

Jessica Kang

Breaking a Glow Stick

As a Korean American, growing up in Columbus, Indiana had its ups and downs. I grew up knowing the names of all my neighbors, going to school with the same kids for years, and being part of a community.

The move from Indiana to Wuhan, China was abrupt, and adapting to life in China was difficult because of cultural differences and the language barrier.

On the first day of the French school, I was lost, angry, unable to speak up. A few of my classmates asked, "Why did you come to this school? To learn French?"

I'd respond with a simple oui, I didn't know why I was here. I began noticing the students being friendly and chatting openly toward me. I was determined to be part of this tight-knit community. I soon had a new group of friends and joined new clubs I'd never thought I would be a part of.

Two and a half years later, I was adjusted and comfortable with my new lifestyle in Wuhan. Whispers of this new virus floated throughout the streets. On the last day before winter break, the French education department sent a notice to our school to shut down. Every day someone would come up to our apartment and take our temperature.

Soon a strict lockdown was enforced. The U.S. Air Force reached out to American citizens living in Wuhan, offering a chance to come over to evacuate to the U.S. We took the opportunity and left China. Although I felt scared and nervous, I comforted my younger brother and helped others also on the plane.

Once we landed at an Air Force base, I reflected upon my journey since moving to Wuhan and back to America during the two weeks of quarantine.

Changes can happen anytime and anywhere. To weather the storm, you have to keep moving forward and look toward the future. I was courageous and stayed positive (but tested negative) because of the support from family and friends. Living through COVID-19 in Wuhan showed me staying flexible, calm, and working together as a group is important to overcoming obstacles.

The communities have changed for the better by staying more connected in this change by keeping everyone, each citizen safe with COVID free parks, restaurants, and schools. As the whole country changes are always made, bad or good news. Even if the whole country crumbles, I believe that there's always a solution to a problem. We have lost many doctors, family, or friends, but their loss is our gain as heroes. We are all holding on to something which is each other, staying connected during the darkest moments.

Who knows what will come next, but one thing I am sure of is that every little or big change is a break in our glowstick to shine on for the future, after all a glow stick needs to break to glow. I believe this is all a metamorphosis for the better.