My experiences in N.Y.C.

New York City has been called the “center of the world.” It has been given that name for a reason. Yes, the city itself is rather large, but it’s more than a number. New York City houses the United Nations, which is the largest symbol of internationalism. The United Nations is very important to many countries. It is a place where people from different countries can come together and work toward a common goal. Without it, there would be no tie between nations.

More than just the UN, there are several other places in New York City where internationalism exists. I walked through Chinatown and I instantly felt like I was in another world. I was a minority amongst tons of Asians. The streets were overcrowded and people were feuding. Everywhere I turned I heard Chinese and I felt lost, I had no idea what these people were saying to each other. I saw authentic Chinese foods, clothing and other items. I’ve never been to China but I felt I had just from walking through this small area. Once you turned on the sidewalk it all stopped. I realized that this small community was like a different world, but it only existed inside that area.

As I walked on, I saw a sign overhead that was for “Little Italy.” It was such a cute place and the people were so interesting to watch. If you walked into a restaurant you were waited on by a real Italian waiter. It was just like I had imagined Italy, wine and romance. It was much calmer than Chinatown but it had the same international appeal. While I was in New York I heard more languages spoken than I could imagine. Some of them I couldn’t even identify. But just the same, these people were people and coexisted in the city along with everyone else. It was a new experience for me and I was surprised with the diversity and yet assimilation.
At this point in time nationalism is all over New York City. With the terrorist attacks in 2001, New Yorkers have taken an all new pride in America. After losing the World Trade Centers people stopped and realized what the United States of America meant to them. The memorials and monuments for the tragedy are always marked by a flag…an American flag. I feel that being in New York City today is different than it was before September 11, 2001. Many American citizens have gained an all new love and appreciation for their country. People will stand and look at Ground Zero for quite awhile as they feel pride, love and remorse. The initials N.Y.P.D. have taken on a whole new meaning for many of us. A lot of U.S. citizens have had to come to terms with the question of whether they will fight for their country or not. Grand Central Station was beautiful, but the most beautiful part about it was the American flag hanging from her ceiling. Being an American in New York City is a very emotional experience.

I was astonished with the culture change. I really didn’t think that women in New York City would dress any differently than I do, and I was so wrong. These women wore dresses, business suits, and always high heels. Designer purses were everywhere, their clothes were designer and so were their sunglasses. These women did not shop at Wal-Mart for the latest trends; Louis Vattan and Gucci were their choice. I don’t think I could even walk in some of the shoes these ladies were sporting. As we were walking through Central Park we were bombarded by runners, bikers and skaters. Not only did these women dress nice, but they had great bodies too! I did not see one overweight or obese person while I was in NYC. Everyone was in shape and everyone dressed nice. I quickly realized that appearance was very important to New Yorkers. I had once felt fairly
attractive, but I knew if I wanted to compete with these ladies I would have to buy an
entire new wardrobe and start jogging!

The name brands in the city were prominent. The people selling on the streets
took advantage of this and tried to sell fake Rolex watches, knock off Prada purses and
cheap Oakley sunglasses. I walked into a store and saw that an ordinary purse had an 800
dollar price tag attached to it. Not only is this apparent in their clothing, but also in the
vehicles they drive. I’ve never seen so many Escalades, Hummers or limousines. These
vehicles are the about the price as a house! And they are just like the clothes, the only
reason they are so expensive is because of the brand name. But brand names are
significant to these people.

The social customs of these people were easy to recognize. Because of all the
beggars and peddlers on the street, people in New York would often ignore you. I
stopped on the sidewalk and asked a group of ladies who were smoking if they had a
spare cigarette for my friend, they all scowled at me and snottily walked away. To them I
was just another stranger looking for a free handout. It really bothered me because where
I come from you help people, you at least acknowledge them. Instead of just saying “No,
sorry,” these women had to make a face and just walk away. People there are cold and
they don’t seem to care about anyone else. By the end of the trip I was so tired of being
begged that I didn’t want to help anyone out, not even my friends that were on the trip. I
can understand why these women acted as they did, you are bothered so much in New
York City that you just want to be left alone and ignore everyone. I didn’t like that, I
want to talk people, and have people smile and talk to me. Being ignored is painful and I
can’t imagine how the homeless people feel. We also don’t have homeless people where
I’m from. If someone was destitute, one of the churches would take them in and help them get on their feet. Everyone works where I’m from, and everyone helps each other out.

The wealth in NYC is outrageous. I don’t know how some of those people could even spend all the money they have. It’s ridiculous to have that much money, but it definitely happens there. The extravagant buildings named for rich people, the stores, the cars, and the cost of living. It really made me wonder how these people acquired that much money, it seems impossible to us middle class. I don’t think its right for people to be as rich as some New Yorkers are. It made me sick to think of what these rich folks waste their money on. I wish they would just donate it to the poor, to the shelters, or to the charities. A city that is that rich also has those that are extremely poor. Its funny how that works, you would think they would come together and it would all even out. But again people in NYC don’t care about others; they just want to be the biggest, best, and richest. The poverty in New York City was grotesque. Homeless people were on every block, and each of them stank from very far away. I saw them all the time, on the street, sleeping in Central Park, and trying to get in some places where they were turned down. These homeless were truly homeless, and they had absolutely nothing. Most of them were alone, no family, friends or companions by their sides. I felt for them, and some of them would try to get you to listen to their life story so you would feel pity and give them money. Some of them were nice, but one man followed us and begged us for five pennies. It blew my mind, this person was actually begging for pennies. The saddest part about these homeless was that they could not get a job because you had to have an
address to be employed. It put them in a double bind situation. Another thing I noticed was that most all of them were male, I only saw one female homeless person.

The reality of living in a big city hit hard. I had never been in a huge city, and I had no idea what life there would be like. I am from very small towns and it’s all I’ve ever known. I love it though, and I love the wide open spaces and vacant places that I go. After I was away from my small town I realized that things were very different in the city. I am used to peace and quiet and it’s never quiet in NYC. The smells are even different, and there’s no possible way you can drive your car through the city. Taking the subway was nice but it got so tiring. I missed jumping into my car and going into town. People are everywhere and a lot of them want something. I couldn’t handle the crowds, the waiting, and all the constant surveillance. I love private areas, quiet neighborhoods, and unoccupied highways.