December 2023 Issue 14

WHAT WE EXPERIENCE | OUR SPRINGTIME

Artist Reflection:
Angela Nguyen

"When it comes to childhood, specifically an Asian person's childhood, you usually think of something like trauma, parental stress, disconnect from culture, stuff like that. But what I take away the most from the topic "childhood" is wonder; the joy of being a child. The nostalgia and the warmth you feel when you're still curious about the world. So, I wanted to capture that feeling with some things that I liked as a child. A majority is food because that's all I really remember. Enjoy this month's issue, and reminisce (or scarily relive) your childhood and the stories that it told."

Letter from the Founders

Dear reader,

Welcome to our 14th quarterly issue! We are beyond excited, as always, to present to you our issue. Thank you for taking the time to read our magazine. We are so grateful for all of your support.

If you are new to our magazine, our names are Jeenah Gwak and Hope Yu, and we are two college students from the greater Seattle area, at Stanford University and Carleton College respectively. Our project began as one of our many ideas three years ago. As Asian high schoolers living in American society, we have witnessed countless instances of discrimination and xenophobia against people of Asian descent. Additionally, despite living in a relatively Asian-dense region, we have been exposed to various forms of social injustice against Asian Americans, such as the lack of Asian representation in academic curricula and recent COVID-19 related events. These occurrences galvanized us to take action.

Taking into consideration our abilities, we decided that promoting awareness through written works would be the most appropriate course of action. Through our magazine, we seek to share the untold stories of Asian-American experiences surrounding racism and societal pressures that are often overlooked in society. We hope to educate and inspire you to take action in your own respective way.

Our magazine, *What We Experience*, is released quarterly, on the last Sunday of every March, June, September, and December, covering the experiences of various Asian identities. This issue's topic is childhood experiences. Ranging from cultural disconnect to our favorite childhood stories, our members wrote about their personal experiences and shared the experiences of others, as well. Whether it be big or small, each of our members wrote about a topic that holds significance to them.

We are so happy to present to you the 14th issue of our magazine. Thank you for supporting us in our journey to advocate for the Asian-American community. We hope you enjoy our magazine and feel inspired to share it with others.

Sincerely,
Jeenah Gwak & Hope Yu

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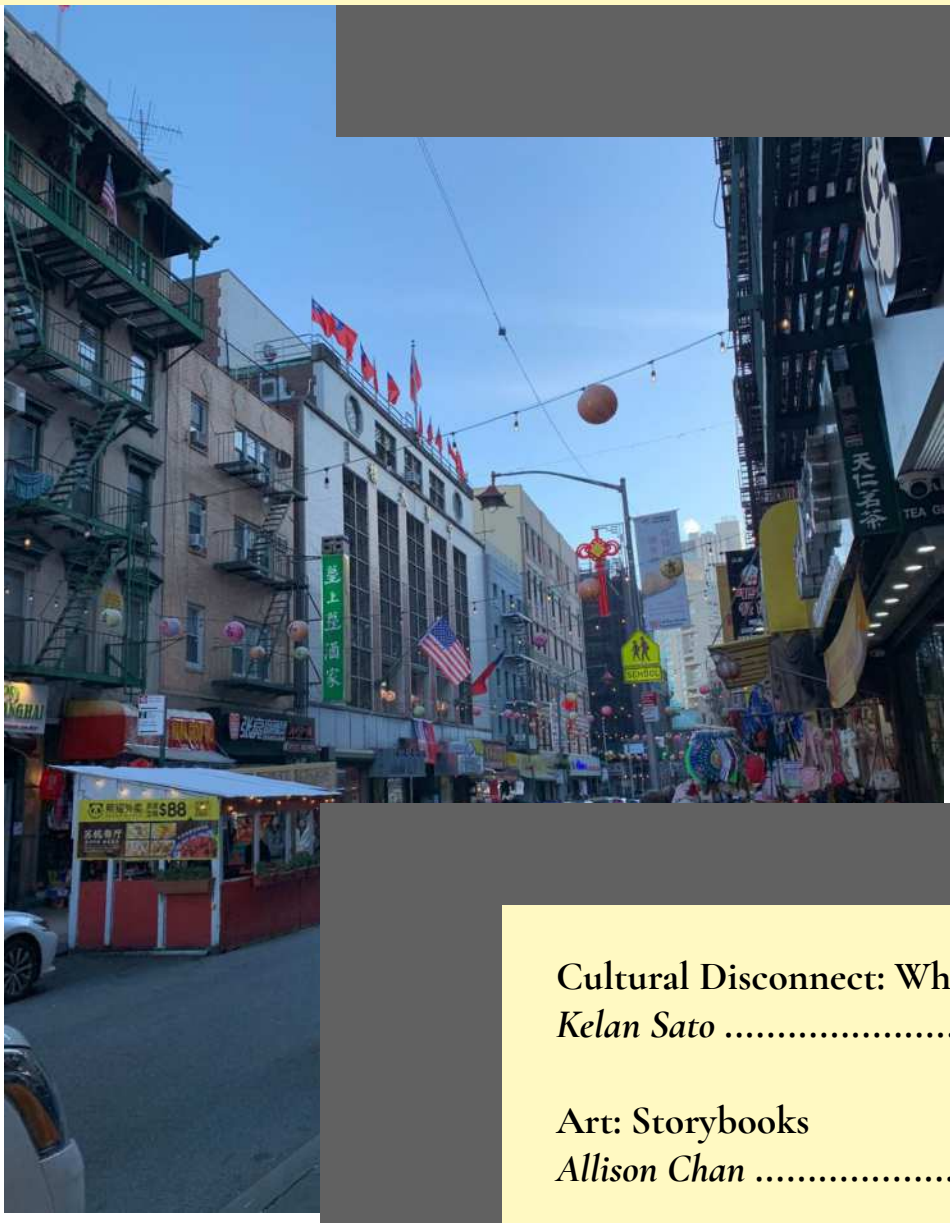


Language Loss in the Immigrant Experience

By Anushka Agate

In the tapestry of my childhood, the threads of my dad's immigrant journey were woven with vibrant colors of hope and sacrifice. As I sat, wide-eyed, absorbing the tales of his arrival in the United States in 1997, the images painted by his words became unforgettable in my mind. Coming to a new country with just one backpack, 200 dollars, and an unwavering dream for a better life—my dad was the embodiment of the immigrant narrative.

However, amidst the tales of triumph and tenacity, one chapter cast a shadow on our family's journey—the post-9/11 era. The vibrant palette of my dad's Indian identity suddenly dulled in the face of discrimination. The United States, once seen as a land of opportunities, now echoed with daily reminders that he was no longer welcome. Strangers' looks carried unspoken judgments, and slashed car tires whispered threats of an unwelcome presence. As my dad navigated these challenges, the weight of the decision to lean into or distance himself from his Indian heritage became palpable. The dream for a better life collided with the harsh reality of discrimination, compelling him to make a poignant decision – to shield his children from the prejudice that had marred his own immigrant experience.

As I grew up, the unintended consequences of my parents' aspirations for the American Dream became apparent. Their earnest desire to provide my brother and me with opportunities inadvertently led to the gradual erosion of our native language, Marathi. I found myself grappling with the fading echoes of Marathi within the walls of our home, where English now reigned supreme. The once melodious sounds of Marathi conversations were replaced by the ubiquitous cadence of English, and I, too, unwittingly became a participant in this linguistic shift.

