

Personal History & Diversity Statement

David Y.J. Kim

My motto is "Living, Loving, and Learning," as the author of the book Leo F. Buscaglia, Ph.D. mentioned. I always pursue learning new things not only in academia but in my everyday life. My goal is to contribute to making a loving society of understanding and empathy.

Living

I was born in Ames, Iowa, and I spent most of my childhood in the USA. I came to Korea with my parents at the age of 10, and after that, I spent most of my education in Korea, including my undergraduate. Now, I am currently pursuing a graduate degree to fulfill my goal of becoming a research scientist.

I consider myself fortunate enough to have a reasonably comfortable life except for one part, and that was when I first came to Korea. The cultural change I experienced moving to Korea was sometimes too drastic for me to handle at a young age. The small cultural difference between the two countries confused me; for example, people had different expectations in manner and courtesies when talking to seniors, such as different forms of 'you' to address seniors to show courtesies respecting their age. As I was not accustomed to such, I failed to meet that expectation occasionally, and certain groups felt awkward towards me and excluded me. The educational difference was also a major factor that made things hard. Although the educational emphasis is currently changing in Korea, during my time, competition between peers was extremely fierce even at a young age. Students would not study together because they were afraid of outdoing each other on exams. However, my sixth-grade classmates elected me class chairman because I showed teamwork and drive and found my school spirit infectious. That became the backbone of my adaptation to Korea and my confidence. Eventually, I started enjoying my life in Korea and gain academic excellence. Whenever I face obstacles in my life, I think about the time I came to Korea and remind myself that every wall has a door and trust myself in finding happiness.

Loving

For a while, I lived a life for my benefit and thought that was enough. I was aware of social prejudice and discrimination, but I did not act upon it because it did not directly impact me. During college, the foreign student support program in which I participated made me realize I should be more aware of inclusion and discrimination. The school assigned me a wonderful Philippine student as a mentee. At first, I merely helped him with school assignments arising from language barriers. However, while I was assisting him, it frustrated me to see him having difficulties getting into a group projects because people preferred to work with classmates of the same skin color. I tried to make him understand how Koreans relate to each other and some humor that Koreans enjoy so he would have a better chance to form relationships. With my minor help here and there and his extraordinary courage, he eventually adapted to the society and is now working at a prestigious software company in Korea.

My mentee's story showed me that there are people out there that are not fulfilling their potential because they feel they do not fit in. As much as I want to live a happy life, I want others to enjoy their life too. I will continue my interest in teaching other to *learn* diversity so everyone will *live with loving* in an interconnected way.

Learning

My father is a college professor, and he always emphasized to me to think out of the box, asking questions such as "Why do you think $1+1$ is 2? Can it not be 100?". When I was young, I had no idea why he was asking me these *strange* questions. Nowadays, I kind of understand why my father was eager to ask me these *essential* questions. As researchers, our goal is to expand our knowledge, break limitations, and make the world a better place. We will not be able to reach our goals with old fashioned rules. Instead, we reach new frontiers of creativity by thinking outside the box and by learning from others. When I say others, it includes everyone regardless of his/her race, gender, age, and social status. On top of that, Artificial Intelligence will integrate into our society at a quick pace. As a research community, we must make sure that these new technologies do not isolate certain groups of people. I myself will always ponder how my work can contribute to diversity.

"Living, Loving, and Learning". As I have stated, I will continue to live my free and happy life while loving others so they could obtain the same, and lastly never stop learning new things.

Thank you

David Y.J. Kim