great Mall because there are many Asians going there.
Racial Discrimination while Shopping  
– Ei Phyu Tun

No matter how successful you become in America, you’re still faced with racism. It was Sunday and I was walking around the shopping area. I stopped by a famous store to find a brand-new handbag for my mother. I asked a white saleswoman to show me the leather handbag, but she ignored me the first time. Therefore, I asked her a second time again. She directed me to another discounted handbag store. I knew what she was doing. She looked down on me assuming I wasn’t there to spend any money. Even though I was dressed well, she felt I wasn’t a steady or high class customer and so, not worth her time and energy. At the time, I tried to explain to her even though my English was bad. I said, “No matter if I’m not a regular customer buying something, you’re supposed to show me the merchandise.” She just ignored me. Finally, I left the store and have not gone back. It does it matter if I’m an Asian or White or Black as long as my money is green, but I guess to some people, it does matter.
Part Two:

Essays Dealing with Various Forms of Discrimination
Discrimination at Work –
Duong Le

Is discrimination against people from other ethnicities the best way to alleviate the suffering of being discriminated? My knowledge about sensitive and complex definitions of discrimination changed after I encountered unfair behaviors at my workplace. The weak people try to insult the weaker people so that they can have fake relief. Is it moral? How to solve the discrimination issues? Everyone will have their own conclusions after reading my stories. To me, keeping the hatred alive, especially hatred toward people of diverse ethnicities who are weaker than us is definitely the wrong perspective.

I worked at building 3 of ____________ company, which is a foreign company, as a Server Team Operator. The biggest group of company's staff is Taiwanese-American people, who to us basically are Taiwanese because they mainly use Mandarin as their working language. People in the smaller group who aren't Taiwanese are related to China. Their ancestors are Chinese or Taiwanese who immigrated to Vietnam, The Philippines and Cambodia. They look the same like us except they can at least communicate in Mandarin or Cantonese. I call them group A and group B in the order of appearance. The minority group, who
work in less important positions, manually thoughtless basic jobs, so called "Group C", is made up of Vietnamese, Mexicans, or even African-Americans.

Group A and B discriminate against group C people. For example, the lady who controls the working equipment is from Group B. Every time C people wanted new stuff for work like ESD smock, or microscope, they always received the bad ones. The stuff was already badly damaged before it got to C persons. Even more, she asked C people to sew and fix the smock if they wanted to use it, or they could wait. She explained a lot about the supply sources, and how bad the company's finances were. But all those words vanished into thin air when a member of group A or B asked for equipment. They always got the new one, or gently used ones but never the worst, which is intended only for C people. One of my co-workers, who is Chinese, expressed her big surprise as she went to ask for a new smock, right after I did, and received a new one. I was given a torn and tattered smock. That was what happened with the equipment. How about the outcome with people?

Six weeks ago, our team had a new member. He was a 67 years old Vietnamese, who used to be a secretary of a school board in Vietnam. He was assigned to our team out of the blue. We were happy because we lacked human
power for fulfilling everyday tasks. After a while, the rumor came to our place. It
turned out that he was rejected from another project, which was mainly
organized and operated by one big shot. The poor old man, who in our opinion is
still capable of working on daily basic tasks, refused to cover tasks which weren't
his responsibility. Members from that project tried to bully him. He refused to
comply with their unnecessary demands. They threatened to give bad assessment
comments to the Supervisor. The action came right after their words as proof of
power. He was removed only after one day with a lot of bad comments about his
health and his ability to understand and fulfill the daily tasks. The reason the
company didn't fire him was because of the money. They didn't want to pay for
unemployment support. The additional reason for this case was group "A" and
"B" wanted to get rid of people who didn't obey their commands, and more
importantly, they wanted to build up racial barriers around them. How shameful
they are! They challenged our tolerances by their provocative words toward the
supervisor's decisions so that we have to keep on covering for him again and
again to stem the threat of being fired.