The struggle to reconnect with Marathi was not just an academic endeavor but a journey of self-discovery and identity. In my attempts to bridge the linguistic gap, I encountered frustration and a sense of inadequacy. The language of my heritage, once spoken fluently by my ancestors, now felt like a distant melody that I could barely comprehend. The emotional toll of this disconnect manifested in a profound detachment from my cultural heritage, a rootless feeling that intensified as I struggled to communicate with family members back in India.

When I was around 10 years old, my parents decided to take my brother and me back to India after not having been there for a while. The anticipation of meeting relatives I hadn't seen in years was tinged with excitement and a subtle anxiety about the language barrier that had grown between us. Despite their attempts to learn and speak English, a language foreign to them, their proficiency was limited, and the nuanced intricacies of our conversations remained trapped in translation.

During family gatherings, where laughter echoed through the air and the aroma of home-cooked meals enveloped the room, I found myself on the outskirts of understanding. As my Atya cracked jokes and my Ajoba talked rapidly about recent events shown in the news, it became an elusive dance of words that I couldn't fully comprehend. My inability to engage in these conversations left me feeling isolated among the people I longed to connect with the most. Despite the shared bloodlines and common heritage, the inability to communicate seamlessly created an invisible barrier. It wasn't just about missing out on the surface-level exchanges; it was about feeling detached from the essence of our shared stories, traditions, and the core of familial bonds.

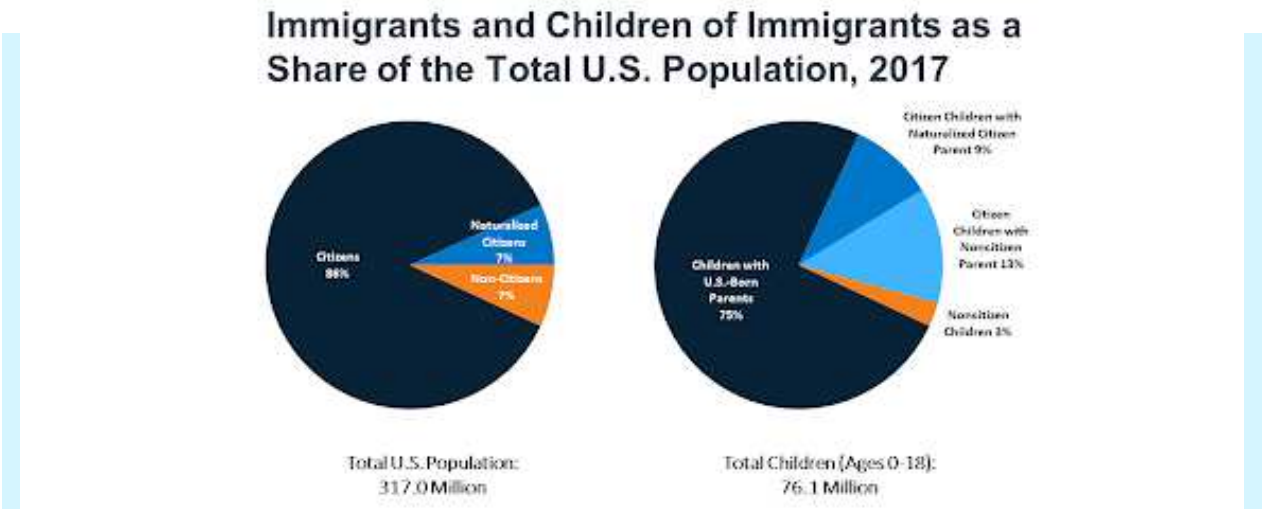
In the aftermath of that trip, the echoes of those missed conversations lingered in my mind. It fueled my commitment to reclaiming Marathi, not merely as a means of linguistic proficiency but as a bridge to the intangible aspects of our shared identity. The journey to reconnect with my heritage became a personal quest, fueled by a desire to break down the language barriers that had inadvertently distanced me from my family and cultural roots.

In an attempt to bridge this growing divide, I enrolled in a Marathi school near my home, taught by volunteers from the area. The classroom, nestled in an old General Electric building with a broken air conditioner and 30 young children eager to learn, harbored more challenges than opportunities for me. On my first day, walking into the room, I immediately knew I didn't belong. The gap had widened too much. Even though I was only 10, I knew that I would never be able to catch up to the other kids there. Groups of kids enveloped in laughter and gossip in Marathi, seemed like islands of familiarity in a sea of incomprehension. I realized that catching up to their linguistic fluency was not going to be as simple as I once imagined.

The consequences of language loss extended far beyond the realm of words; it was a detachment from the cultural symphony that defined my family's history. The once-rich tapestry of Marathi, woven with traditions and stories, now threatened to unravel, leaving me with a profound sense of identity crisis. The erosion of my native language was not just a linguistic evolution; it was a rupture in the fabric of my identity.

My story mirrors the broader narrative of language attrition among children of immigrants, a phenomenon intricately woven into the fabric of societal, educational, and familial dynamics. The Migration Policy Institute's research underscores the challenges faced by immigrant children in the United States, with approximately one-third of first-generation immigrant children becoming English-dominant within a few years of arrival due to efforts to fit in with the local population.

Language loss is fraught with multifaceted challenges. The disintegration of linguistic ties often heralds a disconnection from cultural roots, stifling the transmission of heritage and intergenerational communication. Bilingualism is also incredibly important in promoting cognitive benefits, such as enhanced problem-solving skills and multitasking abilities. Therefore, addressing the challenges faced by immigrant children in maintaining their native languages is crucial not only for preserving linguistic

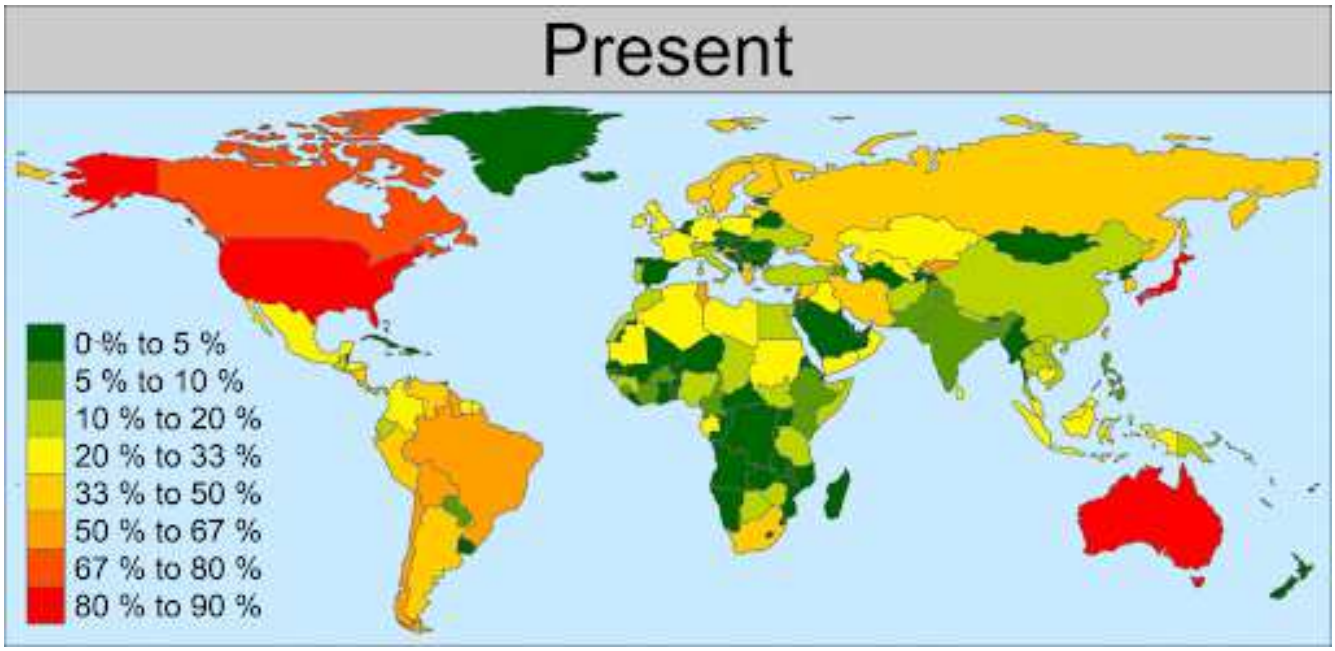


diversity but also for fostering a sense of cultural identity and facilitating holistic cognitive development. Efforts to support language maintenance programs and promote bilingual education can play a pivotal role in mitigating the loss of language among the children of immigrants.

