

The Dog Days Are Over

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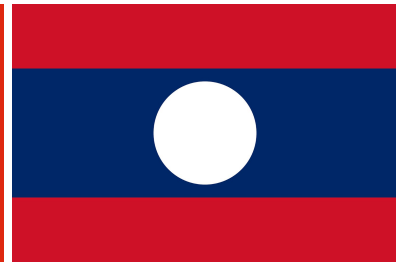
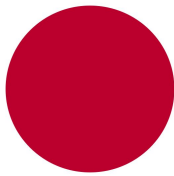
Moreno Valley College

Abstract

As a Mexican American student, I have continually had a particular perception of the Asian-American culture within society and my school campus. While there is a celebration and drive for culture exposure and traditions relating to Mexican and African American heritage, there has not been the related equal treatment for the Asian community. I wanted to interview teenage Asian American women and their struggles with acceptance of self and to analyze their interpretation of real-life concerns while reflecting on family ties and backgrounds. Each culture stems from differing accounts of behaviors, manners, and stereotypes that follow these students throughout their lives; I wanted to conduct interviews addressing these worries and shed some much-needed light on these narratives.

Community Map

I conducted various interviews with Asian American women, which consisted of Japanese, Chinese, Laos, Filipino, and Vietnamese. They dealt with many hardships, including bullying, stereotyping, and overall discrimination within society inside and outside their school campuses. Throughout the United States, only a fraction of Asian-Americans create the general population; this conveys to many schools all across America. Many of these students separate their traditions and culture and try to balance between American and Asian customs. Each individual has a story to tell about their history, heritage, and beliefs. No two narratives are the same.



Chapters

Angela

Lily

Er

Rebecca

Cat

Cherry

丹妮尔

Jaelyn

[Angela](#)

Age 17

Chinese, Laos, & Japanese

2nd Generation Immigrant



Angela is a hardworking individual with a passion for education and pursuing a long-lasting career. She is currently a senior attending high school working towards her diploma. She does not shy away from her culture and challenges the norms when it comes to Asian traditions.

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Chinese Girl

In elementary school, there was a girl that called me *Chinese Girl*, and every day she would see me, she would say *Hi Chinese Girl!* I would tell her to stop, but she never did. I've been called almond eyes, and people ask me if I'm Chinese all the time. It annoyed me. Growing up, I did not really see myself as a minority. I never saw myself as out of place-- just a kid like everyone else was. However, I never took the time to notice how everyone else would have seen me as the one out of place. I think the girl made me realize that I probably stood out. But I don't think she truly got to me emotionally.

When I was younger, I would bring Asian food for lunch, and everyone would ask if they could try some. Not only did I have to give away my food, but the results were often them

spitting it out in the end. I feel like I resented them for disrespecting food in front of me. I became a bully in order to avoid getting bullied. Growing up as the youngest and a female, it was difficult to get respect from my parents or siblings. It didn't help that it is cultural for the oldest son to be treated the best because they carry on the family's name.

In middle school, I used to go to my white friend's house, and that's when I realized that my way of life was very different from how other people lived. For one, they didn't take off their shoes, and that was my biggest pet peeve because they would be on the bed with their shoes on. Their mom did a lot of work and usually, in my house, everyone shares the work equally or the kids do all the work, depending on how the mom feels. Some significant differences made my way of life stand out to me.

Origins

My mom is half Lao and half Japanese. And my dad is Chinese. My dad doesn't tell me much about his past or his family, but my mom fled from the Vietnam War. When she came to America, she first lived in San Francisco. When she met my dad, they moved to Texas, and after they had my brother, they moved to Moreno Valley because my dad's parents lived there. My grandma called my parents in the middle of the night saying that my grandpa was dying and that she wants them to live in California to help care for him. My parents immediately packed their bags and drove all the way to Moreno Valley. Upon arrival, my grandpa was totally fine. Walking, healthy, no health problems at all. My parents discovered that my grandma lied to them to get them to move back to California. Although a little resentful, my parents ended up buying a house not too far from my grandparent's house anyways. Asian parents will go the lengths to stay near their kids, even when they're married and have children.

Generational Journey

I'm the second generation because my mom moved here. She immigrated here and then had me. Back in Laos during the Vietnam War, there were constant bombings despite the war mainly being in Vietnam. My mom told me how the house shook at night and the sounds of bombs and gunshots showering the city minutes away from her home. The houses were makeshift, so they don't provide much protection. She remembers hiding between the bare bamboo floor and an old mattress at night. One night her mother and her seven siblings packed their few belongings. They paid their collective life savings to a cargo ship crew hoping for a better and safer life in America. The US president at the time, Gerald Ford, was very open to helping refugees from the Vietnam War. She spent time in a refugee camp, she and her five sisters and two brothers were able to assimilate into American life and get back on their feet.

Family Dynamics

My dad works somewhere in Thousands Oaks and he lives in an apartment by himself. My mom lives in Moreno Valley with my cousin, my brother, and myself. My cousin recently moved with us because she wanted to attend college. My brother still lives with us, despite being nearly 20. My cousin and I share the same room, and when my dad visits it's a little crowded. My cousin is away most of the time and my brother keeps to himself.

We don't throw a lot of parties. Still, they usually include any relative who's willing to travel because we are separated around the United States. Our parties are kind of small, just my family and maybe one or two relatives that happen to come by. For perspective, only my aunt, her husband, and their son are coming to visit us this Thanksgiving, rather than a whole family reunion.

