

I have not yet travelled the globe. I have not been to either coast, and I am sorry to say that other than crossing into Canada a few times, I have never even left the country. I have been about as far as my backyard. Last winter I went to New York City for the first time, and my perception of the world was forever changed.

Whenever I heard about the diversity of New York, I never really believed it. I expected there to be a lot of Spanish, and to probably see a lot of English signs translated into Spanish, but not much else beyond that. Once we got there I was floored to find that wherever we went, a huge variety of different languages could be heard. From Arabic to Vietnamese and everything in between, somebody could be heard speaking it. There were so many, in fact, that it became difficult to even attempt to differentiate them. Everything was slightly overwhelming. Given that it was our first time in the city, we had to ask for directions quite often, and although there was sometimes a bit of a language barrier and we were somewhat nervous about approaching random strangers who spoke little English, everybody was so kind. Even the people who spoke absolutely no English were happy to try to help us as best they could, and that demonstrates a lot about the kindness of others.

Looking back, the interactions that I had with those people had a much larger impact on me than I could have foreseen. I realized, by seeing and talking to those kind strangers who tried so hard to assist us when they barely understood what we were saying, that there is more than America, and the world is not spinning just for us. There are billions of people in all corners of the globe, each with their own thoughts, desires, families, and dreams. Just because the language one speaks is new and unfamiliar to somebody else does not mean that it should be disregarded.

I believe that people from any and all cultures can communicate with and relate to one another. Despite the languages we speak or the gods we believe in, we do have common ground. We are all human beings, and we are all innately capable of compassion for others. This I firmly believe, and I will spend my life seeking that inherent goodness in all people.