The emotional ramifications of language loss are intricately entwined with the broader societal context. The United States, often hailed as a melting pot of cultures, paradoxically witnesses the erosion of linguistic diversity among its immigrant communities. The very diversity that should be celebrated becomes a casualty of the assimilation process, leading to a dilution of cultural identities. This silent loss is not just a personal narrative but a collective struggle faced by immigrant populations striving to balance the preservation of their heritage with the demands of integration.

In a world that increasingly celebrates diversity and cultural richness, our languages stand as gatekeepers to our knowledge and identity. Embracing them, learning them, and passing them on to the next generation is an act of cultural defiance against the forces of assimilation. Our languages are not mere linguistic artifacts; they are the doorways to our culture and history, the living threads that weave our collective identity. As I navigate the complex terrain of dual identities, my linguistic journey becomes a testament to the resilience of cultural ties. The interplay of languages, the dance between Marathi and English, mirrors the delicate balance of embracing the present while honoring the past.

The journey of language loss and rediscovery is a deeply personal one, etched with emotions and colored by the broader societal context. The global challenge of language attrition among immigrant children serves as a backdrop to the intricate narratives of individuals grappling with identity, discrimination, and the preservation of cultural heritage. Each linguistic journey, whether marked by moments of estrangement or reconnection, adds a unique story to the human experience. It is through these narratives that we not only understand the challenges of language loss but also celebrate the resilience that comes with the rediscovery of cultural identity through language. As we champion the cause of linguistic diversity, we affirm our commitment to preserving the kaleidoscope of human languages that enrich the global mosaic of cultures.



61% of languages around the world that were spoken as a first language in 1795 are set to become extinct.

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The **Article** of the **Author**: Grace Lin

By: Michelle Fung

Among the many, many books I read during my childhood, there are two that stand out: The Year of the Dog and its sequel, The Year of the Rat, by Grace Lin. As far as I can remember, they're the only books I read that revolved around a Chinese-American girl, and although I loved picturing myself as a part of epic battles with magic and dragons, there was something different about experiences that I could completely relate to.

These books are why Grace Lin was one of the most influential authors of my youth and why I, despite now being an older teenager, recently decided that she is most definitely an author worth going back to.

Her Career

Grace Lin grew up in upstate New York. She originally dreamed of becoming a figure skater, but soon found her passion through her drawings of herself as a figure skater in illustrating. She then attended the Rhode Island School of Design and published her first written and illustrated children's book, The Ugly Vegetables, in 1999. After gaining this initial success, Lin released several other children's picture books. Her first novel, The Year of the Dog, was published in 2006 and soon followed by its sequel, The Year of the Rat.

She has been a notably prolific children's book author from the start, with The Ugly Vegetables winning the Growing Good Kids Book Award CLASSIC. Picture book A Big Mooncake for Little Star made her a 2019 Caldecott Medal honoree, which highlights her work as a children's book illustrator, and novel Where the Mountain Meets the Moon earned a Newbery Medal, which is awarded to authors who have significantly contributed to American children's literature. In 2016, Lin was recognized by the Obama administration as a Champion of Change for Asian American and Pacific Islander Art and Storytelling, with her cover art for her novel When the Sea Turned To Silver featured at the White House (About).

Apart from through her books, Lin has served as an advocate for diversity and Asian-American representation in other facets as well. She has delivered several talks on the subject, including the

Grace Lin

Photo credit: Danielle Tait

video essay "What to do when you realize classic books from your childhood are racist?" She also used to host the podcast "kidlitwomen*," which focused on women and gender identity issues through interviews and essays, but the talk was unfortunately retired in 2020 (Podcast).

How Her Identity and Childhood Influenced Her Writing

As the daughter of two Taiwanese immigrants, she was one of the only Asian kids in her area. This upbringing played a large part in her decision to write The Year of the Dog about a Chinese-American girl, whose life parallels the author's. In her short essay "Don't Judge A Book By Its Character (even if it is Chinese)," Lin talks about how the lack of Asian population and culture in her childhood neighborhood negatively affected her sense of identity, noting that she would sometimes "forget [she] was Chinese and feel a sense of shock and disappointment when [she] saw [her] slanted eyes reflecting in the mirror." She also writes about scrounging for Asian representation in media, favoring books and TV shows solely because they featured a Chinese character (Lin).

I've definitely done that before, so while reading the essay, I began to question if my opinion of Grace Lin's books had been based on the lack of book representation in my own childhood. A more recent read of The Year of the Dog proves it was not. While it may have been slightly influenced by being one of the only Chinese-American protagonist books available, the story and representation in The Year of the Dog is and was uniquely valuable to me because of its accuracy to Chinese culture and use of inner monologue. I didn't find out that the books were based on Lin's real childhood until a few weeks ago, but upon this discovery, I could see how this made perfect sense. Lin does an excellent job choosing vignettes of her life that reflect the experience of a young Chinese-American girl, and elementary school

like (spoiler) not being paired into a "cute couple" or being typecast out of a play due to protagonist Pacy's Chinese identity and features resonated with me even more after I knew they had really occurred (Year). In short, Lin's books provide the representation that kids deserve.

Grace Lin Today

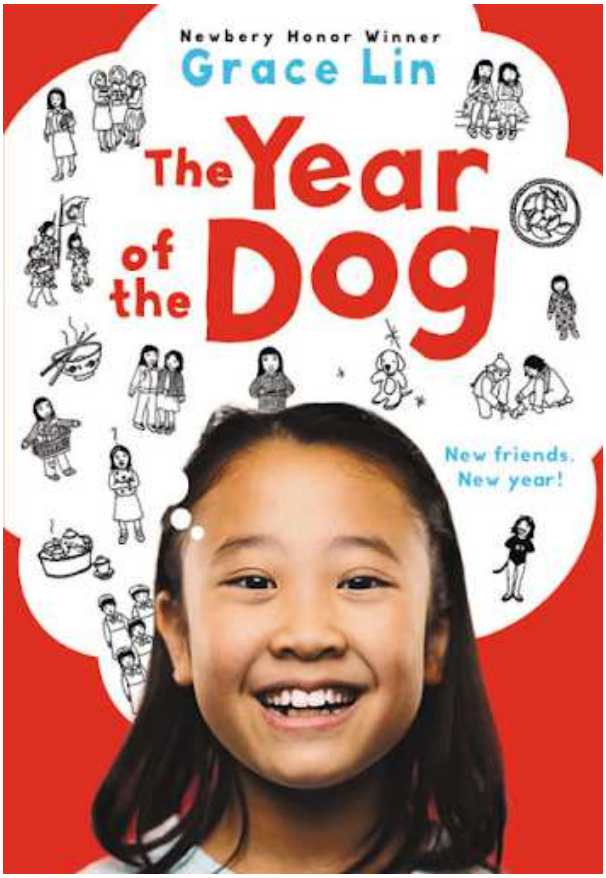
Lin currently hosts two other podcasts: "Book Friends Forever," during which she and best friend and editor Alvina Ling discuss the children's book publication industry, and "Kids Ask Authors," which is a short weekly talk geared toward children where Lin and guest author will answer a question submitted by a kid (Podcast). She continues to write and illustrate, and released a new children's book Once Upon A Book in collaboration with author Kate Messner earlier this year (Gilbert). Lin also does in-person and virtual school visits, which range from book read-alouds to informative talks about Chinese culture through her books (School).