Language Barriers

I've never been fluent in my native language, so English was never hard for me. I grew up learning English, and I've always been decently good at it. I could understand the native language, but I can't speak it. I could read some words and know how it is pronounced, but I can't understand what it means. Most of my family lived in Asia and they immigrated here, so they all speak the native language and they would always try to talk to me in it. I obviously couldn't understand a thing. I sort of felt estranged from my family. A lot of them can't speak English well, so I was never close to any of them.

I am trying to bridge the gap between my relatives and myself by learning the language. Still, I don't think I will ever be able to make up the experiences I have lost.

Grandfather

My grandfather is a foreigner from Japan but learned Laos to be a tourist. He ended up falling in love with my grandmother and decided to live in Laos with her. When my grandfather died no one in the family ever knew how. My mom told me he drowned in a river in Laos while fishing. One of my aunts claims he was murdered, and another thinks he committed suicide. The police in Laos wasn't exactly helpful and his death went undocumented. No one in the family really discusses his death. No one in the family questions it.

Less Asian

I can't speak the native language, that's the biggest thing. I do eat Asian food but a lot of it is Americanized, sometimes we eat rice with hotdogs. We eat American cuisine, and a lot of the Asian restaurants in California are a lot more Americanized since they are less spicy. Because of this, I have a low spice tolerance compared to someone who would live in Asia. I've

seen kids who grew up in Asia eat entire ghost peppers without breaking a sweat. For me, I'd be panting for water after a bag of spicy chips. Not to mention that most Asian foods are simply unappealing to me.

I've tried some, hated some. Some I've refused to try at all. A lot of the plants that grew in Laos did not grow in America or were never imported here while I was growing up. Without the resources, my mom was never able to recreate any Asian dishes for me to grow up with. My grandmother passed when my mom was only seven, so she has very limited knowledge about Lao recipes and culinary techniques. My grandfather is Japanese but passed before my mom even remembered him. It didn't help that he wasn't someone who could pass down any recipes, so my mom didn't grow up eating any Japanese dishes either.

I do feel less Asian if I'm compared side to side to someone from Asia. I'm a lot chubbier and Americanized. I know very little Asian mannerism and culture. In America, we don't usually pay any mind to small things like culture since there are so many different races living here. America simply cannot cater to every race, and I understand that.

When people ask me what race I am, sometimes I feel compelled to say that I am American because I can't speak my own language. I feel like I'm not a part of the culture. I usually follow a lot of American beauty standards and most of the things that I use as entertainment is Western. Still, I also try to follow the Asian rules because some of them appeal to me naturally. In Asia, I feel like I would look very Western to them. If I went to Laos, I would look very Western because they are a third world country and they still wear traditional garments. If I went to Japan or China, my Americanization would have been obvious because I

would be considered chubby or simply lack knowing any of their mannerisms. I just wouldn't fit in.

The Difference

In Japan, food tends to be less salty because they want to maintain their weight. However, in Laos, it's incredibly savory-- everything is spicy or sweet and sour. As I said before, my spice tolerance is really low for an Asian person. But, in America, everything is more fattening. There are more chemicals and processed foods here. I know that in Asia they eat a lot of vegetables too, and not really here. But, I would prefer food from both cultures, I think both of them are good for me.

Statutes

In Laos, there's still maids and slavery, and if you are rich over there then you are really rich. For a third world country, their mansions are gorgeous. In Japan, the hierarchy is very important. In Japanese business culture, if you were to sit with co-workers at a restaurant, the way you are seated tells a lot about your status. The *Kamiza* is the seat of honor at a dining table. It faces the door and is furthest away from it. The *Shimoza* is the seat for the person of lowest status, with their backs to the door and closest to it. It is believed that when attackers came through the door during the *samurai era*, the *Shimoza* would be the first to die. Japanese honorifics also tells a lot about your relationship with another person. You can say the same sentence in several ways and they all mean different things in terms of status. Additionally, food eaten can determine one's, social class. *Broken rice*-- which is fragmented rice from the fields and are considered defective-- and *chazuke*-- tea or hot water poured over cooked rice-- are some of the lower class types of food. Whether you genuinely enjoy it despite your income or not,

eating such foods are often shunned or looked down upon. It is sort of comparable to how canned beans or instant noodles are associated with low income in the states.

Community

I don't think I know many Asians-- and the ones I do know, we aren't really friends. In a sense, all of us Asians have been *Americanized* differently depending on the friends we grew up with. We have very different interests-- some may like American TV shows, some like makeup, others, like myself, are education-focused. People want to hang out with like-minded people regardless of race. I think that's why I don't have many Asian friends. Other than ethnicity, we don't have anything in common. I feel more comfortable with people that think like me. If they value school or any of my common interests, then I'll gravitate towards them. It doesn't matter what race they are.

I don't necessarily feel oppressed since I live in a pretty welcoming area in America. I feel accepted here and I don't get any bad looks. I would definitely live here as opposed to living in Asia. In China, it's terrible. Japan is very crowded, and it's not ideal. And in Laos, it's third world and communist. America is simply the most appealing out of all of them. There's not really a lousy government, most of the time. You are free here, and I think I'm too used to living here to go back.

Standards

In Asia, if you don't look like them, then you will probably be hazed. Living in America and being around people of other races is way different than living in Asia with cities filled with people that look like you. Foreigners tend to have a good and a bad name in Asia. They are suitable for the economy, but their lack of knowledge about how influential culture is to other

races leaves a negative impression. Their roles are pretty similar to America's old way of seeing things. The women would clean the house and the men would be the breadwinner. I know America is progressively changing, but that's how the culture still is in Asia.

