

An interesting theme that continues to pop up in the story of María Luisa Onody is education. The first mention of school is in the paragraph about her grandmother, who would say she had a pizarrón (blackboard) in her home. This ties in later when María says that she loved school, but her mother never encouraged her to go further than elementary school. This is clearly indicative of the role that women had generally played in rural Mexican life. This theme of difficulty through education continues throughout her whole life like when she graduates from Escuela Normal, a stark contrast from what her academic life could have looked like if she completed her studies in the United States.

Questions: How have cultural ties either inhibited or helped your academic endeavors in the past?

What, in your opinion, are the biggest changes in attitudes towards women in education recently?

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I was surprised by the level of devotion that her father and mother held toward the CCP movement by sacrificing more than fourteen hours a day for work. I am curious about the extent that people in China today know about the Cultural Revolution and how it split up many families. The immense belief in this ideology and fear of ostracization drove Xidan to prove her worth. I am interested to learn more about Xidan's rejection of the traditional beliefs on marriage and if many others of her generation would agree with her. Although she mentions frequently her obligation to her country and being taught that there is no individualism, her actions and motivations to prove herself through her business also seem very individualistic. I was wondering how she reconciles those aspects of her life.

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The chapter I read was about Nara and Oktiabrina and their experiences as Armenian refugees. One thing I found incredibly intriguing was how Nara said that communist families had "red baptisms" where they would give their children names such as Proletariat or Vladimir to show their dedication to the Bolshevik Revolution. Oktiabrina's name means October, the month the revolution started. Despite the dedication of her family to the Communist Party, her grandfather was thrown into prison for being an accused Trotskyite and denounced the party after his release from incarceration. I found this to be a really interesting point throughout the reading because it shows how people are often enticed into blind devotion to a certain political party or ideology that does not exist to benefit them. This devotion can be seen today with President Trump as his supporters demonstrate a strong passion and loyalty to a leader that does not follow through on his promises for their betterment. Another thing I found shocking was the fact that the Armenian Genocide is constantly ignored and blatantly unaccepted by the government of Turkey, even after one and one-half million Armenians were killed. I personally did not know anything about the Armenian Genocide, or the injustices Armenians faced. I think the American education system selectively chooses which major historical events students are going to be taught and this leaves us with a very Westernized viewpoint that shows us the United States through rose-colored glasses, similar to what Nara said about her experiences in the Soviet Union. While the conditions in the United States are not nearly as extreme as those in the Soviet Union where Nara grew up, I think it is important to recognize similarities in our experiences as a way of reflection.

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I read Chapter 1 from Susan Philips' book which was about an Armenian woman telling her family's story of living in Armenia. I thought it was really interesting how she started the story with her grandparents and then worked her way down the family tree. It seemed as though, across the generations, their quality of life got better. However, despite the increased quality of life, family members from each generation still experienced discrimination for being Armenian. It was also heartbreaking to read the section where she outlined her dreams for a prosperous future in Armenia where they have a strong economy, people are living comfortably, and Armenians who left the country can return to their home. Having stability is something we often take for granted living in the U.S. and her description of such simple but perhaps hard to achieve dreams puts our privilege and luck in perspective. I would be curious to see what Susan Philips thinks about the future of immigrant women in the U.S.

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to Ms. Phillip's Book: China After reading Philips' chapter about Xidan, I was very shocked to learn about the history of China and the cultural revolution through a woman's perspective. Compared to the US, where I grew up, I found many differences between the culture and traditions, and importantly how women were treated. Xidan's story was very inspiring to hear because of the hardships she went through. I really enjoyed hearing about her background and her story to success. I am very impressed that Xidan became a doctor, trained as a plastic surgeon, and also built a very successful beauty spa in China, despite the disadvantages and hardships she went through as a child and young woman. Reading about her experiences made me question the differences between the US and China, specifically the treatment to women. I was shocked to hear that women in China had to follow so many rules, and were expected to follow traditions, such as staying home to take care of their child, being a housewife, or even not speaking up for themselves when needed, therefore I was really touched to read that Xidan rejected all these traditions and was motivated and eager to fight for her beliefs and for what she wants. Additionally, I thought it was amazing how China is becoming more united, unlike times in the cultural revolution under Mao Zhedong's leadership. Although China has been closed to the rest of the world, China is now considered one of the most powerful countries and they are proud of their ability to finally be able to live in peace and respect.