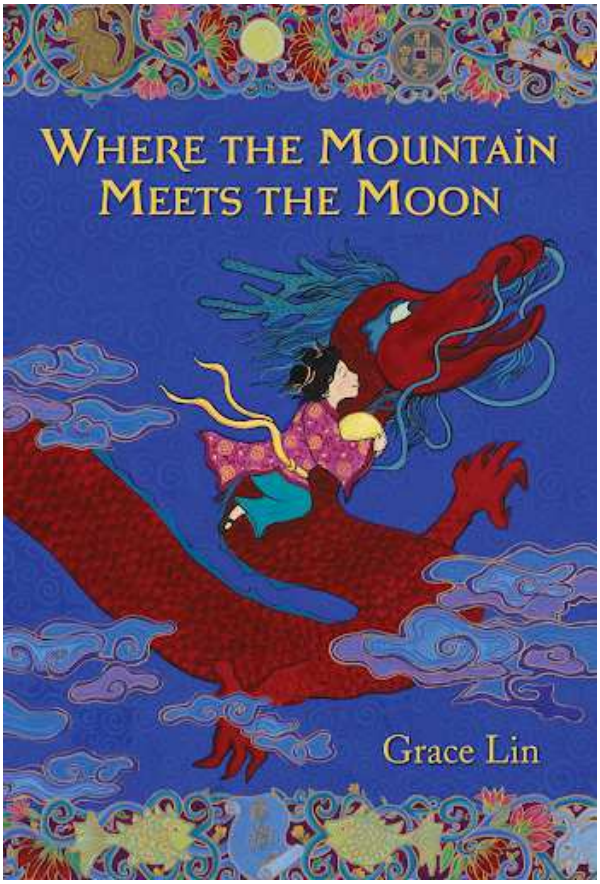
Although Lin's books are targeted toward a younger audience, I think that they are worth reading for anyone. The simple but effective storylines will almost certainly entertain, and older readers might feel a kick of nostalgia from the touching descriptions of the childhood and youth experience.

I obviously can't list every Grace Lin book here, but the next two pages feature a few that I highly recommend. If you're looking for a fun read, give them a shot.

The Year of the Dog
Novel

"Half fiction half memoir" as described by Grace Lin, this book follows a young girl named Pacy through her experiences with family, friends, and her Chinese-American identity through the new year. As previously mentioned, this book has a sequel: The Year of the Rat.





Where the Mountain Meets the Moon
Novel

This book combines Chinese folklore and a Wizard of Oz-like story to tell the tale of Minli, a Chinese girl living in the mountains who embarks on a journey to find The Old Man of the Moon, a man who supposedly holds all the answers—including how she can bring prosperity to her village. Where the Mountain Meets the Moon also features full-page illustrations and has two accompanying novels, "Starry River of the Night" and "When the Sea Turned to Silver."

Ling & Ting: Not Exactly the Same!
Children's Picture Book

Although they are similar in appearance, readers soon find that Chinese-American twins Ling and Ting have many differences in personality as they partake in a variety of silly misadventures and activities together. This book has three additional picture books that follow in the Ling & Ting universe.

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Inner Piece

By Nicole Kim

Jars are powerful objects. They hold food. They hold recipes passed down from multiple generations. They hold stories.

Jars are often used to preserve food items that can be canned, salted, pickled, and fermented. Food preservation is a method used to store food for a long duration without having it spoil. This fascinating method has been used for centuries, working to the advantage of thousands of people who ran into problems regarding food scarcity during freezing cold winters, blazing hot summers, and the fruitless times in between. Nowadays, food preservation is still commonly seen in the kitchens of many homes, including mine. On top of newspapers dampened from the rain are onggis, earthenware Korean folk pottery that has been used as fermentation storage for centuries. Onggis of varying heights and widths form a cluster in the corner of the kitchen where the wind can reach but the sun cannot. Quietly asleep in these onggis are countless layers of Kimchi, an integral part of Korean cuisine. I do not wish to disturb their slumber, so I gingerly remove the cover lid with trembling fingers. There, I examine pieces of cabbage leaves touching skin to skin, together drinking up the spices and salt they are submerged in. Pieces of kimchi mature in the onggis and I wait for a good week to savor them. Onggi is the home of spiritual growth; this is where kimchi gets its tastes, and this is where each piece of kimchi acquires its personality traits.

What I love about kimchi is its lack of consistency. The uniqueness in each batch of kimchi – the unexpected kick to some of it, the soothing mildness in others, the crunch, and sometimes softer munch – the diversity in the realm of kimchi is what I genuinely appreciate. Back in Korea, my grandmother taught me how to make kimchi. Every year in November, relatives from all across the Northern region of South Korea gather at my grandmother's place – a.k.a the epicenter of onggis. We would all start out by straightening out a mountain of crumpled newspapers, then placing a huge red plastic bowl on top of it. My cousins and I would sit out at the edge of the collage of newspapers ranging from those from the early 2000s to those more recent. After the fun of many repetitions of placing our fingers on top of people's nostrils in photographs and advertisements in the newspapers, we would watch grandmother bring all the ingredients one by one as adults chatted among themselves, catching up on the year's highs and lows (sharing the latest bits of

juicy gossip). The cabbage, horseradish, ginger, garlic, scallions, fish sauce, and Korean chili flakes would be laid out to form a neat circle around the red plastic bowl. Once everything got combined in the bowl (a bowl so large that after all the ingredients are added, seven people can put both of their gloved hands in to it at once and aggressively mix the ingredients), and the ingredients mixed, each of the kids would get a chance to stir the bowl and be complimented by aunties. After this simple, yet time consuming step is done, my grandmother would say, "I'll take care of the rest, go help yourselves to some Korean pears from the fridge." Relatives scattered away from the kitchen and found comfy spots in the living room. My cousins headed outside to look for some bright purple berries in the bushes while keeping an eye out for dragonflies zooming across the unoccupied streets beyond the backyard. Meanwhile, I stayed behind and crouched down next to my grandmother.

I closely examined my grandmother double checking if there was enough spice rubbed on each piece of cabbage leaf. I watched in silence to assess the need for my help. While my grandmother was working, I headed to where the onggis were stored: in the corner of the kitchen where the wind can reach but the sun cannot. Without asking, I brought the empty onggis out to the center of the kitchen one by one where they could be filled with kimchi from the large red plastic bowl. My grandmother saw my little hands grab onto the handles on the sides of the onggis, turning pink from holding them too hard. She noticed me panting a little, but she never stopped me from moving the onggis. After all the onggis were placed near the huge batch of kimchi piled in the plastic bowl, my grandmother chuckled and finally spoke up, "now, this is step one." The two of us formed uniform layers of kimchi in the seemingly bottomless onggis. We conversed; I successfully deciphered the slightly slurred speech and the accent that my grandmother's family carried all the way from Busan, where the Korean peninsula meets the Pacific Ocean.