I dislike how dark our skin is. I want to be paler because it is a beauty standard in Asia to be light. But, we have naturally dark skin, so it's hard. Asian culture is basically asking the people to do the opposite of what they can do. The majority of Asians are born with darker skin, especially in a third world country like Laos, where most people are regularly exposed to the sun. It is a standard to be pale. If you're pale, it means that you aren't working and doing labor. It puts you in a higher position. I can't speak for everyone, but I think looking more American is also part of the incentive to being pale. Food is also a huge part of Asian culture, and yet the standard is to be extremely skinny. Plastic surgery is a trend in Asia nowadays. It's a little heartbreaking how Asians feel the need to abandon their natural look to fit into the impossible beauty standards.

I Like You Only Because You're Asian

It's a little embarrassing how people are obsessed with Asian culture or how people try to become friends with you because you are Asian. It's weird how they want to learn how to speak your native language and fetishize it when it's really not anything special. They can like anime or a band without praising it solely because of the race. One time, this guy had asked one of my friends for my Instagram because I am Asian. That was the only reason why he tried to contact me in the first place. The same guy was notorious for reaching out to only Asian girls at his school.

A Destined Future

When I was little, my mom would always tell me to be a lawyer or a doctor-- which is pretty stereotypical and I usually ignored the demands. When I told her that I wanted to be a teacher, she was disappointed-- maybe even a little hurt. Both my brother and I weren't planning to pursue billionaire jobs she could brag to her friends about like she expected. After months of telling her my decision is final, she sort of accepted it. I think Asian parents, or any ethnic parents, need to realize that not everyone can be number one.

It's a little unfair that some colleges accept based on race, I grew up in an American school, I got the same education as an American person. I understand that parents from Asian families push their kids farther, and perhaps they are more dedicated to their work than an American would student would, but since I got the same education as any American would have, it's unfair that my future could be screwed over because of the race and last name that I didn't get to choose.

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Kamiza- The Kamiza is the "top seat" within a room, the seat of honor

Shimoza- The Shimoza is the "bottom seat" within the room, the seat of the commoner

Samurai Era- The Samurai were the warriors of Japan. Samurai lead their lives according to the way of the warrior

Broken Rice- Broken rice is fragments of rice grains, broken in the field, during drying, transport, or by milling.

Chazuke- A simple Japanese dish made by pouring green tea, dashi, or hot water over cooked rice.

[Lily](#)

Age 16

Mexican and Vietnamese

2nd Generation Immigrant



Lily finds herself at a crossroad when it comes to her culture and identities. She struggles between two worlds, whether or not she is more Mexican or Vietnamese. She faces a dilemma each day and tries to persevere despite constant roadblocks between these two worlds. Her family came from Mexico, while her paternal grandparents came from Vietnam, and she never received the full story on how they made it to Mexico. Her father knew her mom, and he needed a better life since their marriage wasn't supported by his family. They ended up crossing the border with the help of a coyote. When Lily was growing up, she'd see a lot of conflict between my mother and father. However, her father would tell her that she'd be an outcast, that she would be judged for who she was. He told her never to be ashamed of her cultures.

Asian

Many people tell me that I do not look Asian. And that I'm not going to be considered Asian just because of my appearance. When I told people I was Asian, they didn't believe me. They would call me names, call me a liar, say I was just seeking attention. People don't believe me. I'm only close to two people, and when I told them about being Vietnamese, they accepted me, for once. I'm only viewed as Mexican, nobody considers me Asian except for my closest friends.

When I told somebody that I was part of the Asian community, they started telling me about *yellow fever*, and I didn't know what that was until that point. The guy explained it to me, and he was like, *oh yeah, I have yellow-fever*, it was disgusting. Finding out that I was Asian, he only wanted me more.

Mixed

My Asian side of the family makes me feel bad for looking the way I do. Rather than saying, *we accept you as Mexican too*. They would tell me that I look too much like my mother, which they don't like because they want me to look more like my dad. My dad did break a rule marrying a Latina woman. I'm the product of a mistake. Some of my family does accept me; *she's still family, and we still love her, yes our son made a mistake, but she's still family, we're not going to abandon her. We are going to welcome her with open arms*. But the other side continually reminds me *you weren't supposed to be born. Maybe if he married an Asian woman, we would accept you more*. It makes me sad, and I start questioning if I really am Asian. In my mind, I identify more with Mexicans rather than my Vietnamese ethnicity.

I wouldn't feel like I belong in Vietnam. I know that they are very judgemental, and seeing as my dad married a Mexican woman, they are against that. They just want to keep the bloodline clean. I am seen as something that was made out of a disgrace. I wouldn't feel safe there if I ever went to Vietnam

The Journey

My dad's parents are Vietnamese, and they came to Mexico to raise him, and my mom grew up in Mexico. It was my mom's idea to go to America. My dad was against leaving his family; they had to result in marriage to save themselves. When my mom and dad found a man to help them get across the border, it was tough for them because they had to separate themselves from my siblings to not get caught. My older sister and older brother traveled alone, while my mom and dad went with someone else, but they ended up meeting on the other side. It all went okay, but they were terrified because my sister got sick, and my brother got ill also, they thought something terrible was going to happen.

Manners

As Vietnamese people, we are very polite. We are not allowed to judge anybody at first glance, except the hateful side of my family, they do it either way. We cannot slouch. Our posture has to be perfect. Women have to be ladylike if we cross a line, and we state our opinion that is against other people's views. We are seen as *she'll never marry*. We do welcome people with open arms, we accept them for who they are, but if it comes to them being disrespectful, we shun them.

When it comes to my family, they are very strict. That's why I'm not allowed to do things that normal kids do because I can't do that without thinking, *is this disrespectful towards*

my family? Am I being a problem child? The Vietnamese are strict, they're polite, believing they're higher up, so they hold their noses high. They think they are better than anybody else, you have no right to disrespect them, but we can disrespect you, that kind of mentality.

