

At the age of 7, I remember noticing people blatantly staring at me. I would then ask my mom why people would do that because I found nothing unusual about myself. She would always reply with, "it's because you are so beautiful." Of course I would refuse to believe her because saying that your daughter is beautiful is a typical mom response. I would soon find out why the people were staring.

Once I started school, my parents came across a dilemma when filling out forms. In the ethnicity section, the person filling out the form was only able to check off one box. In spite of the fact that I am an Asian-American, I was forced to put one label on myself when I don't have a singular label. I was conflicted because I either had to be Caucasian or Asian, not both.

I felt that if I identified myself as "Caucasian" then my mom would be disappointed and feel as though I was not proud of my Asian heritage. But if I identified "Asian," then I felt as though I was lying because I didn't think my Asian features were as prominent. Then there was always the "other" box. I thought of this box as an ethnicity that wasn't listed. Why would I choose the "other" box when I had two boxes that perfectly described me when both were checked off?

I have spent my entire life in a small, rural town called Hubbardston with a population of less than 5,000 people that lacks diversity. In the classroom, I didn't have to worry about choosing which ethnicity to be because my peers did that for me. In elementary school, I was categorized as Caucasian because the majority of my classmates were Caucasian, and I wanted to fit in. But in middle school and high school, I tried to break out of the Caucasian category because I was becoming more proud of my Asian heritage. Every once in awhile, I would receive a grade lower than an "A," and often the other students would then say, "Haha! You are Asian and got a bad grade! You're supposed to be smart!" They would even make fun of my appearance, specifically the shape of my eyes. One time, one of the only other Asian girls in my school told me that she hated me because of my mixed background. I was naturally confused and sad because being a mixed child was something I could not change about myself.

Junior year came and I transferred to a school that specializes in math and science and attracts a larger geographical population. I was quick to realize the majority of people are of Asian descent. For some time, I did not reveal that I am of Asian decent because I was afraid of receiving a negative response again. But near the end of junior year, I told people, and they did not make fun of me. Instead, they accepted the fact that I am a mixed child and made nothing more of it.

As people have started accepting me, I have come to realize that being different is not a bad thing. Now it is acceptable to check all of the boxes that may apply on forms. Being mixed is slowly, but surely, being viewed as a normality in today's society. Now I could not care less if people stare at me because I am in fact "so beautiful" and am being myself, and that is all that matters.