

## **My Taiwanese Background and Me**

I was born in Hershey, Pennsylvania to two Taiwanese parents. After spending the first three years of my life in an apartment, my family and I moved to Maryland, where we managed to find a bigger, more comfortable home. I attended Potomac Elementary School for six years, and then went on to the Magnet Program at Roberto Clemente Middle School in Germantown. During my eighth grade year, my family and I moved to Kensington, which was a long way from my middle school. After a half year of waking up early for me and my parents, I went on to the Science, Mathematics, and Computer Science Magnet Program at Montgomery Blair High School.

Throughout my career as a student, I have always been in need to adapt to new people and new environments. Not a single student from my middle school shared my elementary school experiences, and only one other student from my middle school went to Blair High School with me. As a result, I have often found myself alone and not comfortable with anyone else during the first few days at a new school. However, my Taiwanese background has always given me the spirit and strength to pull through times like these. Aspects of the Taiwanese people, such as independence, positive attitude, and perseverance are things I always keep in mind when I am struggling.

Since the age of five, I have been studying piano and violin. It has been ten years since, and I have yet to lose interest in music. Having perfect pitch has always given me an edge, and my memory ability for music is pretty strong as well. I have been competing annually in various MSMTA piano solo competitions such as the Solo Festival, the Gottlieb Competition, and many others. Additionally, I participate in my school orchestra playing violin and I have been an active member in the Maryland Classic Youth Orchestras (MCYO) since fourth grade. To stay in shape, I participated in the tennis teams of my middle and high schools, in addition to training every Sunday morning at the Germantown Tennis-Plex Program. To keep my mind open and creative, I enjoy playing chess. Similar to music, I have been competing in chess tournaments over the last 10 years, accumulating over 50 chess trophy awards. Finally, to maintain fast fingers and a quick reaction, I have been a member of the Rubik's Cube teams in both my middle and high schools, receiving second place for the solo category in 2015.

The Washington DC Taiwanese School (WDCTS) provides a platform where all of us, Taiwanese Americans, are able to group together and show our commitment to the languages spoken in Taiwan, such as Chinese Mandarin and Taiwanese. Since the age of three, I have been attending the school and learning more and more about these interesting languages. Personally, I find the Taiwanese dialect extremely useful when speaking to "akofng" and "amar" (my grandfather and grandmother) on the phone. It also comes in handy when I visit Taiwan every other summer. Aside from my position as a student at WDCTS, I am also one of the teachers at the Taiwanese School Chess Club. The task of transferring my knowledge to other students has helped me with the arduous task of thinking on my feet. It has also placed a feeling of responsibility on me, which has guided me into becoming a better leader.

In addition to being an active member in the WDCTS, I have also participated in the Formosa Association of Student Cultural Ambassadors (FASCA) training program. The objective of this program is to use teamwork principles to link Taiwanese people together. From this experience, I learned that the art of teamwork can accomplish so many things that would not be possible otherwise. Furthermore, once again I had the opportunity to fully appreciate my Taiwanese heritage. For the first time, I encountered a group of kids around my age who shared similar stories with me. Knowing this gave me a sense of belonging and fitting in. Most importantly, FASCA has been a linkage institution to me and my Taiwanese community. Throughout the year, FASCA hosts events which allow its members to learn about Taiwanese culture. Traditional Taiwanese activities, such as juggling the diabolo and baking mooncake, are things that I have enjoyed participating in.

The Taiwanese American Next Generation (TANG) summer camp is something that is valuable to me as well. Every year, along with hundreds of Taiwanese kids and adults nationwide, I attend this four-day-long event. By participating in various activities, the camp allows me to recognize the true spirit and strength of the Taiwanese people. Though the camp is split into many different age groups, we are the united seed of hope for the future of Taiwanese Americans in the years to come.

Something that I will always be thankful for are my parents. I cannot imagine how much courage it must have taken my mom to come to America alone, with barely any money and no relatives to support her here. Both my mom and dad have worked so hard to provide me the opportunity to live in comfort, with no need to ever worry about quitting school to financially help out my family. Knowing this, I understand the importance to always remember my true heritage, and to always think of Taiwan as my origin. Many of my friends think of me as Chinese, but despite all the controversy, I will always think of Taiwan and China as two separate countries.

Throughout the rest of my childhood and adult life, I will always keep in mind my unique identity as a Taiwanese American. This is what defines me, and this is where I will receive the courage and strength necessary to fight through future obstacles that come my way.