Societal Standards

Growing up wanting to be an artist was really hard, this is very stereotypical when Asians talk about *you can't be an artist, you can only be a doctor or a teacher*, that's mostly the reason why I wanted to become a teacher. My thoughts were filled with you can't be an animator because my family will be disappointed.

I hate their beauty standards, *you have to be thinner, you can't be on the heavy side, you have to be where it controls your weight, if you're more than 120 pounds then that's overweight*. When I visit my Asian side of my family, they say *you're too chubby. You're not as thin as the rest of us*.

Judgment

When my more racist and hateful family says that you can't marry the same gender, I'll try to listen to what they say, but if I try to open my mouth, I'm going to get in trouble. I can't really defend my community. My family isn't accepting of the LGBT community, so I get scared when my parents mention that I'm not straight. They judge your significant other, they will say things like *can he provide for you? Does she have enough money?* I hate that they want this perfect partner and this ideal son or daughter in law. I also hate that they stereotype. They'll tell me, *stay away from blacks, they're dangerous*. We are not allowed to marry another race.

However, my dad broke that rule. But they still gossip when my mother is at the table, and they're talking about how bad Latinos are. I get so uncomfortable, and I try to defend my mother because that's my mom. When they told me about American culture, they'd make it seem bad, so I didn't lean towards that side. It made me think that I respect them more than I appreciate Americans.

Religion

My dad is not in the family anymore. But for respect towards him, when I get married, he has to be there to walk me down the aisle, because I respect his religion. And my mother is always going to be there for me because I grew up learning to trust my mother more than my dad.

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Yellow Fever - A clear sexual preference for women/men of Asian descent

Er

Age 16

Han Chinese

1st Generation Immigrant



Er grew up learning Chinese first, however, she lost touch with her native language and feels guilty due to how little she can read and write in Chinese. Er feels westernized despite being extremely patriotic about China and constantly yearning to go back.

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Language Barriers

My family is friends with a lot of people in China, business, and pure friendship wise. Often, I have trouble communicating with them because I didn't start practicing my native tongue until very recently. I can't talk to a lot of people because I'm not confident in speaking, but they usually guess my skill is less than it actually is. I end up talking in a weird mash of *Chinglish*. I have a lot of trouble understanding my grandparent's accents since they're quite strong. Since I grew up learning Chinese first, I have trouble pronouncing sounds such as *th* in English, which tends to sound more like *ss*. Growing up, I was ashamed of how little Chinese I could read, but

that doesn't affect me anymore. Not knowing when I was younger only encourages me to learn more now.

My speech makes me more westernized compared to my family, they would be more straightforward while I use a lot of helping phrases. Slang is a lot different, they use numbers since there's no way to make a new word in English. Over text, I'd say talking is a lot calmer, but at the same time, my family prefers sending voice messages while I try to avoid them. I like how confusing foreigners find the Chinese language because then it seems like something special to understand it.

Life In Texas

The journey I made to the Americas was overflight, and we traveled with my dad's sister and his parents, my brother, father, mother, and me. I was roughly 2 years old at the time, so I only know this by what I'm told. They had stayed in a cramped apartment in California before my direct family moved to Texas. The people I listed might not be accurate because I don't really remember what I was told either. The story might've gotten messed up on the way to me.

Asians make up 9% of my school campus. Pretty much all the Asians know each other one way or another. There are no events centered for Asians or anything ethnically, but the school is very carefree with wearing traditional garments or speaking another language that isn't offered on campus.

Fetishized

I can't really control who desires me or not, but I don't really care if someone does. It's their feelings. I have had experiences with a fetishizer, and that's when I don't like the person anymore. It was when I was 11 or 12, and they confessed to me despite that was the first time

I've ever seen them. In the next 2 years, they kept pestering me to go out with them. The year after they moved on and had a crush on a different Chinese girl. This year he's in my class again, and one encounter I still remember is him asking what my legal name was, I told him it was Rachel, but he went on saying oh I could probably guess it, it's Jaeyoung. He bothered me for 2 years and assumed my legal name was Korean when he knew I'm Chinese, and I just told him my legal name.

Stereotypes

The most often said one is definitely *All Asians look the same* by a large margin, the second is the assumption that I eat dogs or cats. Culture wise, there's the food. People call me disgusting for eating certain things such as *goose esophagus*. My favorite food is *Chinese bbq*, not sure if that's the correct name, but it's 烧烤. I really like the small *lamb skewers* because you can eat them while walking, and I love the flavorings and spices you dip them into. People judge me based on the food I eat.

Standards in China

There's an expectation for hygiene in China. There's a standard to have a morning routine and be clean higher than that for Americans, but at the same time, they would do things Americans would find disgusting like sharing straws. In the streets, most people are dressed in roughly the same fashion or they wear traditional clothing since it became a recent trend. There's an expectation to just know a lot of people. The more connections you have to others, the better you are off even if you've only talked to them once.

Asians as a whole are a lot more generous to their guests like pay[ing] for their hotel and food, offer to drive them to places. The Chinese are a lot closer to strangers. They have less

personal space when meeting someone new and are okay with sharing social media right away. Chinese also don't waltz around and get straight to the point. At restaurants, the waiter/waitress waits for the customer to call them over. I think it's just my area, but people drive everywhere, even if it's a five-minute walk.

I don't like how there's a long history of extreme gender inequality. The way foreigners, black people, especially, are perceived and treated isn't nice and more so racist. I wish Chinese culture could be more open and respectful to anything foreign. China was secluded from the rest of the world for a long time that did help preserve culture, but it also alienated. In general, I wish it was more open-minded.