Even if you were born in this country, if you are not white, you would be
discriminated by extremist white supremacist somehow. To new immigrants like
us, being discriminated is an easy-to-predict outcome. We accept it because we
have to earn our livings. But the price for a job some time is too high. My perception about hatred and discrimination is that, it is a blurry image, which continually and consistently shapes itself in every aspect that it might develop. It is alive and well. My inner voice told me that I had to speak out loudly to protest against this bad social-issue. Bullying other people, or discriminating against weaker people, both physically and mentally, is not the way to solve the problem. The solution for discrimination is to help other people of diverse ethnicities, especially the weaker ones. We should treat them well and equally, regardless of what color their skin is or what ethnicity they belong to. Gaining respect from them may be the cure for our self-esteem. To give is to receive.
A Story of Discrimination –

Phuongchi Pham

Have you ever thought that in exchange for living in a free country, your ego, your pride, and even your dignity have to suffer some forms of discrimination? I never have and was naively elated upon setting foot on the American soil. However, I soon faced discrimination on different levels. I always reassured myself that I just happened to meet a few cranky narrow-minded people at the wrong time. The truth is that not until an innocent and simple act of returning a Vitamix blender five years ago made me become a target of discrimination, did I bitterly accept that discrimination in this so-called “the land of the free” is indeed an undeniable reality of the norm, and it changed the way how I would deal with it.

That day, I went to a store to return a Vitamix blender I bought for my mother-in-law two months earlier. I explained to the young white clerk that my mother-in-law changed her mind and wanted something else, so she did not open the box. I also apologized that I was too busy to return it promptly. Seeing the
factory seal unbroken, the clerk started the return process. Just then, a middle-age white lady at the next station raised her concern loudly and reminded him to be careful. Her warning instantly shocked me and changed the peaceful atmosphere to a heated one.

“With people like her, you never know what they do,” she warned the clerk. I was puzzled, not understanding yet what she meant by that. She asked the clerk to open the box to see if everything was there. Then she continued saying out loud, “These people, they always buy and use it, then claim something is wrong.” I felt blood rush to my face, but calmly and politely, I asked her if she was talking about me. Looking at me with a contemptuous smile, she replied, “You people are known to take advantage of the return policy so we never know.” That put me right into a defensive mood. I sternly told her I had not said that there was anything wrong with this blender and demanded her to inspect the already opened box to see whether it was what happened in my case. The conversation was noticeably tense between a Caucasian woman and an Asian woman, each on each side of the counter, with a young Caucasian man getting caught in between, and a few curious customers starting to gather around us.
At that moment, a supervisor came out to assist. The young clerk informed him what had happened, and then I told him my side. The supervisor apologized, talked to the lady, and she also apologized. But I could tell she was not sincere because she repeated that they had to be very careful with people like me. I was so upset that I requested an address where I could send in my complaint, and I did. They wrote back a letter of apology for the bad experience and included a gift card of 400 dollars, the exact price of a Vitamix blender. I sent back the gift card with a note expressing my acknowledgement of their apology and making it clear that I would never trade my self-respect for any amount of dollars or anything else.

I understand that there are a lot of untruthful Asians out there, but that does not justify discrimination against the whole race or innocent individuals. Issuing some apologies with some money to compensate for the insults can never solve discriminatory issues, and neither can trying to prove yourself worthy of respect each time you are discriminated. We have no control over people’s mind, but we do have power over ourselves. The best way to defend ourselves and at the same time, to raise awareness of the beauty of diversity within our abilities is to live up to the valuable customs and traditions we dearly hold to be true.
Gender Discrimination in Korean Culture – Kate Lim

“For the first three years you need to live as if you are deaf, then the next three as if you are blind and then live another three years as if you are a dumb.”

