**COMMON APP ESSAY - MELISSA ANASTASIA TAMIN**

Prompt #5 - “Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.”

“Dude, why is there only 5 mil here, where is the rest of the money?” Rachel exclaimed with a slight panic in her voice as we all stood around her. “I don’t know, have they all paid already? They said they have paid their share.” Bryce replies. “But the bill is 7 mil, we are short 2 mil. Who is going to pay for the rest?” Rachel says, with a worried look on her face. “I don’t know. Maybe we should go and ask everyone if they have paid again.” I mentioned. We spread out and asked the rest of the group -- the Danish students -- if they had chipped in. As we ended up completing the whole bill, I watched the other party in confusion, dazed by their indifference and lack of sensibility. Being a part of this student exchange program is great and all, yet it is now tinted with occurrences which make us question if we can really build a genuine relationship with those students.

Since they came to Indonesia as a response to our previous visit, some little conflicts between our groups had challenged the way we perceive their personalities. I recall one time when Derren, who generously offered a weekend trip to his villa in Bali, was then regretful of his choice. “They were so ungrateful, and didn’t even say thank you at all”, he remarked. He recounted no mention of gratitude from them, describing their attitude of entitlement through the small gestures along the trip. I also remembered instances where we would be feeling left out, just like that one night when Erica, my supervisor, invited me out to the lounge at their dorm. The foreign Danish sentences and loud Danish music did nothing other than making me feeling out of place, as no one responded to my inquiries in English.

Although unexpectedly, it was understandable that at one point the Indonesians ended up making a dedicated chat room just to rant about these annoying episodes. However, it also became more apparent to me that this is going in the wrong direction. Throughout the exchange period, I learned to walk out of my comfort zones -- in and out of the classroom -- by asking questions, being receptive to new knowledge, exchanging opinions with people bringing different perspectives, and taking matters into my own hands. Particularly for the last point, maybe it is time to step the game up: from just my own laundry to the social situation I am currently in.

I made up my mind and asked Erica if she wanted to go for a swim in my neighborhood pool so that we could relax and chat. I opened by telling her how the Indonesian students felt, the indifferent actions of the Danish students that made us feel ignored and rejected, almost. Upon hearing this, Erica apologized to me for how the Danish students might have made us feel and said that it was absolutely not their intention. The next thing Erica told me actually shed some light to my understanding: that the Danish see everyone as equal, nobody is treated special, and therefore no one should be afraid to express what one is feeling. She also mentioned that some of the Danish students weren’t that fluent in English and their hesitation might come across as indifference. Hearing this, I understood that we are just having small miscommunications, resulting from our unfamiliarity with their rather individualistic culture.

Looking back at the experience, I now realize that the trip had changed me. I became a more open-minded and tolerant person, without compromising the values I hold as true.. Now, whenever I encounter change, I think twice before rejecting it. At the end of the day, I can only be grateful for this wonderful opportunity that has changed me for the better.