Family is really important in China. I imagine they'll support me financially still after high school. They don't have any opinion on what field of career I should go into, nor do they have expectations. I also imagine them living with me once I'm stable, and they need their children to take care of them.

Americanized

For my direct family, I'm the one known to be making sure we follow traditions. For non-direct, I guess you could say I'm more Americanized. I don't have the same mannerism, speech, and slang, eating style, or sense of what's socially allowed for the distance between people. I eat foods that are more oily more often than my family. Personal space for my family is closer to each other than I'm used to with my friends.

I'd feel subpar to others in China since I feel disconnected. I know that there are things you learn from growing up in the mainland that you don't naturally learn overseas. At the same time, I feel proud of myself since I'd be going back and trying my best to integrate back in, plus

I'm better at English better than most over there. I get to show other pieces of my culture that I would not have been able to if I were in China.

K-Pop

I'm okay with the idea of clubs like *K-Pop* or *Anime*, but when they're actually established, there's typically one *koreaboo* or *weaboo* that ruins it all for everyone. I don't really care if another person wants to create one or join, but personally, I wouldn't even though I'm a *K-Pop* fan myself. There's still a lot of close-minded people in my area, but I'd say it's much better than most others. I do feel oppressed in the *K-Pop* community. My voice gets ignored a lot when talking about things relating to East Asia or Chinese idols, even if I state that I'm Chinese. I've opted to not tell people where I'm from just to get their unbiased view and since I've typically listened to more. I've also heard from the *K-pop* community that the Chinese language sounds weird and would never listen to *C-pop*. Despite it being *K-Pop*, a lot of international fans are against any Asian that isn't their idol. I get ignored, I say, around half of the time.

Homeland

I like how it's over 5k years old, that I can brag about. I also like garments and how flowy they are and how nice they are to wear. I love how rich Chinese culture is and how it's been kept together (most of it) for so long.

Currently, I'd still stay in America since it makes my life much more comfortable to finish my studies in English. If I had a choice to never immigrate, then I would choose to stay in China. In the future, I plan to move back.

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Chinglish- A blend of Chinese and English language

Chinese BBQ- Skewers of meat that are hung over open flames to cook

Lamb Skewers- Dish consisting of small cubes of lamb threaded on a skewer and grilled.

Goose Esophagus- Chinese delicacy, frying the esophagus of the goose

K-Pop- Korean pop music

Anime- A style of Japanese film and television animation

Koreaboo- a non-Korean person who is overly obsessed with Korean (pop) culture

Weaboo- a non-Japanese person who is overly obsessed with Japanese (pop) culture

C-Pop- Chinese pop music

Rebecca

Age 16

Filipino and Caucasian

2nd Generation Immigrant



Rebecca is both Filipino and Caucasian, she is often judged because of her customs and finds herself to be the black sheep of the family. Not able to speak her native language as well as her family, or follow strict traditions, she knows that she is Westernized yet still clings on to her culture and tries to embrace it as much as possible.

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Westernized

With my family, they make fun of me, because I don't speak *Tagalog* that much, they gossip about me for not knowing the language. My mom thought since she married a white man, that I shouldn't learn *Tagalog*. I don't really know how to communicate in the language, and since I live a little bit different than most Filipinos, they treat me different[ly].

I'm a second-generation immigrant. It's kind of weird because both my older brother and my mom immigrated and I was here. I have a different situation because I'm mixed, sometimes I can see the difference. I'll see how someone will treat my mom and my older brother compared to me because they'll see me as white. I don't really face discrimination as much compared to

my mom. Honestly, I feel like I'm a slap in the middle. When I'm with American friends, I'm the odd one out because I'm Asian. But when I'm with my family, I'm also an odd one out because I'm also American.

When I'm with my Dad, they don't look at me differently. But it's a different experience. Obviously, they are all white, so I do notice that. When I'm with my mom's side of the family, they look at me differently. Most Filipino girls are super skinny and thin, and I'm not because of my Dad's side of the family. Most of the women are taller and more prominent. My mom is very westernized as well, there are different holidays and celebrations in Filipino culture, but we don't celebrate them as much.

At times I feel less Asian compared to my family. But I still embrace my culture as much as I can.

Culture

There are *debuts*, which are my favorite things. It's like a *quinceanera*, but for eighteen. You wear a big dress, we have so many people and do the waltz. There are *eighteen roses* and *eighteen candles*. The *eighteen roses* are the important men in your life, and they all dance one by one with you, to your song that means a lot to both of you. It can be any song. The *eighteen candles* are all the important women in your life, and you sit down in a chair, and they have a candle, and they'll give you a little speech, and they light the candle and put it in the eighteen shapes.

Most Filipinos are super judgemental and even racist sometimes. All they do is gossip and shame people, especially young girls, and they put boys on a pedestal. Girls will get in trouble for going out too late and when the guys would be caught doing something-- and they'll

somehow be praised for it. For Filipinos, what I've experienced is that they have to be really good at everything. You can't be unladylike, if I slightly slouch, my aunt will smack my back. Or if I'm overweight more than another cousin, then they'll tell me, *Oh you need to lose weight*. You have to be a good girl and get good grades.

In the Philippines, it seems that the man was the person that made the rules. And the girls are raised to stay at home and take care of their kids. A lot of Filipino women are always cleaning or cooking, because they only do that, and they were forced to do that instead of having a career that they wanted. When we go to places, my mom and I, we're not ourselves. We have to act like proper ladies. We have to work as if we are the best person. And my mom will talk about all the great things I do, but we also do this odd thing if someone knows smack or dirt on you, we try and cover it up. When I say we, it's just a normal thing for the culture.