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us with a very Westernized viewpoint that shows us the United States through rose-colored glasses, similar to what Nara said about her experiences in the Soviet Union. While the conditions in the United States are not nearly as extreme as those in the Soviet Union where Nara grew up, I think it is important to recognize similarities in our experiences as a way of reflection. I chose to read Chapter 2 on China and I thought the reading had many interesting topics, one being the drastic changes the country and people of China went through during the mid-to-late 20th century. The part that fascinated me the most was the Cultural Revolution, and how families were brainwashed into purging their friends, family, and even themselves for the greater good of the Communist party because of their socioeconomic status, beliefs, or wrongdoings. I also thought it was interesting how fast Chinese society recovered post-cultural revolution; while traditional culture and traditions remained, they were able to pursue education, start businesses, and adopt Western practices of beauty and society (all things that would have categorized them under the Five Black Categories of the cultural revolution). It's also important to note the challenges woman face(d) in an evolving society such as China; they were still expected to conform to social norms and be the inferior relative to a man, yet they are still expected to succeed and "have face". Xidan shamed her parents, worked in the countryside, went to college and became a doctor, started her own beauty business, went through a hard marriage, and moved to the United States. It's amazing how one woman can push through so much struggle and hardship to overcome gender norms and societal barriers to her becoming a scholar and doctor. Even in the US, Xidan didn't know the language, the customs, or what to expect and she has still made a life for herself. Lastly, it's inspiring to see how far the Chinese people have come from just 50 years ago; China's history still haunts members of society but they are now one of the most economically productive, rapidly growing countries in the world exporting talent in education, sports, technology, etc. across the globe. While this success story is not representative of all Chinese people who experienced the Cultural Revolution and the CCP's current reign, it does show how your background, experiences, and knowledge can contribute to society, and how far you can come to achieve your goals and aspirations. .

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I read the chapter about Xidan Wang, chapter 2 of Ms. Philip's book. This story was very interesting since it kind of related to my family background. The experiences that Xidan had are nowhere near what my mother experienced but were similar since she had immigrated to America from China. My mother was pressured to marry at a young age and came from a background of farming in a rural area in Guangdong, China. Contrary to what Xidan had experienced, my mother did not receive much education. The highest level of education that she completed was middle school. Coming to America, she was not able to communicate well with others since she could not speak English. Even now, her English is still not very good. Reading Xidan's story gave insight to the many traditions of Chinese culture that I had known for a long time existed but have never known of people who had experienced them. Being Chinese, I've learned that the traditions and expectations that were carried on in the past have evolved now, and we as the newer generation are not required to meet the expectations that were set from the older generation. Xidan's story had followed many of the older traditions that were set, passed down for generations. Now, especially those who are American born Chinese are only held to a couple of those standards such as, getting married, doing well in school, and having children.

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Xidan's story reminded me much of the experiences of my mother. She had given everything up in China and moved to America, to give me and my siblings a better chance at life.

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I had the opportunity to read the chapter from Ms. Susan Philips' book discussing Xidan's journey to becoming a doctor in China, her experiences with marriage, and her eventual move to the United States. Reading her story was eye opening in that I was able to learn about her first-hand experience growing up in Communist China and her journey to America. It was interesting to hear her reflect on the differences between Chinese and American culture. My family is also from China and my parents also grew up during the Cultural Revolution, much like Xidan. Although I knew about some of the Chinese traditions she described, some were new to me. Xidan's experience with Chinese culture is a much more traditional one than mine. But, there were many elements of Xidan's childhood that sounded similar to my parents' stories of their experiences growing up during the Cultural Revolution. When Xidan mentioned that coming to America from China without knowing English is like "living in a prison" (pg. 53), I was reminded of my mother's experience. My mother had echoed the same sentiment and felt quite isolated when first coming to America, as she did not know English.

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I read chapter 4 Susan Phillips' book and I felt a personal connection with this reading.

My mother is a Mexican immigrant from Jalisco, and the stories that Maria told remind me of the stories that she tells me about her life growing up. My grandmother was also a field worker, but I never knew enough Spanish to talk about her life with her before she passed. The first thing about the readings that surprised me was the nonchalant way in which she describes the deaths of her siblings. The way it is written makes it seem very monotone, which adds to the narrative of how hard this woman's life was. The stories about her father going to the US all the time to send back money remind me of what my grandmother would do for my mother. She would go work in the fields of central California down to the bay, and she would send back money so that my mom and my tia could live. Her description of Mexican culture made me pretty sad because it doesn't allow for women (or most men for that matter) to chase their professional dreams. Professional dreams aren't valued as much as tradition and family though, and that's something I wish was more common in the states. When she talks about loving the feeling of independence but yelling at her kids because they wanted to be more free than she was growing up, I snarled at the irony.

Overall, I think this chapter provides an excellent illustration of a fairly privileged immigrant journey, the other stories that I've heard weren't nearly as pleasant as the one she described.

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Chapter 2: I think it is very interesting to learn about the perspectives of those who lived under communism given the fact that many of us have grown up in America, a capitalistic country. Individualism is a very American concept so it is thought-provoking to see how people are so willing to sacrifice their lives for the collective good, especially when Xidan's parents worked so much that they didn't get to see her or her brother very often. I didn't know about the red/black/gray categories that people were divided into and how the Cultural Revolution destroyed families, as Xidan had to treat her parents badly because of their family background and how she even considered killing him with a gun. One can't help but feel that communism has taken their children. I really admire how Xidan and her mom were so able to become amiable with everyone around them and to adapt quickly. I especially respect Xidan for instilling confidence in her patients and for refusing to do procedures because the client's boyfriend told them to. The language barrier that Xidan faced when she relocated to the U.S. resonated with me because my dad told me a lot of stories of what life was like when he immigrated here. He frequently was misunderstood at restaurants and everywhere else but over the years he has learned to adapt and now those awkward experiences he had are funny to him. Overall, Xidan's story was an emotional rollercoaster and it was a great read.

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