

Sierra Lim

## You Belong

As I looked in the mirror, I couldn't help but wish someone prettier and lighter-complected was staring back at me. Growing up in a rural city barely seen on the Northern California Map; I felt like a singular sunflower in a crowd of daisy-haired children. I was seen but never felt heard. Kids rather looked at my "different" appearance but never at my soul or personality. My mother is a fair skin woman who grew up in America, while my father traveled to the country of hope from the great Filipino islands. He grew up with his seven siblings in Manila, Filipino till the age of 10. He along with his family left everything behind to make a better life for themselves. Every day I carry both of them, both of their cultures, and love with me. I wanted others to see me for the strong, powerful, and diverse woman I am instead of the only Filipino girl in the whole school.

During Middle School, everyone is finding themselves through the influence of peers and personal changes. Like many, I was finding my dislikes and likings academically along with socially. However, children became crueler and their meaningless stereotypes turned into disease-like threats. I would walk down hallways and hear roars, "Asian-Invasion" "Dog-Eater" and "Ching-Chong." I didn't understand why these comments were made about me every day. It eventually spread into classrooms too. People would slant their eyes when I looked at them or say "Chinese" girl instead of my name when getting my attention. 6th-8th grade these remarks were said every day without any hesitation or consequences. My self-esteem and dignity were shattered, I couldn't comprehend what motives I had given my peers to say and do such repulsive

things to me. I felt helpless and silenced by the laughs of submission from others afraid to say anything against the majority.

Although this shattered my spirits, I wanted to make sure it never happened to anyone else. I then spent my Freshman year devoting myself to helping and bringing joy to people's faces. Throughout my high School journey I found people that saw me for me. I traveled and for that there was a greater world filled with more accepting and diverse individuals. I found great satisfaction in uplifting low spirited people that I saw in myself years prior. After being buried under the cruel stereotypes and racist phrases, I stand up for myself and others who shouldn't fight these injustices by themselves. Asian American have been fighting for equality in America since 1974 in Chinatown, Manhattan, New York; they were peacefully protesting over discriminatory labor practices. The fight for equality for Asian Americans and all people of color will continue, and each voice brings light to them and their endeavors. Every voice and action against inequality accounts for the many hopeless children of color, immigrants, and financially unstable fighting a system corrupted by closed-minded individuals. Whom are already granted freedoms and privileges many have and will die for. Everyone belongs and should be treated as such.