Religion is essential in my culture, they are very Catholic. It hasn't influenced me, but in my family, all my aunts and uncles and grandmas all have the *Last Supper* in their house, and they have *Rosaries*. And they pray. They have a lot of superstitious beliefs.

We have to bless the elderly, and you take their hand, and you put it on your forehead. When you talk to older people, you say *po* after. If I called my *Lola* beautiful, I would say, *Lola, you're Maganda po*, it would mean *Lola, you're lovely with respect*. We call our grandmas and grandpas *Lolas* and *Lolos* and our aunts and uncles, *Tita* and *Tito*. We also have to call our older siblings by a particular name, older brother means *Kuya* and older sister is *Ate*. The second oldest sibling is *Dide*.

I love the food! It's very salty, but there are also a lot of sweets, and it's kind of similar to Mexican food. We have the same names, but the food is different. Like *sambal rice* and *ube* is a

sweet yam, it's purple, and it's delicious. We also make *chicken adobo*, and it's chicken and rice with other vegetables, but with oyster sauce and soy sauce. That's how my mom makes it. It's different.

My best friend, her family is white. When I go to her house, they kind of look at me differently. When they eat, it's regular American food. But then at my home, we always have to eat rice. At my aunt's house, we're there a lot, we eat with our hands. But I can't eat at my friend's house with my hands, they would look at me weird. I remember when I lived with my cousin, and my *Lola* just moved in, and we were eating at the table, and she came in her little robe because she likes wearing it. And I remember grabbing a fork and spoon, then my *Lola* made us eat with our hands. Everyone was sitting at the table, speaking *Tagalog*.

The Philippines

My mom wanted to move here to get a better job, and for my older brother to have a better life. She moved here so she can work at a hospital and she moved my brother after that. I'd rather live here in America. In the Philippines, it's fun, but there's a lot of violence there, so you can be walking down the street, and someone will beat you up to get your purse. And it happens mainly to women. There is also a lot of poverty there. But, my family is doing good actually. They're better off than when my *Lola* (grandparent) was there; they're house flooded when there was a typhoon. That's when my *Lola* came here, other than that they are doing pretty good.

Asian

When it was my freshman year, someone mentioned I was Filipino, and this guy came up to me and told me, *I only like Asian girls, would you want to date me?* And I was just sitting

there, confused. That's not exactly how it went, but that's the summary of the incident. He was just approaching me because of my ethnicity.

I've never been bullied due to my culture but, since I'm Asian, they'll tell me *Ching-Chong*, or they'll make jokes about me eating dogs. There is kind of an Asian community on the school campus, but I don't sit with them. In my opinion, I don't feel oppressed at school or in society.

Future

My mom really wants me to be a doctor. And I don't want to be a doctor. But I think colleges are getting a lot harder to get into, primarily due to race. I think it's okay to an extent because some people don't get accepted just because they're a different race. But at the same time, it's the question of *Who is better qualified?* Just because they are Asian compared to another person with a different race, and they get a job based on race even though they have better qualifications. I think that's where it gets unfair.

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Tagalog- Filipino language

Debut- Traditional Filipino coming-of-age celebration which celebrates a young woman's 18th birthday

Quinceanera- A celebration of a girl's 15th birthday. It has its cultural roots in Mesoamerica and is widely celebrated today throughout the Americas

Eighteen Roses- Symbolize the woman's readiness for romance. She dances with 18 men who will give her a rose each before dancing with her

Eighteen Candles- Symbolize a light that will guide the girl on her life journey. These women give speeches and advice and state their well-wishes for the debutante

Last Supper- The final meal that Jesus shares with his Apostles in Jerusalem before his crucifixion

Rosaries- A form of devotion in which five (or fifteen) decades of Hail Marys are repeated

Po- Indicates respect or politeness.

Lola- Grandmother

Lolo- Grandfather

Maganda- Beautiful

Tita- Aunt

Tito- Uncle

Kuya- Older brother

Ate- Older sister

Dide- Second oldest sibling

Sambal Rice- Side dish, made with vegetables, fish, or coconut, usually seasoned with chili peppers and spices

Ube- Bright purple yam used as a flavoring and coloring in sweet dishes

Chicken Adobo- Filipino cuisine that involves chicken marinated in vinegar, soy sauce, garlic, and black peppercorns, which is browned in oil, and simmered in the marinade

Cat

Age 17

Chinese

1st Generation Immigrant



Cat believes China is corrupt and holds impossible standards for individuals to live by. She dislikes the traditional nature of China but tries to live by the traditions as a sign of respect. As a first-generation immigrant, she was able to learn English very quickly and adapted to American culture without a problem. She is the first person in her family to attend High School and tries to please her family in any way that she can.

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Societal Standards

In China, it is common for students to do homework for eight hours nonstop or until they pass out. There is the *GaoKao test*, that determines one's future. They have one shot at it. That is why students are continually studying for this tough two-day-long test. If I was given a chance between China and America, I would choose America without a doubt. China might be the right vacation spot, but I could never live there. The government is corrupt, and many students are extremely stressed due to the impossible standards China holds.

I dislike the traditional nature of China, how women's duties are to raise children, how not getting married is disgraceful, and how it's basically a crime to be LGBT. In China, it is essential to respect your elders. Also, offering fruit to guests is a sign of respect. My parents have stringent expectations and standards for me. They pay a lot for tutors and hope I can climb the ranks. Basically, if I'm not doing very good in a class, they're gonna hire a tutor and hope it will bring my grades back up.

