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I was born as a citizen of both the United States of America and Taiwan. Many would say that is what makes me Taiwanese American, but I disagree. To me, being Taiwanese American means being the result of the fusion of two cultures. Being Taiwanese American means that even with the American environment at school, I am able to embrace my heritage and incorporate that into my identity. Being Taiwanese American means being proud of displaying attributes of both cultures at any given time. Although I was born a citizen of both countries, with the help of the Taiwanese American Community, I grew to become a Taiwanese American through the language and, of course, food.

Ever since I was in the womb, my mother was constantly speaking Taiwanese to me. It was the first language I learned. I grew up babbling away in Taiwanese to my older sister and parents. At age 3, as my grandfather was cleaning his golf club outside, I asked him “*Akofng, lie u su'iaux taosvakang bQh?*” (阿公，你有需要逗三工嘸?) He was immensely impressed and still praises me for it today. This fond memory serves as a motivation to continue speaking the language. Even though I had started learning other languages, Taiwanese was the basis of all my language skills, including Chinese, English, and eventually Spanish. I went to Taiwanese school to further engage in the culture and language when I was young. I attended the events, like the Mid-Autumn Festival celebration and Mother's Day celebration that the school hosted. When I was available, I helped out as well. The inclusive environment that was buzzing with energy always lifted my spirits and made me feel at home. Now, meeting someone with that same energy or simply hearing someone else speak Taiwanese in a foreign or uncomfortable situation automatically puts me more at ease. The language is and will always be a comforting connection back to my family and all the friendly members I know of the Taiwanese American community.

As a Taiwanese American, food has also been a key part of my identity. I have never found a cuisine better than that of Taiwan. On our annual trips back to Taiwan, I would enjoy my grandmother's bamboo soup (竹筍湯), sweet potato leaves (地瓜葉), braised pig feet (滷豬腳), sesame oil chicken

(麻油雞), and so much more. Every morning, my grandfather would prepare his famous rice noodles (麵線) with tea oil and serve Taiwanese high mountain tea (高山茶) prepared traditionally with the classic tea set. On the streets, we could enjoy night market food like shaved ice (刨冰), bubble tea (珍珠奶茶), and papaya milkshake (木瓜牛奶). I would spend the entire school year craving all these foods. The Taiwanese American community here was a huge remedy for that. The authenticity of the stewed ground pork rice (肉燥飯) or the Taiwanese meat pie (肉圓) at the various celebrations hosted by the Taiwanese school reminds me of my grandparents and my other home, all of which I miss dearly.

I am extremely grateful for everything the Taiwanese American community has done to help me appreciate my heritage and develop my identity. I am lucky to have found a community to which I truly belong. It is my wish that future generations will have the same privilege of feeling the connection to their Taiwanese heritage, and I will work to provide this opportunity.