

9 退后一步自然宽

四川成都的青城山天师洞有副对联：

事在人为，休言万般皆是命；
境由心造，退后一步自然宽。

这幅对联否定宿命论，强调事在人为，同时也告诫胜败乃兵家常事，要懂得取舍进退。人在逆境中要乐观开朗，退后一步说不定是一片大有作为的宽广天地。短短四句话，把做人的深奥哲理表达得淋漓尽致。我们家的两个孩子对这些哲理的理解是从钢琴和体育比赛中逐步悟出来的，毕竟很多哲理是无法“教”会，而必须经过实践才能理解。以学钢琴为例：远翀和凯伦都不具备“完美或绝对音感”（perfect or absolute pitch），但从未因不具备“音乐天才”而认输，而是坚信勤能补拙，并通过自己的努力在钢琴演奏上取得成绩。当然他们也清楚人外有人，天外有天。比如，远翀参加全美音乐教师协会（Music Teachers National Association）的钢琴比赛时，就输给他人而未跨出阿拉巴马州；凯伦在八年的花样滑冰考级和比赛中，也并非胜将军，有考级不过和输给对手的时候。兄妹俩不断学习怎样正确对待输赢，做到提得起放得下，胜不骄败不馁。通过这些事件的磨练，他们逐渐认识到学琴和滑冰最重要的不是输赢，而是提高自己的修养和身体素质。没想到凯伦的这些长

处很快又在申报大学的过程中，帮助她战胜困境，以积极的姿态去面对未来。

在实施提早申请的精英大学中，斯坦福大学是最早公布录取结果的学校。2011年12月9日，斯坦福给提早申请的5880个学生送电邮，通知录取结果。在早期录取阶段，斯坦福一共招收了755名学生，录取率是12.8%，比它的平均录取率高两倍。12月15日星期四，哈佛、耶鲁和普林斯顿同时公布其“提早申请一个学校”的录取率：

- 哈佛从4231名学生中录取了772名，录取率是18.2%。
- 耶鲁从4304名学生中录取了675名，录取率是15.7%。
- 普林斯顿从3443名学生中录取了726名，录取率是21%。

三所学校中，普林斯顿的录取率最高，我们暗自庆幸凯伦选了它作为提早申请的学校。普林斯顿在自己的网站公布，学校将在当天东部时间下午4时让查看录取结果的网页生效。一旦网页生效，学生便可以进到自己的账户查看结果。阿拉巴马比东部时间晚一个小时，所以网页将在本地时间下午三点生效。凯伦要等到3:40才放学，所以送短信委托我们在三点钟时进到自己的账户查看结果。我和晓鹰提早下班，坐在家里的计算机旁等待。三点钟时，查看分数的网页准时生效。可是上网查看的人太多，普林斯顿的计算机服务器跟不上，让我们等了15分钟才终于进入凯伦的账户。当没有看见“祝贺你”及“很高兴通知你”这样的开场白时，我们的心直往下沉。结果普林斯顿没有在提早申请阶段录取凯伦，而是将她的申请推迟到正常申请阶段考虑。根据前几年的数据来看，哈佛、普林斯顿、耶鲁等学校在正常阶段的录取率仅5%左右。如果在提早申请阶段没能进去，正常申请阶段被录取的可能性几乎为零。

凯伦放学回家知道这个坏消息后很失望，但没有怨天尤人，抱怨不该选择普林斯顿，而依然认为申请普林斯顿是对的。首先普林斯顿是五所学校里最能满足她的需要的学校，其次普林斯顿的早期录取率是五所学校里最高的，报普林斯顿是正确的决策。大家从失望中平静下来后，我们提醒凯伦如果对普林斯顿还有期望，就应该写点什么表明自己的态度。她心情不好，告诉我们考虑几天再说。