Americanized

I'm Chinese, and I'm a 1st generation immigrant. I was able to learn English quickly because I discovered it at such a young age, so language was never a problem. I grew up in China and lived there until 1st grade. My parents and I moved to Canada because my father found a job there. We moved many times and eventually made our way into America. I used to be Christian, but now I'm an Atheist, but it all after I moved here. Since I'm the first one to attend high school in America in my family, I try to spend a lot of my day studying. My family still speaks Chinese at home, and I'm very fluent in *Mandarin*. They all watch Asian TV and cook Asian meals. I speak English mostly and can only cook American meals and cannot stand Asian TV.

If I were to go to China right now, I would feel very nostalgic, and I'd feel out of place or uncultured because I've been gone for so long. However, I would identify as Chinese because I grew up in China, and it means a lot to me. Also, America is taking its sweet time, making me a US citizen.

Chinese Cuisine

I love *hotpot*. It's a cultural dish that involves the consumer to put desired meats in the center broth and cook it. It's unique to Asia and has been a thing for many centuries. China is famous for its food and diet culture. While American foods are a LOT more greasy and fattening. Chinese dishes, in my opinion, have more of a delicacy and are way less oily.

Life As A Student

At school, there were obviously *do you eat dogs?* jokes in elementary school. But in high school, everyone believed I was good at math. However, I've never really been bullied before, mainly because I was always a quiet kid. But, I like being considered a minority. It makes me feel more diverse and different from others.

My school has many East and South Asians. They tend to all take computer science AP. Most of them get 1500+ on the SAT. They also often group themselves with other Asians. Also, South Asians are super-rich. With clubs like *K-Pop* and *Anime* at school, I think it's an excellent way to expose those to Asian culture. As long as they are not blatantly fetishizing Asians, I do not mind.

When the time for college arrives, I think it's stupid and unprofessional that colleges accept based on race. Colleges should accept people based on how well they performed in high school, not race.

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GaoKao Test- *The National Higher Education Entrance Examination* Standardized test that determines one's future and whether or not a student can go into college

Mandarin- the standard literary and official form of Chinese

Hot Pot- Raw thinly sliced meat and vegetables that are cooked by diners at the table by dipping them in boiling broth.

[Cherry](#)

Age 14

Filipino

2nd Generation Immigrant



Cherry recognizes Filipino traditions as rich and full of remarkable history. She dreams that one day, there will be a specific club or group on her school campus that will showcase her beautiful traditions and beliefs relating to her culture. She doesn't feel less different when compared to other students despite usually being the only Asian student in the classroom. At times she feels less than Asian due to being a second-generation immigrant; however, she defines herself as a mix between American and Filipino ethnicities.

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Traditions

Since it's getting around the Holidays, for us Filipinos, I was always told that for Christmas, kids would have to go around neighborhoods and sing carols, and they get money. In September, that's when they start putting up decorations. It really depends on how your parents

are when it comes to Christmas. In my situation, we're not too religious. Usually, our tradition is especially on Christmas, we go to church. But that's not really serious based on Christianity.

Traditions are essential for Filipinos, even when it comes to parties and how crazy we are in the right way. A bunch of karaokes and we're always there for each other. Food is also really significant since the Philippines is an island in the Pacific, we eat a lot of seafood. Rather than the United States, where we live around farms, it's mostly beef. Usually, they say when you're eating, don't put your elbows on the table.

School Life

It's nice to know that they have some sort of Asian culture at school. But it's only a particular group. *K-Pop* is for Koreans and *Anime* is for Japanese. There isn't really that much representation for people who are Vietnamese, for me-- Filipino, or Chinese. It's nice to know, but we should have more images for other Asian cultures. But there isn't that much Asian representation at this school. For Spanish-speakers they have a community here, but nothing really for us. I would definitely participate if they had a club for Asians.

At times I feel disconnected from my culture because there isn't Asian Representation at school. But I think fetishizing the culture is happening, especially those who like *K-Pop* because they see these Asian idols and think they look amazing, *I want to be like them*. But they don't understand behind that, it's strange to think about.

I've definitely been the only Asian in class, but I don't feel any less different, I've never been pointed out *hey you're the only Asian, how do you feel?* It isn't less different. I'm still a student here at school, it isn't any different from everyone else. Unless people try to point it out. I have been bullied due to my culture I remember when my Mom made me lunch and kids would

ask me, *is that what you eat from China?* And I get typical *do you eat dog?* It's more because of the way my eyes are. I've always been attacked for it. Despite that, I would say that it isn't as harmful compared to other racial groups. I don't really feel oppressed.

Second Generation

My dad came to America because when he was working, fixing planes in Australia, his coworker sponsored him and his family to move over here [America], my Mom as well. I'm the only one in my family that was born here. It doesn't feel any different as it feels to be born in the Philippines, but I'm one of the few in the household that is fluent in English. I'm always asked to correct my parent's grammar. It's nice to know that I can help my parents in any way I can. I never had language barriers because my parents wanted me to learn English, but I never got the chance to learn my native language. Everyone else is fluent, and I understand it, but speaking it, not really.

I feel Westernized because I don't listen to Filipino music as much as my parents do, the influence that came from America impacted the songs I heard. I would like to listen to American music more than what my parents listen to. But I don't really mind if my parents push me in to listen to Filipino music.

I am a mix between American and Filipino, but I would say I'm more American because I've lived here my whole life. And the amount of culture from America is being impacted to me rather than the Filipino culture. I would rather live in American rather than the Philippines. I've created so many memories here, I have some family members that live in the United States, and I still have contact with them.

