

ESCAPE FROM AMERICA

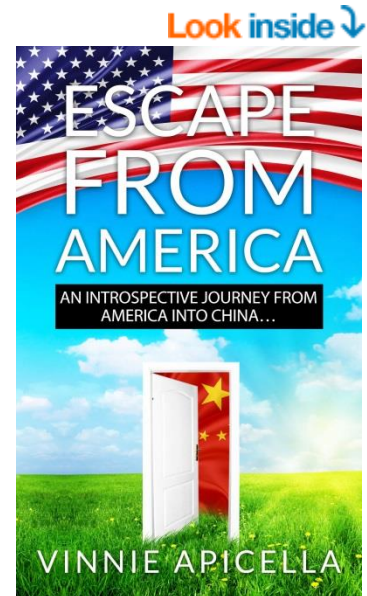
An Introspective Journey from America into China...

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On the surface, *Escape from America* is the story of an American aspiring to change his life and plan a future in China. Beneath the surface, however, this book features critical analysis of both countries in an effort to promote greater understanding.

China, in spite of its long history, is still a very “young” country where development is slow and unsteady. Sure, we from the “West” can say we’ve arrived—but have we really?

EFA is meant to educate and entertain readers who wish to truly “know” two of the world’s dominant superpowers, as well as provide powerful insight from someone approaching the subject from both a local and global perspective.



But that's not all...

My “story within a story” is one that I believe can encourage you, whatever your background, to take a closer look at your country, your life, and take everything into account. Step back and examine your world, ask yourself: Am I happy? Do I like what I see? What future goals might I wish to pursue?

Broadly speaking, for anyone who is not satisfied with the status quo and feels there are better ways forward, this book will inspire you.

Do you think you know America? Do you think you know China? Think Again.

***Please note:** The following selections are incomplete versions of full chapters. They do not follow a specific order and are only meant to exemplify the book’s variety of content. Enjoy!

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Praise for Escape from America

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Praise for ESCAPE FROM AMERICA...

“Insightful, convincing, and absolutely fun to read! As a Chinese student pursuing higher education in America, Vinnie’s book really helps me better navigate the cultural differences between the U.S. and China. At a time when distrust and uncertainties threaten the relations between the world’s two largest economies, Vinnie’s book would be a meaningful contribution to promoting greater mutual understanding on both sides.”

Mike Shao – Student, Harvard University

“As an overseas student living in the U.S., my understanding of the U.S. has been constantly changing. I started to realize how wrong it is to judge a place you’ve never lived in. The understanding of the U.S. by Chinese people tends to be generally biased, from what I’ve seen, and so is the understanding of China by Americans. There are plenty of Chinese in the U.S., but U.S. citizens that I’ve encountered seldom have the interest to even visit China. All of this made me realize how unique Vinnie’s experience and thoughts are, and what an impact it will make to readers if all these are written down.

Moving to China demands great courage and determination. From my personal experience with Vinnie, I can see that he possesses not only such courage, but also the great insight nurtured by the best education in the U.S. and his own persistent pursuit of new knowledge. All these made the ideas in this book priceless and irreplaceable.

How would an American elite perceive China and the U.S.? What is the truth like behind all the crazy propaganda and “fake news”? What advice would an American who understands China offer to improve today’s China?

All of these questions are answered, carefully, and candidly, in this wonderful book!”

William Hu – Student, University of Chicago

Chapter 3

Getting Good at Barely Getting By



The latter part of our first decade in the 2000s will surely rank among the lower points in American history. We all bear responsibility for the financial collapse in America and we as a people, as well as our government, should hang our heads in shame. Again, we can point to this idea of entitlement and self-gratification that I introduced in the last chapter where we expect to get what we want at all costs; and now the cost is proving too much to bear for many of us: loss of jobs, loss of homes, loss of money, loss of dignity... it goes on.

People no longer have any money to spend. More so, they have less money to spend than they did before because of job cuts; because of salary cuts; because of a lack of savings, and a major loss in investment funds. It can also be argued that many of us never really have money to spend to begin with, which was why we were so reliant on borrowing. Such unwise habits created the framework for our economic problems.

IV. Self-discipline is Not Our Strong Point



Based on stats from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), more than 65% of Americans are overweight. This was not where I meant to go with this section but it can serve as a cornerstone to my point. Self-discipline is not something we Americans as a nation are good at, particularly in recent times. Consume now, ask questions later. If this chapter begins to have a familiar tone to it, it's because I touched on this topic earlier in Chapter Two, but wanted to go into further detail about pitfalls China can avoid as it now heads down the road America's already traveled.

On the one hand, it's exciting to see a more globalized China with patrons enjoying the KFCs and Pizza Huts and high-end international fashion shops for the first time. Now international and domestic automakers are entering the picture and auto sales are rising—look at GM. On the other hand, take care toward becoming a nation of irresponsible spenders who spend foolishly because now you can; or think carefully about patronizing foreign outlets more for prestige than practicality. Indeed it's a nice feeling to earn higher wages and have more spending power, but do not let it blind you toward the perils of perceived prestige because as we've (Americans) seen, as quickly as it comes, it can go just as fast.

