

★ editorial

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TENNESSEE VOICES

Why Asian-Americans excel over others in education

By Ming Wang

America faces many major challenges today, among them jobs, health care and education. In order to strengthen our nation, we have to improve



Wang

in these areas particularly in education. At the time of the celebration of Chinese New Year (this is the “Year of the Sheep”), I am reminded of what a great job Asian-Americans have been doing in educating their children, and how the rest of America can learn from them.

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children in this country. The average ACT score of Asian-American students is higher than all other ethnic groups, and Asian-Americans have enjoyed the preponderance of representation in America’s top universities, especially when compared with the low percentage of Asian-Americans in the U.S. population.

The percentage of Asian-American students in Ivy League schools is disproportionately high. When I was at Harvard Medical School, nearly one-third of the students were Asian-Americans, unusually high when compared with population.

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Americans enrolling in top American universities is so remarkable that it prompted schools like Harvard and Stanford to openly enact discrimina-

tory policies of stricter criteria and higher admission test score requirements for Asian-American students.

The University of California, Berkeley, justified such biased requirements by saying that if higher admission standards for Asian-American students as such didn’t exist, more than 50 percent of the school’s student body would be Asian-American, resulting in significant overrepresentation.

Why are Asian-Americans so successful in educating their young? The main reasons are cultural heritage and family. When I was young, my parents were poor, so we did not have any money to buy toys for me, and the little money that they did have they used to buy books for us.

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if I mastered mathematics, physics and chemistry, I could go anywhere in the world. Education, knowledge and scholarships are regarded with the highest esteem in the Asian culture.

Despite the fact that most Asian-American families have already integrated and assimilated into American society after only a few generations here, and many of their cultural values and ways of life are no longer very different from those of other non-Asian-American families, one thing that Asian-American families have never let go of which remains the defining feature of an Asian-American family is the singular focus and relentless emphasis on education of their young.

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the education of its children, much can be learned from Asian-Americans, who have exemplified that the key to providing a good education for a child is to start with the family. Asian-American families should share these pearls of wisdom with the rest of the American society today. At a time of celebration of Asian-American heritage such as the Chinese New Year, we as Asian-Americans should not only celebrate our culture and tradition, but also, and perhaps more importantly, realize that we do have the responsibility to help America.

We should step out of our comfort zone, step into the American mainstream society and contribute by participating more actively in helping to solve America’s education problems. As the doc-

umentary film “Waiting for Superman” showed, American students consistently scored last place among industrialized nations in math and science, but consistently scored the highest ... in confidence!

In education of our young, the rest of America can learn much from Asian-Americans, and together we can provide a better education for all our children. They are America’s future.

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