丹妮尔

Age 17

Filipino

2nd Generation Immigrant



Danielle was born in Los Angeles but was raised in West Covina, she lived there for about 4 years until she moved to Moreno Valley. She moved to a new place where she wasn't always surrounded by Asians. Now she was surrounded by a more diverse community, including Hispanics, Whites, African Americans, and not many Asians. Being a Filipino in a diverse society does have effects on her because there are not many people she can relate with aside from family. Speaking an exclusively different language did not make things difficult since she adapted quickly, but she cannot say the same for her parents. Her family had trouble speaking English, but now they understand and speak it; however, they speak Tagalog most of the time. As for their transition in living in America, they stuck to their Filipino culture while Danielle became accustomed to new traditions and ethics.

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Ethnicity At School

People often ask me what type of *Asian* I am. When they look at my eyes, they end up always asking *Are you Chinese? Can you speak some Chinese?* They would mock me by saying *Ching-Chong*. In elementary school, they would spread their eyes and look at me, to make fun of me. Someone asked me, *Did you eat my dog?* And of course, I said *no*. When people would know my ethnicity, they would ask, *Can you say this?* Just so I can translate something for them.

I feel like there is no Asian representation at school because there are not many Asians attending this school. But, I am friends with some Asians. I feel weird that I am one of the only kids in the classroom that is Asian. I have no one to talk to about the Filipino culture. Now I have some friends, and they get it. We are still very different from each other, though. My friend is really Americanized, and my other friend is in the middle as I am.

There is a double standard at my school, instead of having a giant Asian club, there are *K-Pop* and *Anime* groups. I kind of hate it, because people who want to be Asian, they see it as a good thing. It's not for some Asian cultures. I feel like it's disrespectful, to be honest.

The Difference

When I would go to the houses of my friends. They would go to their rooms with their shoes on, and I would ask, *May I leave my shoes out here?* The food is also very different. Filipino food is not the same as American food, American is a lot of junk food, but ours is like soup. It's soup and rice, lots of rice with food combinations such as chicken, beef, vegetables.

The Philippines

I tend to act more American in the Philippines. When I was there three years ago, they would walk to a street market, and I would say, *Can't we just take the car?* Transportation was a Jeep, a motorcycle with a big cart for people, and that's how we traveled. There were also open

buses. I wouldn't say that the Philippines is a particularly rich country. In the Philippines, there aren't many opportunities as we have here, but most of my family is there, I feel complete. It's just a different feeling when I'm there, but I can't really describe it. However, I have to choose America over the Philippines. There are a lot more opportunities here. But I am still a mix between the two cultures.

I love the food... I love the people. In the Philippines, everyone is so lovely. Especially where it's located, there are so many islands connected, and some people on the islands speak different languages, but it's still *Tagalog*; however, the words are different. I love my culture so much that sometimes I display it and people will get jealous. I love being Filipino. Other Asian cultures are a bit more well-known, but I really like my lifestyle.

I'm very attached to my culture, every day, I still speak *Tagalog*, and it's kind of hard at school sometimes because I try not to speak it, and it's hard to translate it. We still eat rice every day. In the Philippines, Christmas arrives early, so on November 1st, we start decorating. We have to greet the elders, they have to hold their hand out, and you grab their hand and say *bless*. We have to do that every time. We have to say *Opo*, which means yes in a polite way. And then *Po*, which is also an excellent way of saying yes. And then *Hindi Po*, which means no thank you. We have to use those. We all treat everyone the same, with respect.

Family

My family came here [America] in 19-something. I don't know the reason, but I think they wanted to give us a better life. My dad got citizenship; first, my mom just got hers recently. She was so happy. Then my sister came here not too long ago, in 2008. But she still doesn't have her citizenship, however, she is working on that. Her husband came here to do that as well. She

was a nurse back in the Philippines and she went to Loma Linda to gain more opportunities, and now she is an *RN*. My mom is jumping between jobs right now. And I don't know what she is trying to do. My dad has been working at Crown Technical Systems for ten years already. He's the one that makes the most money. My dad provides a lot for my family.

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Opo- Yes in Tagalog

Hindi Po- No in Tagalog

RN- Registered Nurse

[Jaclyn](#)

Age 14

Ethnicity Vietnamese

2nd Generation



Jaclyn deems herself as not a standard stereotypical Asian. Her family has high expectations of their daughter and try to convey their Vietnamese traditions and beliefs on to her. At times, she feels suffocated in responsibilities, but always tries to keep a smile on her face.

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Vietnamese

I'm second-generation Vietnamese, and both my parents are from Vietnam. My mom traveled by boat to get here, and my dad went on a plane. Most Vietnamese people are more formal when they talk to anyone. They try their best to sound like they are talking to someone famous, not like in America, where you would speak to someone not formally. If I were to choose between America and Vietnam, I would prefer America because the government of Vietnam isn't really that great. But it also isn't that great here either, but I feel like it's better over here. But I identify more with Vietnamese because I look more Asian than American in general.

There are different accents. I don't like how there are different accents because people will judge you for it. They will tell you, That's not how you are supposed to say that, it's supposed to be something else. But at the same time, it's the exact same thing.

My parents expect me to become a doctor. Or just have a lot of money in general. I don't like listening to my parents. A lot of Asian people try really hard in school, but I feel like I don't try hard enough. My parents are always saying, *You should do this because you're this!*, but I still think *We're in America, we don't have to do that.*

Asian Student

People will say that I'm smart. That we [Vietnamese] eat weird food. People will make fun of or mock the Chinese language. But I'm not even Chinese. They would make fun of my height because they will say All Asians are short. But I see myself as not the stereotypical Asian that everyone thinks of.

Everyone [Asians] knows each other at school. They see each other, and we'll both say, *Oh! We're both Asian, we both could be friends!* They are really nice to each other. But sometimes it feels bizarre being excluded from everyone because no one else is the same. Sometimes, I feel really alone, no one's there to support me, especially in the classroom. However, I don't think of myself as oppressed in school.