对凯伦没有被普林斯顿录取，我们虽然觉得失望和不可思议，但不是没有一点思想准备。美国的亚裔学生普遍优秀，父母也愿意不惜任何代价送子女去最好的学校就读，这就是为什么仅占总人口 5%的亚裔在精英大学的比例能高达 20%以上。由肯尼迪总统在 1961 年签字生效的“平权法案（Affirmative action）”，旨在就业、教育、医疗等方面保护少数及弱势群体，防止任何人因“肤色、宗教、性别或民族出身”等原因受到歧视。精英大学为了执行平权法案，降低标准录取印第安人、黑人及西班牙语系人（泛指墨西哥、古巴及拉丁美洲的移民），以此保证学生来源多元化。亚裔尽管算美国少数群体，因其在大学的比例高，不仅得不到照顾，往往还必须达到更高的录取标准。几十年来，美国各大报章杂志时有文章披露精英学校录取亚裔学生内幕。仅在凯伦申报大学的 2011 年，就有三篇关于亚裔考生逆水行舟，在不公平的条件下与其他学生竞争的文章见报。普林斯顿大学的教授，托马斯·伊斯本歇德（Thomas Espenshade）及亚历山德丽亚·雷德福（Alexandria Radford），对 1997 年的招生数据做了大量对比研究，并在 2009 年出版的《不再分开，但尚未公平（No Longer Separate, Not Yet Equal）》的书中公布他们的结果，其结论是在同样的条件下，白人、西班牙语系人及黑人进精英大学的几率分别是亚裔学生的三倍、五倍及十五倍。书中以加州大学亚裔学生比

例在 1996 年后所发生的急剧变化来证明一流大学在“多元化”和“平权法案”的口号下，采用更高标准来录取亚裔考生的事实。加利福尼亚州于 1996 年 11 月通过 209 法案（California Proposition 209），禁止州政府机构在雇佣公务员、签订公共服务合同和公共教育中考虑种族、性别和族群因素。此法案生效后，加州大学各个分校不再考虑多元化录取学生。结果亚裔录取率猛增，达到 40% 以上。据说在这些学校，中文成了“官方语”。

多年来，总有一些不服气的亚裔家长起诉哈佛、耶鲁、普林斯顿歧视亚裔学生。2015 年又有六十多个亚裔家庭联合起诉哈佛等常青藤学校，称这些学校对亚裔考生另设录取标准，有种族歧视之嫌。尽管凯伦没有进普林斯顿，我们对这些高校的多元化招生还是赞成的。美国之所以不断进步，很大一个原因是广泛吸收不同文化的精髓。我们希望自己的孩子在大学能与不同文化和背景的人接触，相互学习、取长补短。2013 年加州议院通过了第五号修正案，旨在废除 1996 通过的 209 法案，重新采纳“平权法案”。我当时是亨城华人协会会长，许多人让我转发电邮并号召本地华人反对第五号修正案。我在转发他们的电邮时，加上了自己的看法和提了一个简单的问题：如果哈佛大学的亚裔学生比例高达 40% 以上，你们还愿意出巨资送子女去那里，让他们每天与亚裔族竞争吗？

凯伦认为，自己的各项数据都很过硬，标准考试的分数也属于录取的学生中的高线，如果早期申请阶段都没有被录取，正常录取阶段进去的可能性几乎为零。她觉得与其写一封“哀求”的信，不如写一封“呐喊”的文章，喊出自己按学校辅导员的建议力争全面发展，而最终还是因为当今社会对亚裔的偏见而深受其害的事实。

不做十足亚裔的后果

出生在虎年的蔡美儿，以《虎妈战歌》一书让许多父母生厌。凑巧我妈妈也出生在虎年，而且有许多类似的育儿方法。不过我父母均懂得过分严厉和极端的育子方法不能保证培养出独立思考、有主见和发明创业的人才。他们希望我在保持中国文化的同时，能融入出生国家。比较新潮的父母总是让我选择自己的爱好和事业，只要不与我的学习和课外活动发生冲突，对我交友和外出都比较宽容。我一直认为我的学习和生活很平衡，无懈可击。最近没能在高达 21% 录取率的情况下进普林斯顿的事实才彻底让我清醒。回过头来看，我没能进普林斯顿的原因有两点：我不够亚裔“味”去争 SAT 满分，以及没有在选课上课上投机取巧力争年级第一。