Now if you'll please bear with me a moment as I step on my soapbox and offer a lesson from those who've made mistakes. I speak on behalf of my country but also for myself.

Chapter 5

Perception of China II (The View from America)



In this chapter, I will be introducing three Chinese people who have agreed to share their insights on relevant Sino-American topics to follow. Their opinions will appear at various times throughout the next few chapters in this book. The three participants, Ms. He, Mr. Wang, and Ms. Zhai, are all native Chinese now living in America, and are friends or associates of mine.

The following are brief profiles of each:

1. Ms. He: Chinese citizen, age 38, originally from Beijing, and currently living in the State of Arizona. She has been residing in America for 13 years. She received her Bachelor's degree from Tsinghua University and a Master's from the University of Toledo in Ohio.

She works as a manager for an IT department and is also active in real estate investment. Her future plan is to return to Beijing where she hopes to continue her career while lessening the amount of responsibilities and financial burdens of daily life.

2. Mr. Wang: Chinese citizen originally from Anhui Province now living in the State of New Jersey, age 22; received Master's degree from Ohio State University in the U.S., and a Bachelor's degree from the Harbin Institute of Technology in China. He works as a welding engineer and has lived in the U.S. for two years. His future plan is dependent on his professional career and where will be the best opportunity—to stay in the States or return to China. He enjoys football, music, movies, and American television.

3. Ms. Zhai: Chinese citizen born in Inner Mongolia, and much traveled throughout her adult life, living in such cities as Guangzhou and Tianjin where she attended Nankai University. She currently works as a research scientist living in the State of Massachusetts and has been a U.S. resident for more than 12 years. Her future plans are to remain in the U.S. to raise her family and continue her scientific work. She enjoys learning about new cultures, science and technology, and health and nutrition.

Twenty years ago China may as well have been on another planet for all those of us in the Western world knew. The country seemed a large mass of land that existed in seclusion and barely noticeable on the global market scale; certainly a far cry from neighboring Asian market leaders such as Korea and Japan. What did we think of China? At that point, probably nothing, if we even thought about China at all. Now here we are in 2010 and China has made quite an impact on the world.

Of course what do “we” think of China differs among the many who would be asked (this will be highlighted later in the chapter), but in general, it's clear that China has asserted itself as a growing world power and dominant market force for years to come. Based on China's many accomplishments in a relatively short time, other peoples' perceptions of China could be that of admiration; and maybe in some cases, apprehension.

Let's delve further into this topic by highlighting recent history to compare and contrast China and America on a national level to help put things in better perspective.

When discussing the “Perception of China,” it is important to first focus on our relationship on an international level, and provide perspective from both sides, which is revealed often and again on various media and online news platforms.

II. How Are We Alike? How Are We Different?

» *Exploring Family Values, Business Models, Education, and more*



No matter where we're from, our customs, religion, belief systems, etc. it's safe to suggest in spite of our differences, there are also many similarities among us, particularly those that distinguish us as, well, human beings: hopes, fears, joys, dreams, rationality, values, and so on. So while the universal elements that serve to define us do indicate natural likenesses, what distinguishes us as different stems from our cultures and traditions. Regarding the U.S. and China, as greater interaction exists between us today, it's not so surprising to suggest we are not altogether that different, and certainly compared with 20 or 30 years ago.

Yet, we may account for any such cultural differences quite easily. China is an age-old country with unprecedented historical significance, unrivaled achievements, and a wide range of ethnicities and language dialects within its many provinces. The U.S. was one of the newcomers to the world scene, and has hardly had enough time to establish any such cultural traditions as one would find in Asia. Adding to that, since the U.S. population is comprised of various nationalities, to be able to define a particular American "culture" or perhaps credo that we would all identify with is difficult... *"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free"* notwithstanding.

Chapter 9

The Waking Dream



Five years later...

The entryway to Ocean International Center was impressive. Out front there were four tall office buildings that were modern and luxurious. I would later find out Amazon China and Yahoo also had offices located there. The lobby was well decorated and staffed by well-dressed professionals who would guide you toward the appropriate elevator to your destination. Upon arrival to my “new” office, I stood at the front desk and looked around.

It was 8:30 am and most of the employees hadn’t arrived yet. This was to be my new “home” for the next few months: the headquarters of “Company A,” an e-commerce company that I had previously never heard of in America, but was apparently doing quite well in their industry. It was no longer a dream. I had finally made it; I was in Beijing, preparing to start my new job, and get on my way toward pursuing my future goals.

III. America Exposed

» *Thoughts and opinions from Chinese locals*



As I mentioned earlier, when I set out to continue this book and created “Phase III,” my intention was to transition the subject matter to not just focus on myself, but to include contributions from the many great friends I’ve made in China. Some are people I’ve known for several years since before I arrived here, others are former colleagues, and still others are my students and their parents.

