

China is Great

Victor Chen

My name is Victor Chen, and I am an ethnic Chinese that is also a Canadian citizen. I was born as a first generation Canadian through my parents who had immigrated from Guangzhou, China. Though my citizenship is Canadian, I try my best to maintain Chinese elements in my life, but it is difficult when most of my daily activities are dominated by the necessity and usage of English.

However, I have been to China a few times, particularly during my summer holidays, and I found it enjoyable and a nice change of pace. Though the temperature was sweltering, it was nice to meet and reunite with my family, and there was a sense of community in the apartment complex that I did not have in my rural neighbourhood. I don't even know my Calgarian neighbours' names, but in China everyone in adjacent floors knew each other, and I even got to know the street vendors. With regulations on businesses in Canada, people can't be street vendors without licenses and it removes the sense of community and the authenticity of the cuisine you purchase. There obviously is a purpose and benefit to this regulation, but that is a feature that is missed out on in Canada. In addition to authentic Chinese cuisine, my parents took me to a lot of restaurants and we ate there while meeting with family and old friends. The food was nice, but an unfortunate thing about me is that I can't eat seafood, and so I miss out on some of the swanky alternatives to Chinese food, like king crab or lobster.

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The region was also fairly urban, but not to the extent of having a cesspool of pollution like most would stereotypically assume China to have. This was a juxtaposition of my life in Calgary, because I live in a more rural setting, and Canada has a low population size in comparison with its landmass. There was a variety of places to buy merchandise from, all within walking distance, and public recreational places like a track as well. Public parks and aquariums were also present, and there was beautiful renditions of scenic nature, which is not what would be expected from a place that is an industrial and economic superpower. My parents also took me to a lake to go paddle boating, but unfortunately the lake was a unpalatable murky green, which didn't really matter, because paddle boating did not require perfect water. These places would not be easily accessible in Calgary, and they probably would not be as fun without my Chinese family members accompanying me on them. I don't remember the names of any of these places, due to a combination of me being younger and not being able to pronounce those names. I would like to visit China again, because of the great and unique experiences I had, and it would help rekindle my ties to it, but sadly airplane ticket prices are expensive.

For my views on China, I already have inherent support for them, because I am from China, but I also legitimately think China's presence in global economic and political issues has virtue and importance. It is pretty clear to everyone that China is an economic power based on the

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large amount of goods exported to Canada alone, but I think what makes this more impressive is China's rise to power. Historically, China was colonized by Britain and it has had many struggles over the years with disputes like the Opium Wars, and Hong Kong wanting to gain independence. This gave a distinct disadvantage to China, but as a country they managed to overcome this and rise up as a global presence in exports and imports. The jump from status of countries is admirable, and with this power China seeks to benefit the world further. China is being a forerunner to renewable energy, which is important if they want sustainability, and this is important to me because it is my and future generations that will be affected by changes to the way people use energy. Imports on domestic trash to China were also banned, which will indirectly cause countries to think of better solutions to reduce their trash and ultimately move towards renewable products and conserve their waste. I also believe China's altruism with Africa is great. China is developing infrastructure in Africa in order to help benefit and accelerate their development, which first-world countries in the UN have not really done. Another benefit of China's loans is that they do not put restrictions on them unlike the ones the UN gives out, and the country can choose the path it wants to develop into. This is a controversial topic as some believe that China is exploiting the resources in Africa, my stance is that the agreement is mutually beneficial. I admire China's geopolitical and geoeconomic position because they rose from a

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colonized position to one of the largest influencers in the global market today. In addition to their rise to power, China is trying to become eco friendly as a counter-balance to their pollution, and is altruistic with developments to third-world countries.

Through the prominence of English and the Canadian lifestyle in my life, my connection to China fades a little bit everyday. However, I try my best to preserve my cultural roots, as they are an important part of my identity. A way I attempt to preserve my connection to China is to follow it on the news and immerse myself in its pop culture. I read about incidents such as the Huawei CEO being arrested in Canada, Robert Lloyd Schellenberg being sentenced to death, and Tencent buying 5% of Reddit. These topics relate to me and revitalize my connection to China, and I am interested in and enjoy reading about others' thoughts and opinions on these incidents and China. For example, when Tencent bought shares of Reddit, there was a lot of outrage from the community since they had misconceptions about the Chinese worldview. They thought that censorship would be enforced on Reddit, but the control of 5% is very limited, and companies have other reasons to buy platforms, such as turning a profit.

I can speak Cantonese, but not Mandarin, but I also immerse myself in Chinese pop culture which sometimes utilizes Mandarin. For example I watch some Chinese TV shows, and dubbed versions of English TV shows in order to keep up my vocabulary and even learn

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some new phrases. For me, this is an effective way to both entertain and educate at the same time. However, a problem with China I feel is the lack of Chinese representation in American mainstream media. I feel like there have been improvements on it with the release of Crazy Rich Asians last year, but I feel as though growing up, there was really no one to look up to. A role model for Chinese children is important, and it would be nice to have as it would foster more of a sense of belonging in a world full of many different cultures and backgrounds. Though, this isn't necessarily anyone's fault, it is still an important issue that I wanted to discuss, and hopefully in the future I can be a role model for the next generation of youth.

Another form of culture I immerse myself in is Chinese music. I enjoy the classical Chinese style music, but there's also hip-hop style rap music which I also like. Some notable artists that I like are VaVa and MJ116, though they speak in Mandarin and I can only comprehend around 20% of their lyrics. These songs sound great and can be listened to as ambient noise, making them an easy way to attempt to preserve my language acquisition. How Chinese singers create equally beautiful and high-quality music is an example of how good art can come from anywhere.

As a result of my heritage being from China, my thoughts and views would attempt to be lenient towards it, and I have visited China a couple times, which gives me further insight into my own beliefs. I

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enjoyed the visits to China because it offered a variety of different experiences and contrasted with my experiences in Canada, all while strengthening my bonds with family members and meeting new people. I also try to keep a connection to China because it is a large part of my cultural roots, and so I am up to date on China in the news, and listen to Chinese pop culture. With all this into consideration, I think China is a great country, with great places and people that many people tend to overlook or ignore.