According to my grandmother, kimchi is not bound to a recipe, but rather bound to onggis. Although there are a plethora of standardized kimchi recipes for various kinds of kimchi, it can be said that the onggi itself is a recipe for kimchi. By taking advantage of the porous onggis, we allow proper air circulation and temperature regulation, supplying kimchi with an optimal environment to mature in. Adapting to these ever-changing elements of nature, each batch of kimchi turns out slightly different. The earthenware also imparts a slight earthy taste to the kimchi, contributing to the unique taste and texture of each batch of fermented kimchi. Therefore, the varying, sometimes unexpected elements of kimchi make preserving kimchi a form of art. With this in mind, I beam at the onggis at home away from home as I visualize the concave walls of onggis breathing air into each piece of kimchi.

When kimchi is served on the dinner table, my family rarely talks about how good it is. We instead consume, savor, and comprehend the efforts absorbed in the complex flavors of kimchi. The silent pleasure and gratitude for a delightful culture are my compass to finding inner peace. So even to this day, more than six years after moving from South Korea, I celebrate my culture through the practice of making kimchi every November. Although the ingredients are mostly from Hmart, not a local farmer's market, and the portion made here in the suburbs of Washington State is notably smaller than what I used to make at my grandmother's place, I do not hesitate to continue the tradition on the other side of the world, reminiscing about the days spent with my grandmother.

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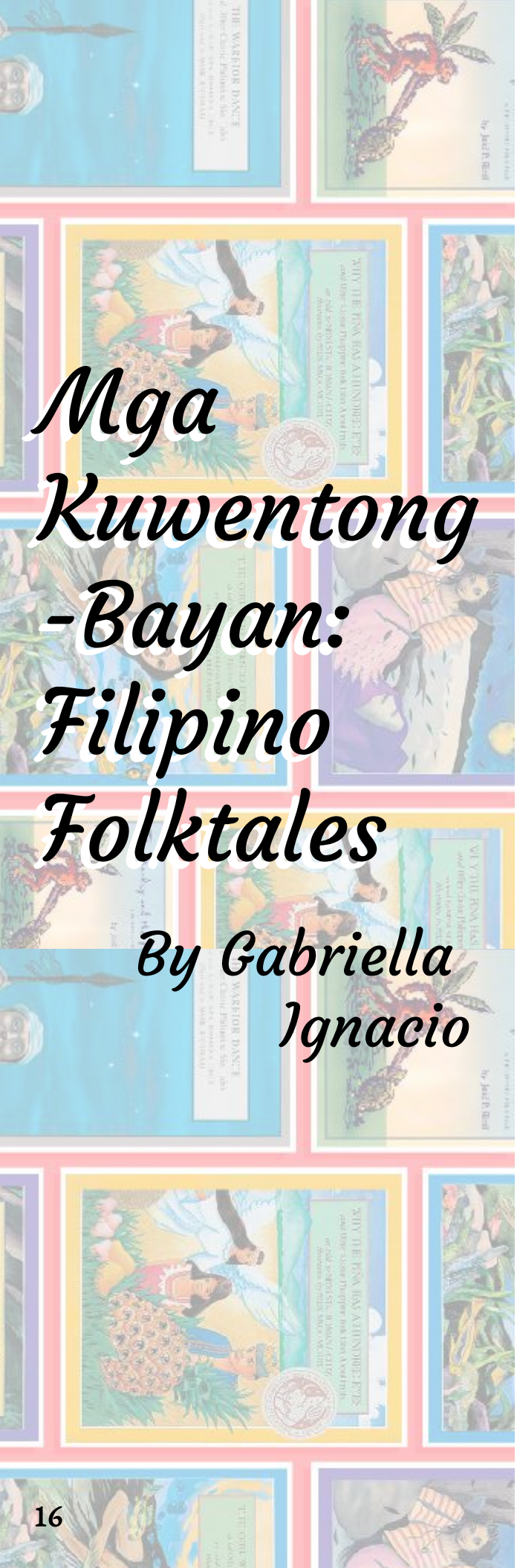


Mga Kuwentong -Bayan: Filipino Folktales

By Gabriella Ignacio

Once Upon a Time...

...there was a young, lazy girl named Pinya. Her mother often asked her to help with chores, but in her idleness, Pinya made up excuses and refused to do them.

"Can you cook some porridge for me?" her mother asked one day. "It's easy – just add rice and water to a pot, then stir it with a ladle." Pinya reluctantly agreed and went into the kitchen, though she loudly banged pots and pans to display annoyance at the task. Eventually, her mother found Pinya lying in her room, with no porridge to be found.

"Did you cook?" she asked.

"No," came Pinya's reply. "I couldn't find the ladle."

"You're so lazy, anak!" her mother reprimanded. "I hope you grow a thousand eyes so you can finally find what you're looking for!" With a huff, Pinya stormed into the backyard.*

After several hours passed, Pinya's mother looked to reconcile with her daughter, but couldn't find her anywhere. Pinya remained missing for months until her mother spotted a peculiar looking plant in the backyard. Wrapped between leaves was a strange yellow fruit resembling a child's head with a thousand eyes...

A thousand eyes...

With horror, she remembered the words she'd yelled to Pinya on the day she went missing. Just as motherly love had spoiled Pinya to laziness, her anger had unintentionally cursed her as well. Her daughter had become a thousand-eyed plant.

In honor of her daughter, she named the fruit Pinya, and took loving care of it as she would her own daughter. It flourished, bearing more and more fruit each year. Today, we know the fruit to be a pineapple, and is enjoyed by thousands of people today.

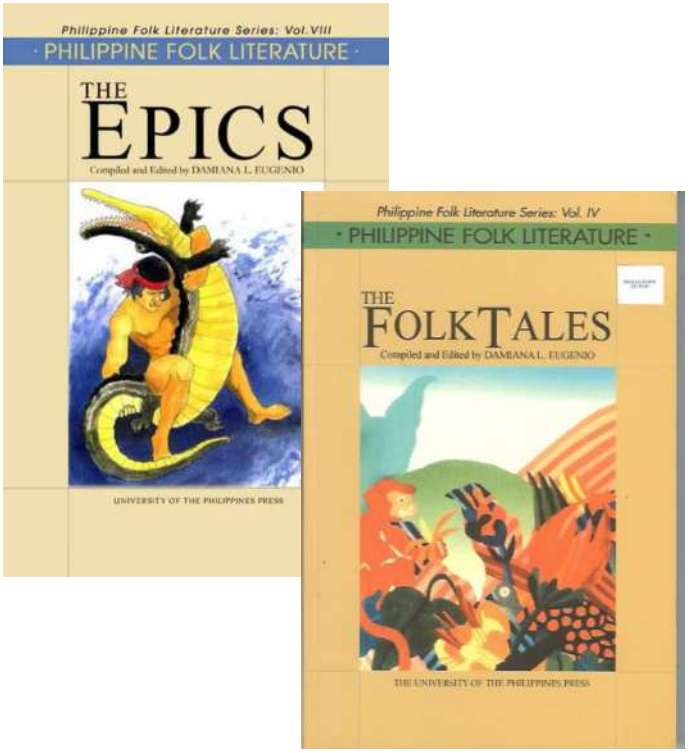
And that is why pineapples have eyes.

