

I am a proud Taiwanese American. Although I grew up in America, I still feel extremely connected to Taiwanese culture. My parents immigrated to the US in the 2000s to introduce me to American culture, but I think it is equally important, if not more important, to get to know my Taiwanese side as well.

400 years ago my ancestors traveled a long journey from China to Taiwan and started the 吳 family. Our family has stayed strong, and each generation has been documented on a wooden plaque in my grandpa's ancient house (古厝). Our family has been through all of Taiwan's 400 years of history, but now in modern day, I live in America, yet I still want to embrace my Taiwanese culture. I saw on the family tree that it only consisted of boys. Many women in the family were forgotten but we have come together to live through all the ups and downs of Taiwanese history. Knowing that my family has been in Taiwan for so long, I realized that it would be a shame if it ended in my generation simply because I don't live in Taiwan. To explore more of my Taiwanese side, I've visited Taiwan annually for 2 months every summer to enrich my Taiwanese knowledge. I have been fortunate enough to visit over 80 traditional factories learning about various trades and traditions surrounding Taiwanese culture. For example, I made Taiwanese noodles with my sister, where we would hand stretch noodles by walking away from each other while holding a wooden bar that holds the noodles. Taiwan is filled with forests so I was able to make chopsticks and wooden house slippers. I also experienced making jelly candles that show Taiwan's landscape to capture the natural beauty of Taiwan. I also attended many glove puppet and shadow puppet shows and even got the chance to make them. I am extremely glad that I was able to make these items. Now, I have many traditional Taiwanese objects in my house that I handmade myself that remind me daily about my culture. I have also visited the indigenous cultures of Taiwan.

To maintain my culture even more, I've attended Washington D.C. Taiwanese School since I was one and a half years old. At WDCTS, I have learned lots of Mandarin and Taiwanese, but also lots of Taiwanese culture. Ever since then I have attended class every week to learn the basics of Mandarin and Taiwanese. Many of my teachers were wonderful and found a method to teach that made sense to me, whether that's giving out rewards for homework or having interactive activities, reading out loud etc. I also remember our speech contests where I would find an interesting Taiwanese topic or fact to talk about. Every year we also had mid autumn, winter solstice/christmas, new years, and mothers day/dragon boat festival celebrations, where there were always fun activities to learn about culture. I also remember making foods like tangyuan, Ang-Ku-Kueh, Lun-Piah, etc. Although others might think Lun-Piah is a weird combination of tastes, but I still look forward to it during school celebrations. I always look forward to these celebrations because I always learn a new tradition and get to take some yummy

food home. When I was younger, I would also always perform during these celebrations. Sometimes it was singing, or dancing, or both. Now, I know many Taiwanese songs and can teach them to the younger students currently at WDCTS.

I also connect with my culture through bringing Taiwanese recipes into my home in America. My great aunt always shares the best authentic Taiwanese recipes with me. For example, we often make boba together and share it with my friends. I enjoy sharing my culture with my non-Taiwanese friends through different foods. After a day at school, I look forward to coming home to a home cooked Taiwanese meal.

Promoting my culture is equally important as learning it myself. I have learned so much from my experiences in Taiwan and at WDCTS, that I think it is my duty to promote my culture to those who don't know as much about it. To achieve that, I have volunteered at many local events. At these events, I would do many things to promote culture. Sometimes I would ask people trivia questions about Taiwanese traditions or Taiwan in general where they must read a brochure to find the answer. Other times there would be more hands-on activities such as making lanterns, playing Taiwan night market games, taste testing Taiwanese foods etc. I have also consistently held celebration events for major Taiwanese holidays at my local library. Each time there would be 6 stations each promoting a tradition for that holiday. I have also helped Taiwanese students learn English during various online activities where I would call them and talk in English.

After learning and promoting my culture I feel confident enough to expand my family tree. I want to continue adding names, both boys and girls, on the wooden plaque to document our family even if not everyone lived in Taiwan.