



GRAND LODGE
ESTABLISHED 1895

美洲同源總會 CHINESE AMERICAN CITIZENS ALLIANCE

~ NATIONAL ~

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Alliance Essay Contest Winners Announced Students Queried on Tiger Mothers

Since its inception over 20 years ago, the Chinese American Citizens Alliance National Essay Contest has attracted thousands of high school students across the nation. Intended to foster creative thinking, self-expression and encourage an awareness of current local and world events, top placing finishers receive cash scholarships towards their education endeavors.

Traditionally conducted on the first Saturday in March and open to all students enrolled in high school (grades 9-12), participants are given up to two hours to compose an essay in English, not to exceed 500 words, on a contemporary topic concerning the Chinese and Asian American communities. This year's participants were asked to comment on the parenting style of bestselling author Amy Chua. Revealed at the time of the contest, the essay topic stated:

“Amy Chua, a Yale University law professor and mother of two daughters, was unknown to most of the world until the *Wall Street Journal* published an excerpt from her now bestselling book, *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*. The excerpt was titled “Why Chinese Mothers Are Superior” and led with a list of activities and behaviors that Chua’s two daughters, now teenagers, have never been allowed to do. These include “attend a sleepover,” “have a play date,” “be in a school play,” “watch television and play computer games” and “get anything less than an A.” Both daughters had to continuously practice their musical instrument. Chua believes that if she set the bar high, her children will rise to the occasion.

Though controversial, Chua’s book is getting people to talk about parenting. The discussions have been heated, passionate and polarizing. As a teenager, what is your take on Amy Chua’s style of parenting, and why?”

With 140 participants from 14 chapters across the country writing in this challenging, thought provoking and competitive contest, essays brought both favorable and dissenting opinions on this parenting style.

Congratulations to this year’s top authors for their accomplishment.

Placement and Scholarship Award

Participant’s Name and Host Lodge

First Place (\$1,000)

Walter Chang (Houston)

Second Place (\$700)

Ruby Simon (Washington)

Third Place (\$500)

Stephanie Wang (Portland)

Merit Awards (each \$100)
(listed alphabetically)

Kevin Chan (Los Angeles/GSGV)
Cindy Chu (Salinas)
Eric Ho (Los Angeles/GSGV)
Austin Li (Mississippi)
Kevin Liou (Albuquerque)
Eunice Liu (Oakland)
Carol Nguyen (Los Angeles/GSGV)
David Alan Wong (San Antonio)
Keianne Yamada (Peninsula)
Xin Yi Zhang (Los Angeles/GSGV)

Editor's Note: Grand Lodge Education Committee Chairman, Davace Chin, is the National Essay Contest Coordinator who organizes the logistics and judging of all entries among a team of respected educators. Local Lodge contest coordinator/volunteers proctor the essay contest at local venues.

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Website: www.CACAnational.org

The Chinese American Citizens Alliance, established in 1895, is among the oldest civil rights organizations in the United States. Headquartered in San Francisco with chapter/lodges in Albuquerque (NM), Chicago (IL), Greater San Gabriel Valley (CA), Houston (TX), Las Vegas (NV), Los Angeles (CA), Mississippi, Oakland (CA), Orange County (CA), Peninsula (CA), Phoenix (AZ), Portland (OR), Salinas (CA), San Antonio (TX), San Francisco (CA), Seattle (WA), Tucson (AZ), and Washington, D.C., the Alliance addresses issues regarding voter education, political participation, racial discrimination and hate crimes, youth leadership training programs and equal employment opportunities for all Chinese Americans.

FIRST PLACE – WALTER CHANG
Senior at Bellaire High School, Bellaire, Texas

I flip open my phone and use speed dial.

“Dad, I got a B on my speech credit by exam.” I report.

“Finally! Something different!” I hear him respond.

“Well, speech counts as a 4.0 class, so my GPA will drop quite some . . .” I begin to explain.

“It’s okay, don’t worry about it.” He reassures me. He hangs up.

I smile. I knew he would do something like that. In front of me I see a peer staring into his report card, and suddenly I realize: what a contrast.

Most Chinese parents have a take on parenting similar to that of Amy Chua, though not as extreme. The parent must maintain strong control and push the child to success. The results are stellar. The child shows strong academic ability, gains excellent musical technique, and good showcases an enormous amount of awards. The child’s skill ensures a good amount of success; the overall result is impressive. At least, on the outside.

The style of parenting makes a number of key sacrifices – most notably, the openness of communication between child and parent. I often hear from friends, “They don’t understand.” The forceful discipline the parent imposes makes the parent hard to approach. How could one report grades openly? Or ask for help or the latest setback in organizing rehearsal? Or confide in them the latest rejection from one’s fourth love? The parent and child relationship may still be loving, but the love is more rigid and less transparent, and the ties in the family are weaker. The importance of family ties is an essay in itself.

As importantly, the source of motivation for the child is less than agreeable and not sustainable. All the awards and achievements the child has racked up had been acquired to please parents; self motivation sits in the backseat. And the choice between the two motivations make all the difference. The former takes one command and gives one output. The latter need no command and continues to give output. With the former, the child complains about the grueling process and is not moved by results. With the latter, the child smiles at the process and dances in the end. The happiness produced with self-motivation makes each second of the child’s life fuller. The interests developed with self-motivation pursue for the rest of the child’s life. And the achievements from self-motivation rivals those of forced motivation, as I myself can testify.