**Anak = "Child" in Tagalog*

When asked about her experience with Filipino folktales, my mother recalled her awe and thorough belief in Pinya's story when she was younger. As an immigrant who grew up in the Philippines, her childhood was often highlighted by the storytelling of relatives, housemaids, and other elders. They regaled her with tales ranging from activities of the aswang, a term for evil creatures, to otherworldly explanations for the tiny black "eyes" on pineapples. There seemed to be an origin behind nearly any object or idea, with hundreds of stories simply waiting to be revealed to curious young minds. In my own experience, growing up in the US has resulted in American children's stories eclipsing exposure to Filipino ones. Yet as I grow more curious and aware of my culture, discovering these untold stories rekindles the sense of wonder that comes with any childhood tale.

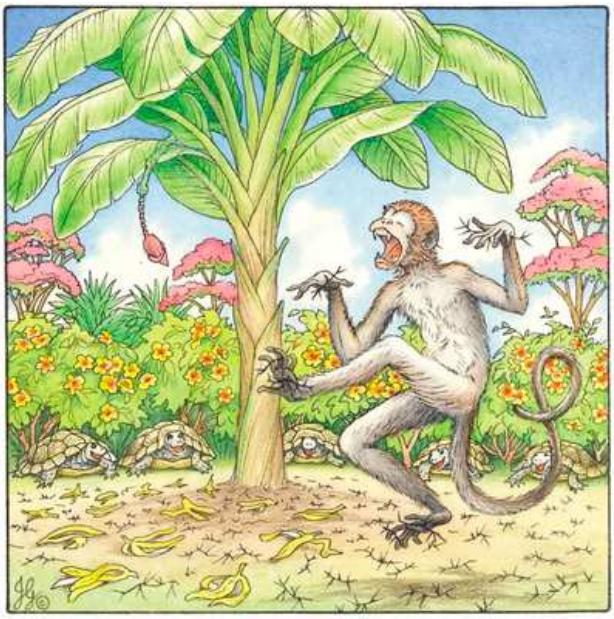
Similar to other cultures, folktales are a hallmark of many childhood experiences across the Philippine islands. Through folklore, Filipino youth are given a glimpse into the morals, narratives, and lives of their ancestors. It roots them in culture, and emphasizes the importance of Philippine spirituality and nature. Though they have somewhat waned in popularity, folklore continues to be a rich source of Filipino history that youth can rely on. Today, they continue to be spread through literature, images, and oral tellings from older generations, with the essence of almost all stories still preserved from hundreds of years ago.

For Damiana Eugenio, a Filipina author, the Philippines' "geographical location, archipelagic nature of the country, the numerous ethnolinguistic groups to be found in it, and the various historical



Damiana Eugenio Novels

forces that have shaped the destiny of its people probably account for the richness and variety [of folktales]" (Eugenio 1). Eugenio's extensive research, writings, and collections of traditional Filipino stories has granted her the title of "the Mother of Philippine Folklore", and was widely known for her impact on childhood education and literacy in the Philippines. As Eugenio states, the history of Filipino folklore is indeed both vast and impressive, especially given its tumultuous history with colonization and cultural erasure. Though oral tradition has existed for thousands of years, the collecting of traditional stories was obsolete during Spanish rule – a period that lasted over three centuries. After the transition from Spanish to American occupation; however, American teachers and anthropologists began to amass collections of folk narratives to keep record of Filipino history. These included Visayan legends from Iloilo and Mandurriao, Tagalog versions of Cinderella or Aladdin, animal tales of the Bagobo people, and much more (Eugenio 1).



An illustration depicting "The Monkey and the Turtle" folktale

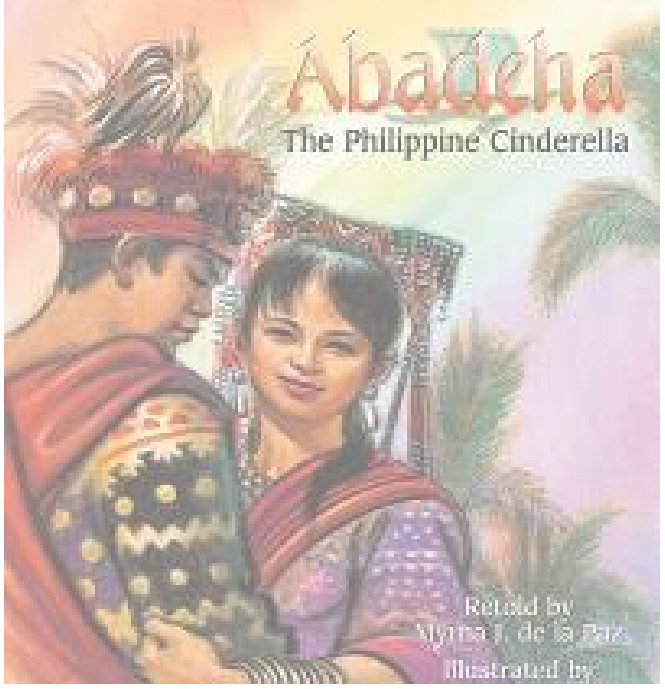
Perhaps the most famous folktale, however, is that of The Monkey and the Turtle. Popularized by writer and revolutionary Jose Rizal in 1889, it is considered the first children's folktale of the Philippines. It tells of a monkey and turtle's disputes over the fruit of a banana tree, in which they trick and get revenge on each other in order to satisfy their own desires. The story is a warning against greed and selfishness, and is a classic example of the animal fables that largely constitute Filipino folklore. Philippine animal tales are characterized by "non-mythological stories in which human qualities are ascribed to animals, designed usually to show the cleverness of one animal and the stupidity of another," according to American folklorist Stith Thompson (source). These trickster animals are usually manifest in a monkey, turtle, or crocodile, though regional differences may cause some traditional stories to alter the species. Like American fables, these tend to have a "moral of the story" expressed through them, resulting in a didactic instilling of cultural values. Naturally, animal fables are not the only kinds of folktales common to the Philippines. Others include magical stories known as Marchen, which include monkey versions of Puss-in-Boots, and typical romance tales of heroes saving princesses. Influences of catholicism have also been reflected in folklore, with religious precepts replacing generic morals. New varieties emerge as storytelling continues changing, so it is important not to determine folklore as having a specific, set structure.

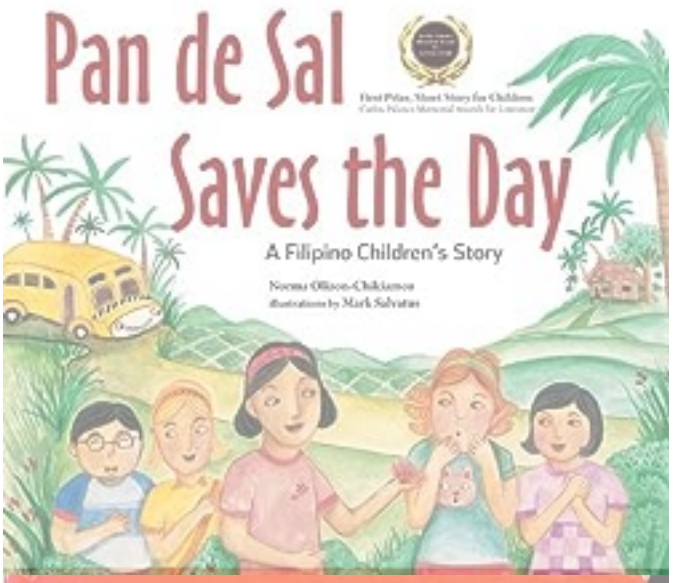
In recent years, in fact, the evolution of modern legends has taken a turn away from the traditional folktales told to children. Succeeding Filipino liberation, many political tactics have involved leveraging the island's love for mythology to attribute superhuman traits to national leaders. For example, Ramon Magsaysay's rule as president was considered the "Golden Years" of the Philippines, in which industry, military, and culture flourished. His successful leadership and establishment of a "people-centered" government amplified trust throughout the Philippines, resulting in his rule being paralleled to the work of a supernatural entity ("Ramon Magsaysay"). However, these supposedly heroic characteristics have not been limited to publicly adored leaders; in fact, this strategy has been most exploited by corrupt ones.

