

I remember on multiple occasions I've told my parents how lucky I was to have been born as Taiwanese in this lifetime. My mom recalls it as either being times where I got to present my culture or just after I had eaten an incredible meal. Although I've been raised in the U.S. since birth, my parents, one first generation immigrant, and the other second generation, preserved the abundant culture they grew up around and raised me in an upbringing that involved the early education of some of my favourite foods, immersive traditions such as making tangyuan for yuanxiaojie, and the love for visits back to Taiwan in the winter. This prepared me well for when they enrolled me in Washington DC Taiwanese School, a community I've grown to anticipate seeing each Sunday.

Since the age of two, I have learned beyond just speaking the languages. Being enrolled in both Mandarin and Taiwanese helped me connect with my family on a deeper level, where instead of simply being taught the experience of being Taiwanese, we got to take part in exploring it together. My first taste of truly being apart of the Taiwanese community came when we went to watch Wang Chien-Ming play for the Nationals. For my dad, the highlight must've been receiving his autograph, however, that was the first time I realized there were people at the game who spoke the same mother tongue as me and could understand what I was saying. Since then, I've actively contributed to creating this sense of community for others as well. For the past four years, I have been apart of WDCTS's youth dragon boat team, where we've won consecutive gold medals in both 200m and 500m, beating adult opponents. Walking alongside grandpas and grandmas, as well as kids in the UN for Taiwan marches have taught me what it means to stand strong as a Taiwanese and to band together in times of anger and resentment. I have walked in the Fourth of July Parade along with my family, equally experiencing pride and fulfillment in representing Taiwan.

I began to develop a love for speaking Taiwanese one evening when I realized I could understand what my grandparents were gossiping about at the dinner table. I can attribute this realization to my Taiwanese education at WDCTS. The accumulation of all my years learning MTL helped me receive first place in the MTL essay competition about what it meant to learn Taiwanese at WDCTS. In the past 3 years, I have received opportunities to emcee for WDCTS' winter solstice celebrations, the TYAF scholarship awards, and TCC's Culture Night Concert. Through these experiences, I have written the respective scripts to each event and communicated by speaking three different languages in order to present the information. Getting educated on each Taiwanese event and learning about our country's extensive history presented me with the extraordinary opportunity to interview Ms. Suen Chen Lin about her experiences during 228, from Japanese occupation during her childhood to her immigration into the U.S., for my seventh grade oral history presentation. Not only have I have had the chance to consume such information, I've now become well-versed enough in Taiwanese history in part to my years participating in WDCTS activities that I am confident enough to share them publicly. This school year, I became fortunate enough to teach Mandarin 5th and 6th grade, as well as being a TA for Taiwanese 3rd grade. It is through the persistent Taiwanese education from age two to now, that I am finally able to begin giving back to the school that has taught me so much.

Even while online, I participate in the FASCA Virtual Hangout activity series with students from Songshan High School, leading a group of 6 students in discussion on various topics such as differences in schools in the U.S. compared to Taiwan, convenience stores in both countries, and the impact of COVID-19 on our lives. These virtual hangouts have grown increasingly successful since they first began, leading to the sister school relationship that is being considered between WDCTS and Songshan High School. Prior, during COVID, I hosted an MGY/WDCTS event regarding the making of tea eggs. I compiled facts about the process, ingredients, history, and significance into a Kahoot that was played live by participants in the online event.

The culmination of all these experiences have led me to become a well-versed member of the Taiwanese community here in DC. I might not be vocally speaking right now, but I'll add another tally to my "I love being Taiwanese" list. Being apart of the Taiwanese community has been a vital part of my life and I am blessed to have been given so many opportunities to interact, participate, and give back. With the experiences I have been fortunate enough to interact with, I aim to become even more capable of connecting Taiwanese culture to the world as a Taiwanese-American.