许多父母鼓励子女多次考 SAT 和 ACT，因为学校取每次考试单科最高分来组合。然而各校招办老师在讲座上都一致鼓励学生把宝贵时间用在自己喜爱和追求的事情上，并戏谑称，除非谁想成立 SAT/ACT 竞赛队。基于此，我只在十一年级时考过一次 SAT，取得数学和阅读各 800 分，写作 750 分的成绩。SAT 的科目考试，我也取得了数学 780，文学 770 的好分数。尽管没在 SAT 写作上得满分，但我认为 PSAT 写作及英语、政府、心理学、微积分 BC 等大学先修课满分成绩会证明我有能力在 SAT 写作部分得满分。我也没有专为得高分去考 ACT，认为七年级时在 ACT 考试得高分，并获得杜克大学嘉奖的事实已足够证明自己的能力。按照招办老师的建议，我利用周末和暑假参加课外活动、社会服务及探索自己的兴趣和

爱好。

典型的亚裔父母会对孩子施加压力，让他们力争年级第一。我所在的高中以加权 GPA 成绩排名，普通课、荣誉课及大学先修课的最高加权分数分别为 4、5 和 6 分。有许多方法可以用来增加每个人的 GPA 分数，其中包括推迟规定的普通课（如体育和健康课）到报完高考后；尽量不考虑那些要求完成了相关普通课才能选的荣誉及大学先修课；利用暑假去低要求的社区学院上大学先修课等。仅因为不玩名次游戏，我以小数点后两位数的差异在 748 人的年级里排名第二。

基于多数精英大学实行“提早申请一个学校”的现实，许多亚裔父母建议自己的孩子申请最有可能进的学校，而不是像辅导员建议的那样申请“最适合”自己的学校。比如我本可以申请我哥哥就读的 MIT，沾校友亲属以及女生相对容易进去的光。然而我选择了普林斯顿，希望在那里深造的同时，争取拿钢琴演奏证书和参加普林斯顿花样滑冰俱乐部。在访问普林斯顿时，我们的学生导游正好也在学钢琴演奏，还是花样滑冰俱乐部的成员。我觉得与普林斯顿有缘，向导的经历让我联想到自己如果被录取，也会如鱼得水地融入校园生活。

许多亚裔父母告诫上高中的孩子减少课外活动，集中精力搞好学习和标准考试。而我除了积极参加学校活动，还是美国花样滑冰协会的成员及有造诣的钢琴演奏者。尽管我的日程安排很紧，我仍然坚持继续追求这些爱好，贡献自己的时间帮助训练参加残奥奥运会的队员，为起居不能自理的老年人演

奏钢琴。参加公益活动是我引以为豪回报社会的行动。亚裔青年常被模式化，认为是不会社交只注重事业的人，尤其缺少领导才能。作为《亨茨维尔时报》专栏的学生作者，我写了不少关于学校、医保、法庭及世界经济的文章，其目的是尽量与模式化的亚裔拉开距离。除此之外，我曾任青年荣誉学会主席及现任 Mu Alpha Theta 荣誉学会主席，这两个组织的宗旨均在于服务社会。

许多年来我以追求自我、不落入百分之百的亚裔模式而自豪。遗憾的是当今的公众普遍认为亚裔学生是得满分和年级第一的书虫，是父母高压的产物——这种观念在蔡美儿的书出版后得到更普遍的认可。当我们尝试突破这种模式时，还是被社会上不公正的看法所摧毁。

中国儒家文化认为教育是培养全面发展的开明学者，他们不仅在学术上有造诣，还应该 在书、琴、诗、画、武、政及家庭上有成就。我对试图融入美国社会而没能进入普林斯顿并不后悔，进普林斯顿毕竟只是实现对世界有所贡献的理想的途径之一。

(英语原文)

Taking the Consequences of Not Being Enough Asian

Amy Chua made many parents cringe with her book Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother. Coincidentally, my mother was also born in the Year of the Tiger, and my parents share many of her parenting philosophies.

However, both understand that extreme, harsh parenting does not guarantee independent thinkers, inventors, or self-starters. They wanted me to assimilate to my birth country while preserving my Chinese heritage. My relatively liberal parents have always let me choose my own activities and career path and do not mind my going out with friends as far as they do not conflict with my schoolwork and extracurricular activities. I like to think that I have a balanced life and thought I was doing great until I was recently deferred from Princeton's Single-Choice Early Action despite a 21% acceptance rate. In retrospect, I see two reasons for not getting into Princeton: I was not Asian enough to struggle for perfect SAT scores, and I did not choose my high school courses based on striving for a class rank of one.