“What is it?” I ask the peer staring into the report card. He sighs.

“Now I have to work because my parents don’t understand senioritis.” He responds.

I give him a few consoling words. As I leave, I suddenly remember something and we use speed dial again.

“Dad?” I ask.

“Yes?”

“Just checking, do you have any idea how much time I spend on homework, my three instruments, or other activities?”

Why would I?” You come to ask us for help, not we go to offer you help.”

“Okay, just checking. Thank you!” I hang up.

SECOND PLACE – RUBY LEE SIMON

Junior at School Without Walls High School, Washington, District of Columbia

As a teenager engaged in a seemingly never-ending battle against teachers, parents and friends who expect too much, I can honestly say that my priorities are all mixed up. While I rarely find myself setting aside time to practice piano or study for the SAT, I treasure sleepovers with my closest girlfriends, or even just the chance to curl up with an admittedly trashy novel. But the reason I object to Amy Chua's rigid parenting style is not the lack of freedom she allows her daughters. In fact, I knew I would be much more successful, at least in certain aspects of my development, if I was banned from sleepovers, school plays and computer games. The reason I object to Amy Chua's ideas is that adolescence involves the transition from external motivation to internal motivation, and part of being a teenager is figuring out what's important without people looking over your shoulder. I spend hours studying Chinese so that I will one day be able to ask my great-aunt about her childhood, and no amount of yelling or grounding or rigidity can motivate me as effectively as my own values.

There is no denying the power of high expectations. When my dad gives me an order, when his voice loses its warmth and his mouth purses into a thin line, I do it, no questions asked. No matter how ridiculously far fetched or seemingly impossible the task, I understand that failure is not an option. But this blind adherence to authority pales in comparison to what I can accomplish when I embark upon a task that genuinely excites me. Not only do I do it, no questions asked, but I do it passionately, inspirationally, and independently.

The first time I experienced this phenomenon was in the 8th grade, during a school project on a community uprising against the construction of a freeway in my hometown. My desire to impress my grandfather, who had been active in the protests, as well as my fascination with the movement's effects on my community, motivated me to visit the National Archives and the Library of Congress to dig up old picket signs and flyers. Up until this point in my academic career, I had been perfectly content with simple web research that satisfied the minimum requirements for school projects. What brought about this unprecedented thirst for knowledge, this sudden desire to maximize my academic potential? It wasn't a rule or a threat or an ultimatum. My parent didn't have to ban me from the television or scream until I finally gave in. Ultimately, no drawn-out lecture or intense shouting match could ever replace the magic that comes with genuine internal motivation. I hope Amy Chua's daughters get to experience it some day.

THIRD PLACE – STEPHANIE WANG
Senior at Crescent Valley High School, Corvallis, Oregon

In Amy Chua's excerpt, "Why Chinese Mothers are Superior," she describes a strict system of controlled academics and little social interaction. Not only as a teenager, but also as a member of my community and as an individual who hopes to raise children as well in the future. I believe that Chua's style of parenting is entirely too limiting. In fact, I believe that her method may even be detrimental to the futures of students. Growing up with strict rules and expectations such as those enforced by Chua invite ridicule, undermine holistic education and do not prepare students for the real world.

High school is the time when teens begin to develop their own opinions, decide career paths, and become their own adults. A major part of this phase is the social interactions that develop their interests. When students never attend social activities and are pressured to ignore their interests and pursue those of their parents instead, social skills do not develop and this invites ridicule from other students. These individuals become targets for jokes about nerds, geeks, and "Asians." With social interactions being such an important part of high school and self discovery, it is unwise to repress those aspects of a student's life as Chua seeks to do.

From an academic standpoint, this is also not an optimal method of parenting. Looking at Ivy League colleges, some of the most prestigious institutions of learning in the world, one notices that they are all liberal arts school, looking for well-rounded students. With hundreds of years to perfect their admissions processes, it is clear that they want students with a wide range of interests and talents. This indicates that the best students are those who do more than ace tests and play instruments. These institutions are looking for open-minded students with broad interests. This, however, is the opposite of what Chua forces upon her daughters.

Finally, Chua's method of parenting is not in the best interest of children futures. Using the Chinese education system as a model, students are encouraged to only study, practice an instrument, and sleep. Social activities, plays, sports and community service are discouraged or omitted completely. Consequently, companies like Goldman Sachs in China specifically refuse to hire these students fresh out of college. They state that these students lack flexibility, creativity, initiative, and knowledge of real world applications for their skills. The similarities in Chua's education system and Chua's method show that her method is not useful in real world settings.

It is apparent that Chua's method of parenting is detrimental to students academically, socially and economically. Her method deprives teens of an opportunity to grow, discover their passions, and enjoy their youth. Furthermore, teens raised under this system lack the necessary skills to compete on the international job front. These negative implications extend beyond youth and into futures as well. For these reasons, I do not support, and in fact oppose, Amy's Chua's style of parenting.