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Home State: New York

U.S. Institution: Boston College

Major: Political Science

Country: China

Term: Academic Year 2004-2005

The Gilman Scholarship played a major role in my decision to study abroad. Being a first generation American as well as first generation college student I did not have anyone's footsteps to follow or advice to heed. My parents were very nervous about my decision to study abroad. What eventually helped to ease their minds was the fact that I would have the financial support of the Gilman Scholarship. I know that I would not have been able to study abroad without the help of the Gilman Scholarship.

I realize that not many African American West Indians travel to Asia because they fear not understanding a culture so different from what they are used to. This in fact was a challenge that I had to deal with in making the decision to travel abroad. I was told by many people that I should travel to places more in my comfort zone and to where I could count on people of similar backgrounds being present. I even thought at one point that I might not be making the right decision. I realized however that the only way to truly recognize and embrace who I am is to step outside of the comfort zones and truly get lost to find myself.

A majority of my coursework at Beijing University was language based. I did however get the opportunity to take a Microcosm of Beijing course that introduced Beijing's specific role in China's history and cultural development. My minor at Boston College is International Relations with a concentration on Global Studies and I believe the courses I took at Beijing University were relevant in that they allowed me a direct perspective and greater understanding of Chinese culture.

I plan on pursuing further opportunities to both work and study abroad. My experience in China is one that is still so hard to put into words. It is such a refreshing and rewarding experience to fully immerse oneself into another's culture and way of life. I truly believe that through cultural exchange we can better understand one another and better live amongst each other.