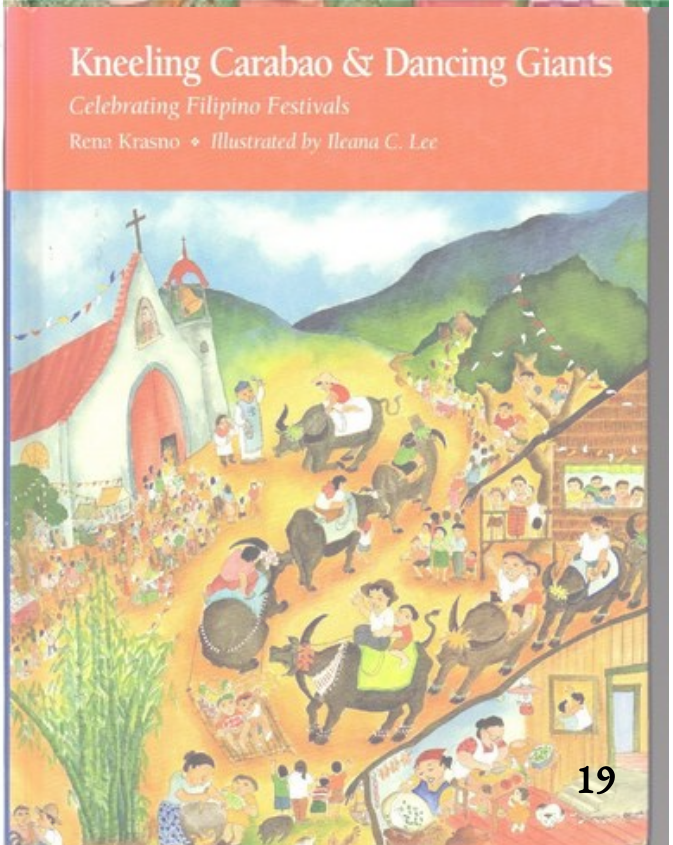
Former Philippine leader Ferdinand Marcos (1983)

To illustrate this case, Damiana Eugenio's book Philippine Folk Literature: The Legends describes it in regards to the Marcos – a political family notorious for Ferdinand Marcos' dictatorship during the 1970's and 80's. In order to legitimize their rule, the Marcos' employed various propaganda methods to create a cult of personality surrounding the entire family. The spread of misinformation continued even during their exile, in which "Marcos myths" – a term denoting the historical distortion perpetuated by the Marcos family – were used to help the family return to political prominence in the Philippines, where they remain in power even today (Eugenio 2).

While political propaganda may have tainted the perception of contemporary legends, it is important to remember traditional tales and recall the values they uphold. These stories are not merely relics of the past, but living narratives that continue to connect Filipinos to their ancestors and rich heritage. Researching content for this article has been incredibly rewarding in terms of understanding my culture, and I've connected with many Filipino friends and family members as a result. No matter your identity, reconnecting with culture through literature and folklore is one of the most gratifying ways to do so.







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Reclaiming Asian Heritage in White Spaces

By Isabel Dorn

As the daughter of a Vietnam War refugee, I have a complicated, serpentine relationship with my Asian heritage. My mother was evacuated from Vietnam as a baby in 1975, then adopted into a White family and raised in Wisconsin. She was one of the only Asian students at her predominantly White university, and after marrying my White father, she moved to a rural community with even less racial diversity. Out of the 7,000 people in our hometown, only about 2% were Asian.

Being born into this community was a bizarre experience for me - not only because my mother and I were the only Vietnamese people in our town, but also because neither of us had the opportunity to build strong ties to our Vietnamese identities. While being a Vietnam War refugee had profoundly impacted the trajectory of my mother's life, she hadn't been able to bring any positive aspects of her Vietnamese heritage with her. My Asian roots brought stares in the supermarket and awkward questions like "where are you really from?", but not homemade pho and Lunar New Year celebrations. My parents' interracial marriage added one more layer of complexity in the form of grandmothers at Walmart inquiring to make sure the tall White man was actually my father and not a kidnapper.

Media representation growing up wasn't much better when it came to diversity. There was Mulan, the occasional Asian contestant on TV shows like Survivor and MasterChef, and some Asian American athletes at the Olympics every four years. While I did enjoy seeing people who looked like me on TV, I felt strange about claiming any sort of shared heritage with them because they all seemed to carry some mysterious connection to another culture that I did not have. No matter how "Asian" I looked, I had never set foot in the country that had given me my face and couldn't speak a single word of my ancestors' language.

Mirai Nagasu at the 2010 Olympics (Wikipedia)

Around the age of eight or nine, I surmised that I lacked kinship with other Asians because my cultural identity was just lying dormant, waiting to be rediscovered. At the time, I saw my Vietnamese heritage as some mystic superpower that would come alive like Harry Potter's magic, so I became obsessed with reclaiming my Asian roots.

However, I had been so isolated from Vietnamese culture that the things I associated with my Asian identity were borrowed from the limited representation I'd seen in the media, and many of these stories portrayed Asia through an Orientalist lens. Films like The Karate Kid and Lara Croft: Tomb Raider - The Cradle of Life oversimplified Asian culture to cherry blossoms, chopsticks, and monks in saffron robes. Without more accurate references, I copied these problematic examples in a misguided attempt to recapture my culture: playing with paper fans, dressing like a caricature of a geisha, and drowning every dinner in soy sauce. Throughout the next few years, I recognized the inauthenticity of these behaviors and abandoned my exaggerated Asian persona. I wasn't yet educated enough to understand the sociocultural implications of these flawed representations, but I knew they didn't feel genuine, so I abandoned them and dismissed this period as a well-meaning but embarrassing phase.

At the age of 11, I developed an intense hyperfixation on Russian history. After watching the 2014 Winter Olympics held in Sochi, Russia, I dove down a rabbit hole of Wikipedia articles on the architecture of medieval Moscow, the Romanov family tree, and the Siege of Leningrad - a fascination that persisted throughout my teenage years. Although I can attribute some of my obsession to being a "history nerd", it also provided an excellent distraction from my ethnic dilemma. While exploring Vietnamese history and culture came with a strange burden of obligation to synthesize this fresh knowledge into my existence as a Vietnamese American girl, random trivia about Russia was fun, fascinating, and stress-free. There was no standard of understanding I needed to meet because I had no ethnic roots in Russia; I could simply observe interesting historic and cultural phenomena without being expected to absorb it into my identity.

Tsar Nicholas II, the Empress Alexandra, and their five children (Getty Images)

In high school, however, my conflicting feelings about my identity resurfaced. While I still had a relentless curiosity about Russian history, I once again felt that being Asian was central to my self-discovery as I embarked on my coming-of-age journey. I owe much of this epiphany to Alice Wu's The Half of It, a film about a queer Asian-American teenage girl in a small, predominantly White town. While many of the Asian characters I'd seen in previous films were uncomfortably exoticized, this film's protagonist felt authentic and relatable to my teenage self. Furthermore, the lead actress was Leah Lewis, a Chinese-American adoptee.

