

## My Taiwanese Background and Me

My Taiwanese heritage is an extremely important part of my self-identity and is prevalent in my day-to-day life. It has shaped who I am and has given me a strong culture that I can identify with. I often volunteer at local Taiwanese cultural festivals sponsored by the Taiwanese community (such as the mid-autumn festival and TAA's annual Taiwan Night). My family and I also travel to Taiwan—on average—every other year helping me maintain that connection.

I studied at Washington DC Taiwan School for ten years, learning both Mandarin and Taiwanese. Most American teens know two languages—English (the local language) and their parents' native language (in the case of immigrants). However, because of my Taiwanese heritage, I have learned both Mandarin and Taiwanese. Studying two different languages at the same time has taught me to be able to process information quicker, which has ultimately helped me with my studies in school. Having that weekly language school also taught me how to manage my time better. I quickly learned that I could not procrastinate and push all of my work to the last day of the weekend—the day Taiwanese school would be held (Sunday).

I have also attended a Taiwanese summer camp annually since 2009—Taiwanese American Next Generation (or “TANG” for short). This program teaches second and third generation children about our Taiwanese roots and how to become involved members of society. This summer, I was asked to MC for TANG's annual Taiwan Night. I had never MC-ed an event before and I was nervous. Once I got on stage and started talking, all of that pressure went away. Being MC really brought me out of my shell and made me more willing to join more clubs and participate in more activities both in and out of school.

I am currently working towards a major in the visual arts—gaining new inspirations and muses is extremely essential in driving a portfolio. When colleges view a portfolio, they specifically look for an artist's voice—what they're trying to say and what they personally value. This summer was the first time I travelled abroad after discovering my passion for art over a year ago. I was able to experience Taiwan in a completely new light. Both the crowded streets of Taipei and the breathtaking mountains of Yilan gave off such character that I have been working towards recreating through my own oil paintings. Self-identity is necessary for projecting my own point-of-view through my works and my Taiwanese heritage really boosts my character. I value my heritage deeply and I'm currently working on expressing that through my artwork.

My Taiwanese background has affected me for the better. Through attending Taiwanese School weekly, I have gained necessary learning skills that will benefit me in the near future. The connection I have with my roots has really given me a strong identity, one that is necessary in having my own point-of-view for my portfolio. Ultimately, my background will be a driving force in my acceptance into an art school.