

My Taiwanese background and me

I go back to Taiwan almost every summer with my mom and dad. Each year we visit our family and friends. We travel around the country eating a lot of food along the way. My parents teach me their culture and show me what their childhood was like. . My grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins talk in Chinese and Taiwanese to me when I am there. All of these experiences have shaped me into the person I am today.

I have been in the Taiwanese community since I was born. Even before I was born, my parents, especially my dad, was very involved within the Taiwanese community. When I was 1 year old, I was enrolled in the Washington DC Taiwanese School where I learned Taiwanese songs like Toax zuie guu (the big water buffalo) and aq siu zuie (the duck swimming). As I grew up, I continued to learn to speak Taiwanese. It came naturally to me since both of my parents constantly spoke it at home. As I grew older I started learning to read and write in Taiwanese using Buun su hwat or MLT from Koklioong lawsux. Currently, I teach younger kids how to read and write in Taiwanese at Washington DC Taiwanese School.

Over the past several years, I have volunteered at many Taiwanese community events. Every year, I volunteer at the annual TCC concert. At this past annual Mid-Autumn Festival, I was in charge of a station selling food to help raise money for my Taiwanese School. Whenever my Taiwanese school has an event, I always volunteer taking various responsibilities. At the annual TAA Thanksgiving party, I help babysit the young children. One summer, I was a camp counselor at the Taiwanese school summer camp.

I've been in love with music since I was a baby from singing those Taiwanese songs I learned or since my dad and mom joined the Taiwan choir when I was still in my mom's belly. I began to learn to play the piano when I was 6 years old. I am currently working towards earning an ABRSM certificate for piano. When I entered fourth grade, I participated in the school instrumental program, picking up the violin. One day, I decided I really wanted to expand my violin skill and asked to start taking private lessons. I ended up starting in fifth grade. I continued to play the violin all throughout middle school in the school orchestra. In sixth grade I was chosen to participate in the Honors Sixth grade orchestra. In high school I joined the school's Honor Symphonic Orchestra and the after-school full orchestra. Recently I participated in my school's marching band as one of three string players. When our original keyboard player was unable to attend the state competition hosted at Towson University, I volunteered to play instead. I learned and memorized the whole show within one week. We ended up winning third place at the competition with our pit ensemble winning second place.

Being in the Taiwanese community, I am surrounded by many who have great achievements influencing me to work hard and achieve many goals. In middle school, I was given the award of outstanding student in the orchestra class in sixth and seventh grade. I was

accepted into National Junior Honor Society in seventh grade. When graduating middle school, I earned the Presidential Award and the Student Service Learning (SSL) Hours award given to students who finished their SSL graduation requirement in middle school. In eighth grade, I earned the straight A's award. In high school, I currently participate in my school's Ulysses Signature Program where they encourage us to explore our interests and develop research skills. I am currently a Northwest high school ambassador and have recently been accepted to the Tri-M Music Honor Society.

I am used to people always asking me what my background is. They either ask me outright or they make it a guessing game. When people decide to guess, they usually guess I am Chinese. I politely say no and explain I am Taiwanese. Most say, "Isn't it the same as China?" My answer to them is, "No. Taiwan is not China. I am Taiwanese, not Chinese."

After I graduate high school, I want to travel with my friends to Taiwan and show them my heritage. I want to show them the values I learned while I was growing up, the food I ate every day, and the things I remember doing since I was a baby. I want to be able to pass on my heritage to future generations and hope this lives on forever.