This is a well-known Korean proverb for women who are newly married and live with their in-laws. So, according to this rule, women should not speak, hear, or see for a total of nine years. This is clearly gender discrimination that has never been brought to the surface in the male-dominated society of the olden days. Interestingly, it is still existent in America among Korean American people in the 21st century. My story begins with my marriage. Just like all other girls, I was treated as a princess in my house back in my country until I was 19 years old. I could do whatever I wanted and was loved by everybody until I got engaged by my mom to get married to a Korean man who lived in the United States. I had to leave my friends, family, and memories behind and fly to a place people called a “dream country” when I was 20 years old. My life has drastically changed since then.
On the first day I came to the U.S., more precisely, the day I moved in with my in-laws’ per Korean culture, my father-in-law took me to a place where he knew the manager very well. And guess what? I got a job. Since then, I have been working all my life. This is one thing that went against my culture where married women stayed home and took care of the family. My husband was the oldest son in his family; therefore, I had to live with his parents along with his two younger siblings. My status suddenly changed from a daughter to a daughter-in-law and from a princess to a maid. That’s why people say you better go through the first nine years without expressing your feelings and just endure. My husband was nice to me, but I still missed my family whom I had lived with for 20 years. All the house chores were, of course, my responsibility. My typical weekday started at 5 AM by going to work at dawn, coming back home at dark, cooking, doing dishes, and cleaning the kitchen by 9 PM. On the weekends, different duties were added like grocery shopping, cleaning the house, washing the car and laundry. I truly felt that I was the main character in the book of Cinderella, but that was just the beginning.

During the first year, I was so young and naïve, and I believed all other women were living the same way. I put my best effort into adapting to the situation and tried to earn as much credit as possible from my in-laws. However, I realized my
mother-in-law treated my sister-in-law and I differently in many ways. My sister-
in-law was free from all the housework because those were solely my job. One
day, at the dinner table, my mother-in-law told my sister-in-law not to eat too
much so she could maintain her slim body and beauty. My young heart was
broken into pieces because she always had told me to eat a lot, so I could be
strong and be able to work. Nevertheless, things still were manageable until I got
pregnant. Many nights, after dinner, the whole family watched TV. There was a
time when they would laugh out loud while I was washing the dishes and
vomiting in the kitchen sink at the same time. Many nights I went out to the park
in front of my house and stared at the moon where I saw my mom’s face. I was
continuously working hard until the day I delivered my first baby. I had an
adorable son, and he was my everything. I finally had someone who was not
named with “in-laws.” But as soon as I came home from the hospital I became
depressed again. The whole family was excited about the baby and the
baby only. My mother-in-law even called me “husk” which meant my body was a
useless shell after a baby had been delivered. She probably made this comment
as a joke but it still hurt.

In the following year, my second baby girl was born, and the family size
increased to 8 people. That meant even more work for me, but nothing could pull
me down since I had a definite reason to live happily. My daughter was a gift from God. My life was fully dedicated to my two kids, and for them, I could suffer any hardship I could think of. But in the mean time, I was still in my early twenties and wanted to continue studying. I thought that would help my kids and family in the long run. However, my mother-in-law was strongly opposed. She was really upset and tried to persuade me that more education women had, the more trouble it would be because it could lead to disobeying your husband. I was totally lost because my sister-in-law who was the same age as me had already gone to college. I knew the value of education so that was one thing that I could not negotiate or give up. I talked to my managers at work, and with their understanding and support, I was able to go to school here and there during my work hours. I ate my lunch while I was driving to school for many years and did homework after all my house chores were done and everybody was in bed. Thinking back, I can’t remember how many caffeine pills I took in those days.

Today, I have lived way beyond those nine years of being dumb, deaf and blind with my in-laws. I finished college faster than my sister-in-law and raised my two kids wholehearted. My mother-mother-in-law has also changed in those years. We became good friends and I see her twice a week at the minimum. I can also go see my own parents whenever I want since they moved to the U.S. and live
close by. The gender discrimination in our country has diminished a lot now days, but it was really a faulty system observed and followed by many young women in the olden days. Lastly, one thing I can surely predict is that my future daughter-in-law will never experience what I have gone through.
Discrimination at Work -

Hoang Pham

Do you think that discrimination is bad? It is not quite so to me. Discrimination is a state when one is treated differently or unfairly from others in the same circumstance. Many years ago, I was a victim of discrimination in an event which I remember as if it had happened just yesterday. I was so upset... But as time goes by, I am looking back at the matter with a new perspective.

