Chinese grad 'sorry' for critical speech

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A Chinese student posted an apology on Sina Weibo on Monday after the speech she delivered at a graduation ceremony at the University of Maryland on Sunday in the United States went viral, triggering accusations of dishonesty and betrayal by some Chinese.  
In her speech, Yang Shuping started by saying that whenever anyone asked her why she came to study at the University of Maryland, she always replied: "Fresh air."  
The audience erupted in laughter.  
"Five years ago, as I stepped off the plane from China, and left the terminal at Dallas Airport, I was ready to put on one of my five face masks. But when I took my first breath of American air, I put my mask away," she said.  
Yang went on to say that the air she breathed in the US "was so sweet and fresh and utterly luxurious".  
"I grew up in a city in China where I had to wear a face mask every time I went outside; otherwise I might get sick," Yang said, describing her hometown as heavily polluted.  
Many Chinese students in the US believe that some facts Yang cited in her speech were somewhat stretched.  
Yang, it was later revealed, is from Kunming, in southwestern China's Yunnan province, where air quality is better than most cities on average.  
"I also come from Kunming, which is famous for its good climate and weather," Zhang Jun, a PhD student at the University of Maryland, posted on his Facebook page on Sunday. "Contrary to what she claimed, Kunming's air is near the top of most major cities in China. From my experience in the last few years, Kunming's air quality on average is at least as good as Washington, DC."  
Some Chinese students also expressed disappointment in the way Yang characterized China in her remarks.  
Northwestern University graduate student Zhang Lemeng said, "China certainly has its problems, but a lot of them result from objective factors instead of system failures."  
There were 2,197 students from China at the University of Maryland in the 2016-17 academic year. Yang was one of few chosen to speak at the commencement ceremony.  
He Jiang, a doctoral student in biochemistry, became the first Chinese citizen to deliver a graduation speech at Harvard University in 2016. In his speech, which went viral and received extensive praise in China, He talked about the importance of bringing advanced science and technology to underdeveloped areas, such as the rural villages of China.  
Later on Monday, Yang posted an apology on her Sina Weibo account: "I was just sharing my experience as an international student in the US with no intention to deny or belittle my country or my hometown. I'm sorry about what I did and will learn from the mistake."  
The University of Maryland released a statement on Monday on its website saying it supports Yang's right to share her views.  
"The University believes that to be an informed global citizen it is critical to hear different viewpoints, to embrace diversity, and demonstrate tolerance when faced with views with which we may disagree. Listening to and respectfully engaging with those with whom we disagree are essential skills, both within university walls and beyond," the statement said.  
The Chinese Students and Scholars Association of the University of Maryland, also made a statement on its Sina Weibo account on Monday, saying that Yang's speech only represented herself, as most Chinese students in Maryland are proud of China's great achievements and are also bothered by Yang's views.  
The association said the public should maintain a rational attitude.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201705/24/WS59bbeb5da310ded8ac18cdbf.html