Most parents encourage their kids to take the SAT and/or ACT multiple times because colleges look at applicants' best individual scores taken from different dates. At college admission seminars, however, I was advised to spend time doing things I love unless I plan to start on a varsity SAT team. Therefore, I only took the SAT once in my junior year, scoring a perfect 800 in both math and critical reading and a 750 in writing. For the subject tests, I scored a 780 in Math II and a 770 in Literature. Though I did not make a perfect score on the writing section of the SAT, I believed that my perfect writing score on the PSAT and 5s in AP English Language, Government, Psychology, and Calculus would demonstrate my ability to get a perfect score on the SAT. While I made a composite score of 30 on the ACT in 7th grade via Duke

University's Talent Identification Program, I opted not to retake it in high school just for the purpose of getting a perfect 36. Instead, I took the advice of the admissions officers and spent my weekends and summers participating in extracurricular activities and community service, exploring areas beyond what typical high school curriculums cover and enhancing my deepest passions and interests.

The stereotypical Asian parents put enormous pressure on their children to succeed in school and be at the top of their class. My school ranks students based on weighted GPAs, so the maximum possible credit for a regular, honor, and AP class is 4, 5, and 6, respectively. There are several ways to boost one's GPA, including pushing required regular classes such as P.E. and Health to senior year after college applications are done, completely skipping courses that require prerequisites of regular classes, and taking courses during the summer at community colleges for AP credit. By not playing the ranking game, I was edged out by a fraction of a point and ranked 2nd out of 748.

Since most top colleges offer only single-choice early action programs, many Asian parents advise their kids to apply early to the schools in which they have maximum chances of admission, regardless of whether they actually like the schools. They disregard the advice of high school counselors, who recommend that students apply early to their "best fit" schools. For example, I would have had some advantage in applying to MIT early, the school my brother graduated from and where girls have a relatively

higher acceptance rate. Instead, I chose Princeton. I want to continue figure skating and playing piano after high school and knew that Princeton offers Certificate Program in Musical Performance and has a very active collegiate figure skating club. While visiting Princeton this past summer, I felt an even stronger connection to the school after learning that my tour guide is pursuing a certificate in piano and is also a member of the Princeton Figure Skating Club. I saw through her how I would fit in and make a difference on campus...if admitted.

*Most Asian parents advise their high school kids to cut down on their extracurricular activities so that they can focus on academics and standardized tests. In addition to being an involved student in school, I am a USFSA competitive figure skater and a respected young pianist in Alabama (www.YouTube.com/aimhighgirl). Although my daily schedule became very tight, I chose to continue developing my passion for both skating and piano. Besides pursuing personal goals, I have volunteered to assist with Special Olympics skaters for several years and to play piano at assisted living homes. Involving myself in public service has always been my favorite way of giving back to the community. Stereotypical Asian students are often regarded as more career-oriented and less socially concerned, especially in terms of leadership. As a student writer for *The Huntsville Times*, I have written articles about topics ranging from school life to healthcare and court cases to the world economy, all in order to distance myself from this stereotype. Furthermore, I am a former president of National Junior Honor Society and the*

current president of Mu Alpha Theta Honor Society, both of which are organizations that work to help others in the community.

For many years, I have been trying to be myself and take pride in not fitting 100 percent into the Asian stereotype. In reality, however, the general public considers Asians to be studious with perfect scores and valedictorian of their class, especially after all the attention given to the typecast that Asian-American students' high achievements are due to overbearing parents – an idea highlighted by Amy Chua's book. When we try to break this mold, we are suppressed by unjustified expectations.

Chinese culture, which is dominated by Confucianism, believes education should produce an enlightened scholar who is highly accomplished not only intellectually, but also in music, poetry, painting, calligraphy, martial arts, government, and family. It values well-rounded individuals who are successful in every facet of life. American education emphasizes creativity, independent thinking, risk taking, and greater involvement in public service. I have no regret that my journey to assimilate to American society failed to get me into Princeton in the early round. After all, admission to Princeton is only one of the possible paths I can take to pursue my dream of making an impact on the world.

这篇文章，让我们很高兴地看到凯伦没有因进不了普林斯顿而自暴自弃。她对自己以儒家的六艺和西方的“博雅教育”为指导、走全面发展的道路表示肯定，并以掷地有声的话语道

李永明

出，“我对试图融入美国社会而没能进入普林斯顿并不后悔，进普林斯顿毕竟只是实现对世界有所贡献的理想的途径之一。”