


December 2022

Thank you, Taiwan

I grew up deeply involved in the Taiwanese American community. I would cheer on my parents and their college classmates from the sidelines of the annual Washington DC Dragon Boat Festival, counting down the days until I would be old enough to compete. In August 2018, I co-founded the Washington DC Taiwanese School (WDCTS) Youth Belugas team, the first youth team in Potomac, MD. I helped recruit students from my middle school for our team, and we soon started land training. Land practice was held twice weekly, so paddlers could pick a time more convenient to them. At our first Festival, we earned 500m gold, 250m silver, and Youth Cup bronze. I was also lucky enough to represent the Adult Humpbacks to earn DC Cup bronze, and our two teams joined together to challenge ourselves to the June Baltimore 2000m.

In August 2019, I began volunteering as a teaching assistant at WDCTS. I enjoy working with younger students and teaching them about our shared culture. Though we transitioned to an online setting that spring, I helped my teacher ease into the change, and classes remained smooth. I continued volunteering with WDCTS through the pandemic and back into in-person learning. I joined a new class of students, and this is now my third year with them. I have learned to be kinder and more patient, and to understand that it can be challenging for students to ask for help. Every student learns at their own pace, and I help them achieve their individual goals in a standardized classroom.

When classes reopened in person, so did dragon boat training. Last year, we learned to fundraise for race team fees by selling Taiwanese food and soliciting donations. We also continued hosting dual land practice as well as extra water practice in preparation for the annual May Festival. I worked with my Belugas co-captain to seat paddlers for each of the four races and to write Ode to the Beluga, our poetic introduction for the booklet of team biographies that is handed out to each team. We earned gold medals in both the 500m and 200m races.

In addition to WDCTS, I have been a member of the Formosa Association of Student Cultural Ambassadors (FASCA) since August 2019. I was elected to be the DC Chapter Marketing Director at the first annual training orientation I attended and became a teaching-assistant member the next year. I manage the DC Chapter social media accounts @fascadc on Instagram and FASCA DC on YouTube, posting information and highlights of events such as the annual Rockville Bubble Tea Festival and Potomac Day. During the pandemic, I worked with three members to write an open letter about Taiwan's entry to the World Health Organization. Weeks later, we posted our "Taiwan Can Help! Taiwan is Helping!" video on YouTube and shared our process with other FASCA members, encouraging them to create advocacy videos of their own.

FASCA also gave me the opportunity to participate in the annual Taipei City Department of Education Video Contest. In September 2021, my YouTube video "MLB in the USA" comparing professional baseball in the United States and Taiwan received recognition as one of five winning videos in the DC Metropolitan region. This year, I created a video introducing Little League Baseball, highlighting Taiwan's outstanding participation in the global scene.

To serve the Taiwanese American baseball community, I have also been performing the National Anthem of Taiwan with the Star-Spangled Banner at Maryland Baseball Collegiate League games and Cal Ripken Collegiate Baseball League games since July 2019 on the alto saxophone. I also received the honor to perform the anthems at the Global Federation of Chinese Business Women (CFCBW) World Congress at the Bethesda North Marriott Hotel & Conference Center in June this year. There, I received the CFCBW Scholarship awarded to the top three female high school students for academic excellence and community services.

I have been playing alto for over seven years and have consistently performed Gong Xi at the Jue Tao Martial Arts Center's annual Chinese New Year party. I taught the piece to my Italian friends who play clarinet, and we were able to perform together. I have been a member of Jue Tao since September 2013 and recently earned my second-degree brown belt in October. In addition to warmups and drills, we study katas, memorized sequences of moves. For Lunar New Year, we performed team katas, self-choreographed katas for groups of three, at Lakeforest Mall. We also study martial arts fan, and we performed a fan kata accompanied with music at the Mall as well.

Martial arts is a piece of my culture I have shared with my high school community, too. Last year, I successfully auditioned for our annual STEM Arts Night (STAN) with staff weapons. Tapping into my creativity, I free-styled to pop music for the first time. Weeks after the show, the director emailed me for my dojo's information because a student was interested in joining. I was touched to learn how a part of my Taiwanese culture I love inspires others. During Asian Pacific American (APA) Heritage Month, our K-pop Dance Club invited me to perform at our APA showcase, and I free-styled during lunch to a newly-released song. I will soon be auditioning for STAN again with martial arts fan, free-styling to Mandarin pop music that has traditional instrumental elements. Through each of these public exhibitions, I have learned the importance of sharing culture through art, a language that connects us all.

I also petitioned for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) to recognize Lunar New Year's Day as an official holiday so students and staff can observe it with friends and family from home. I spoke at the monthly business meeting during APA Heritage Month 2018, drawing parallels between our county's mission and the inclusion of APA culture in our curriculum. Our social studies classes highlight Chinatown in prominent cities and exuberant Lunar New Year parades, and we indulge in the legends of the twelve zodiac signs, but we barely scratch the surface of APA contributions to the United States. Including Lunar New Year in our school calendar not only signifies a meaningful acknowledgement of APA culture, but also aligns with the county's mission, preparing students to thrive in their future with global and inclusive views. In 2020, Lunar New Year's Day became an official MCPS holiday.

I am proud of my Taiwanese American culture. I am forever lucky to give back to my community who has always supported me and helped shape who I am today.