Twenty years ago, I worked in a design group for a hi-tech company. When I joined the group, I was the youngest member. And I was a lone Asian in a Caucasian engineering group. My company provided total hardware and software solution for in-room billing service to hotel worldwide. My group handled hardware and software design. There were a few quite talented gurus in the group, but I got along with them well in both technical and social terms. Though having high technical skills, the products released from the group were still not totally bug-free. One product sent to Europe had had an issue for several years but nobody knew the root cause. Though not fatally flawed, the in-room
hardware reset itself randomly and that annoyed customers very much. I vol
unteered to investigate the problem. After diligently sitting down at the bench, in
a few thousand lines of codes, I found one line written in a way which violated
hardware operation in few mill-seconds. Problem solved.

One time, a project that the group was in charge had been prolonged. In a
weekly meeting, the manager of the group announced that the whole group
would have two choices. Each person in the group would get a three thousand
dollar bonus if the project was done by the new deadline or someone would have
pink slips. The project was done before the deadline. Bonus envelopes were
distributed to everyone in the group during a staff meeting except me. "Why?" I
asked in astonishment. "I will explain to you later". The manager said to me. I did
not know if my co-worker felt the moment of awkwardness inside me. I went to
his office right after the meeting. The reason he gave to me was that I was not at
stake of being fired. I walked out of his office totally confused. Being young and
introverted, I kept it to myself.

I had felt upset for a long time. Beside discrimination, I could not find any
other reasons to explain his decision that day. I wish I had the knowledge I have
today then. That has been the motivation for my continuing education. I also wish
the manager did not act that ignorantly so I would not belittle him that much.

Time passes by. Though still not being happy about that event, I have realized that
discrimination is part of life which I should not be bitter about.
Have you ever experienced discrimination living in America? I hope that you haven’t. Unfortunately, I myself have felt discriminated several times in this great country. The first experience occurred while having dinner in a restaurant which made me change completely my opinion about discrimination in this country.

It was a beautiful restaurant in downtown San Jose where I was so eager to come for dinner. My sister and I got to the restaurant on a Saturday evening after a long drive. It was so crowded with many White people and only four or five Asian people including us inside the restaurant. The restaurant is famous for its steak and lobsters. We had to wait for about half an hour to get seated. The menu was already put on our table which was decorated beautifully. We were ready to order the food. No waiter or waitress came to our table in another half an hour.

Eventually, there was a waitress coming to our table with two glasses of water. Without any smile on her face, she asked us about the drinks. My sister and I were ready to order the food but she only said “you have to wait for another
waiter”. Then she walked away to another table where some white guys coming later than us were waiting. She started writing down their food orders. I felt something was not right because my sister didn’t speak English so well and we just wore casual clothes. After fifteen minutes of waiting, a waiter came to us and quickly said, “Sorry, we don’t have Asian food here” and said it again in Chinese.

The waiter was about to step away after saying it, but I called him back and said out loud “What? We haven’t ordered yet. How come you know that we are going to eat Asian food?” We felt a bit shocked and angry. It seemed that he thought we were Asians so we could only eat Asian food and this restaurant was not for us. He didn’t even say sorry. They were so rude and prejudiced. That guy whispered to another waiter to go to our table, but we didn’t want to eat there anymore. We quickly walked out of there.

That was my first but not the only experience with discrimination in America. It wasn’t just the dinner, but it was prejudice and discrimination of some people of this great nation that made me upset. My story is just one of numerous discrimination stories all over the country. We need to eradicate discrimination because we all desire to live in an equitable society.
Mission College which is located in the center of Silicon Valley is a leader among community colleges in California in the struggle for student equity and student success and we have always valued diversity and shown respect for cultures other than our own. The journal you are holding in your hand is but one small proof of our faith in our students and our unshakable belief that people from all walks of life and from all corners of the world have a central role to play in the shaping of our future and the development of our nation amidst challenges of racism, sexism, and a few other negative –isms. Together we will make your Mission Possible whatever it might be.