In an effort to better understand what Chinese people think about America, I sent out a series of interview questions and was very pleasantly surprised to receive responses from nearly 50 people! This even included friends of friends who I didn’t even know. So while I presume (and hope) it was fun for them to share their thoughts, I’m pleased and privileged to now be able to share them with you.

What are your thoughts? Will you agree or disagree with their responses?

Since it’s not practical to include each individual response, at the risk of running on too long and because of the potential for duplicity, I’ve condensed this section by highlighting just a few of

I. The Moment of Truth



Chapter 11 has become the most pivotal chapter in this book. To this point, you’ve followed me on the earlier parts of my journey before I finally moved to China; you’ve seen my perspectives during that time, and they were quite different from what they are today. They’re different because *I’m* different. My approach to presenting the truth has not changed, however, as you’ve likely noticed in my continued sharp commentary about America in the last chapter. But now here’s where I start putting everything together—the culmination of what I’ve learned and what I’ve experienced these last several years in China—and bring it all to a fitting conclusion during these last few chapters.

My goal from the onset was to deliver value to readers in a way that entertains, educates, and persuades. So perhaps we’re now moving more toward the *persuasive* part here. This chapter is critical because if I *fail* to profoundly impact you by its conclusion, you may feel cheated; yet on the other hand, if I *do* profoundly impact you, you may feel contempt. What do I mean by this? You shall find out soon enough. Basically, by including this chapter and following my original plan, I’m going to open myself to a great deal of controversy from the Chinese point of view.

“It’s time to put people first. This means strengthening services at all levels, from community through hospital care back to the community, and linking them more effectively, so people get the care they need every step of the way. It’s also time to work more efficiently across sectors, to protect people from risky behaviors like tobacco smoking and unhealthy diet, and prepare them to age healthily.”



A report conducted by the World Bank Group, the World Health Organization, the Ministry of Finance, the National Health and Family Planning Commission, and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security of China, provided eight key recommendations on health service delivery reform in China and is expected to be a key driver for its implementation:

- 1) Create a new model of people-centered quality integrated health care that strengthens primary care as the core of the health system. This new care model is organized around the health needs of individuals and families and is integrated with higher level care and social services, using electronic tools and better data sharing.
- 2) Continuously improve health care quality, establish an effective coordination mechanism, and actively engage all stakeholders and professional bodies to oversee improvements in quality and performance across the system, including among public and private sector actors.

Leadership aligns everyone to be *motivated and inspired*



The Essential Hallmarks of a Good Leader

"In a great company, you need to institutionalize and perpetuate a great culture and excellent leaders. To do this, you must do several things well, including the training, the retention of talent and the creation of a company that is continually learning. You must have a culture of character and integrity. This comes from fostering an open environment, where people speak their minds freely, to treating people with respect—at all levels, from the CEO to clerks in the mailroom—to setting the highest standards combined with recognizing and admitting mistakes." –**Jamie Dimon, Chairman and CEO of JPMorgan Chase**

Leadership Lessons...

Always be transparent: *"This is critical to building a culture of trust. Share everything. You never want someone to walk into a meeting thinking you're hiding information."*

Address conflicts immediately: *"Don't avoid issues or confrontations. Conflicts don't age well. Deal with issues sooner rather than later since they don't resolve themselves. They get worse."*

Open communication: *"Encourage dialogue among employees at all times. No one should feel uncomfortable or unable to speak his or her mind at a meeting; otherwise, what's the point?"*

"Poor communication costs organizations time, effort, money, and limits the growth of their driving engines: their people." –**Jamie Dimon, Chairman and CEO of JPMorgan Chase**

I. China... The View from Over Here

» *Nothing will change if nothing is done*



So it is with those questions in mind that I opted to continue our interview segment to lead off and later conclude this chapter with a focus on the all-important topic of Chinese society. As before, our respondents were refreshingly honest in their responses, critical when called for, and subsequently leading the way toward not only uncovering much of what ails Chinese society today but providing part of the solution. I'll say this up front—this is a damn hard topic to discuss without stepping on anyone's toes. Yet for positive change to occur, where needed, we have to tell it like it is and save the apologies for later.

There always needs to be a backup plan. We should always look for alternatives. If help doesn't come from one source, we search for another. Or we *become* the source. True change dictates that we mobilize ourselves, not sit on our hands and hope it'll come greet us at our doors. And so if nothing else, with the rest of this interview, and through the end of this chapter, I truly hope we've been able to, in some way, be that catalyst for change that can yield greater societal prosperity than is represented simply by spending power or status symbols.

You've reached the end of this sample. Did you enjoy the preview? You may find more details on *Escape from America* or make a purchase by visiting our website:

<https://www.edgestudentsuccess.com/about/escape-from-america/>

Thank you for reading!

I believe we are bound only by those limits we place upon ourselves. However you define "freedom," for it to truly exist and impact our lives for the better, we must first condition ourselves to believe we have it within us to change. Release your mind, reprogram your thinking, and recognize the possibilities.

Tomorrow starts today...



Vinnie Apicella