Leah Lewis as Ellie Chu in The Half of It (Netflix)

For the first time, I understood the power of good representation, and I continued to seek out media with strong Asian heroines. This mission has fortunately grown far easier thanks to the recent rise of Asian representation in media led by Asian creators, but we still have a long way to go.

Although my small liberal arts college is still a predominantly White institution, it has a sizable population of Asian Americans and international students from Asia, and I found myself amongst fellow Asian students for the first time. I initially hesitated to reach out to the Asian student communities because I was unsure if we would have enough shared experiences to create lasting friendships. In predominantly White spaces, I had stood out from the crowd because of my distinctly Asian features. Now, as I considered entering Asian-led spaces, I was acutely conscious of the metaphorical open space where my cultural identity was supposed to be.

Fortunately, a few Asian American upperclassmen swiftly took me under their wing and welcomed me into the university's Pan-Asian Organization. This club focused on empowering Asian students of all backgrounds, including those who were not fully connected with their native cultures. I initially hesitated to join because the meeting time conflicted with my work schedule, but one email to my manager cleared my Thursday nights for this club.

In this space, I realized there was no single correct way to be Asian. Some students had spent their entire lives in the Philippines or Nepal. Others had grown up in the United States - some in Asian American communities, others in predominantly White towns like mine. And a few had multifaceted relationships with their cultural identities due to international adoption and multiracial backgrounds.

Building connections in a space full of diverse Asian students - especially one consisting mostly of women and nonbinary students - was an unexpected yet incredible experience. Nobody in the club cared that I had never participated in Lunar New Year before while they had been celebrating it annually since childhood; instead, they invited me to join them at the celebration and taught me about my Vietnamese zodiac sign. They even encouraged me to join the club's leadership board.

"Oh, I'm not so sure about that!" I said. "I'm not sure if I would know what I'm doing."

"That's okay!" they said. "We'll teach you!"

This was the underlying mindset that guided this organization: not knowing something was merely an opportunity to learn more.

For one year, I served as an event coordinator for the Pan-Asian Organization. When the club's president stepped down, I seized the opportunity and became the new leader of this organization that had taught me so much about embracing my heritage on my own terms.

While I still have occasional doubts about my cultural identity as I learn to navigate this connection, I feel confident that I can honor my roots in a way that fits authentically into my current life. Although I never grew up with Vietnamese cuisine, I now frequently enjoy local Vietnamese restaurants, where I have fallen in love with the simple joy of pho and banh mi. After a few failed Duolingo streaks, I have finally committed to learning Vietnamese, one word at a time. Rather than mourning an imaginary past full of Vietnamese influences, I have accepted that my unique journey with my ethnicity does not make me any less Vietnamese than my friends who spent

their entire lives in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. The Vietnamese American identity is not about recipes and languages that can be learned at any age; it's about the survival, resilience, and perseverance of the Vietnamese people to succeed despite dire circumstances. The unexpected gaps and twists in my cultural identity are central to my story, and I am deeply proud to be Vietnamese American.

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Learning Ilocano

By Rojun Andres

My grandma always emphasized the idea of her grandchildren understanding Ilocano. She would say things to me in Ilocano and I would only be able to make out a few words. While she was disappointed with me, she was always kind when she scolded me. I wanted to learn more from her, but the time we had together wasn't as long as I hoped for. As we mourned the loss of our grandma, I sat at the dining table to eat my family's food. My mom spoke to me in Ilocano, "Can you pass me the Cassava?" The airpods I wore made it difficult to understand what she had said, so I replied with the usual, "huh?". She looked at me with confusion, "Do you not understand me?" I shook my head, indeed confused. As I took an airpod out, she said the same phrase in English. While I did what she had asked me, my aunties looked at me with disdain. One aunt snickered and complained about how some of the children couldn't understand Ilocano.

While I may not know Ilocano well, my basic vocabulary and her body language spoke volumes.
"You should know how to speak, you are getting too American," the aunt said in Ilocano.
That is just one of many examples where I am teased for not understanding Ilocano. Of course, they aren't wrong when they say I am American. Yet, I feel annoyed all the same.

My older brother, who was born in the Philippines but moved to America at a young age, has a good understanding of our native language. He doesn't speak it often, but he's still able to say simple sentences and understand imperatives. He gets especially talkative in Ilocano when he's intoxicated which makes for fun nights. On the other hand, my younger sister is practically fluent. She is able to speak to my parents and can stand on her own when having conversations. She has become my personal dictionary. When I forget the translation, I ask her specific Ilocano words. Although, it's a bit ironic since she is the youngest. With my siblings' better understanding of Ilocano, it's made dinner time even more insufferable when the language shifts to Ilocano.

Rojun and his grandmother (title photo) and her house in the Philippines where she raised her 9 children (above)

While I would get by with the malicious comments of not knowing enough Ilocano by my family members, I would think about the Vietnamese friends that I had in middle school. While I only understood English, my friends were fluent in both Vietnamese and English. In our 8th grade history class, my friends, Crystal and Brandon, would often speak to each other in Vietnamese. Before every Kahoot, they would teach me how to say certain colors just so that they could say the color freely without the other teams knowing. Other times, I would even ask them to have full on conversations about their days with one another. I was always fascinated when they spoke in Vietnamese to each other. While yes, it was weird to ask them to talk to each other in Vietnamese; I thought it was so cool to be fluent enough to speak to your friends in another language. I had Filipino friends, some even speaking fluently in both Tagalog and Ilocano, but I wasn't able to practice with them, solely because of the reason that I couldn't speak Ilocano. I became frustrated and annoyed with myself. A part of me blamed my parents for not trying hard enough to teach me, but I also blamed myself for not putting enough effort in trying.

While I could blame anyone all I wanted, I didn't really have the same resources as my friends. My Vietnamese friend, Brandon, was able to practice at his temple. I was jealous that he was able to be taught his own language and be with people he could practice with. If there were classes to learn Ilocano, I would have taken them in a heartbeat, but Ilocano is considered a dialect and only has around ten million speakers in the world.

Rojun at his sster's birthday party (2010)

There are fewer speakers than Vietnamese speakers in the world, so it made sense that there were not as many resources for me to learn. I despised my attitude in learning my own native tongue, but I also realized there wasn't much I could do besides listening to my family more.

Rojun and siblings (2009)

I still try to make sense of the Ilocano words that I am told. Whether that be running errands or inquiring about my day, I would answer the best I could in Ilocano. It may have been off, but I tried my best. I've practiced saying words over and over, engraving them into my brain. I try to use the phrases that I do know whenever I get the chance. When I come home from work, I would say, "Napan ak nag trabajo" (I went to work). When my parents asked if I made rice, I would say, "Adda ti napoy" (There is rice). When being asked yes or no, I will respond with "Wen" (Yes) or Haan" (No). There are still the occasional "huhs" and "what'd you say?'s" that I ask my parents, but I've learned that the effort you put in when trying to speak to your family in your native tongue matters more. I have realized that my identity as a Filipino-American isn't defined by how well I can speak Ilocano. For the last couple of years, I had a lot of motivation to learn how to speak Ilocano, this motivation stemming from my grandma's wish for her grandchildren, conversing with my filipino friends/families, or being bilingual like my vietnamese friends. While I don't agree with my aunt that I've become "too" American, she helped highlight the importance of learning how to speak Ilocano, inspiring me to become fluent as I transition to adulthood.

Cultural Disconnect: What does it mean?

by Kelan Sato

Garfield High School JSA's Musubi from Winter Potluck 12.12.23 & Lumpia at a FSA meeting 10.24.23, Photo Credits: Hamin Chang

Disconnect (v.): An instance of disconnecting or being disconnected (Oxford Languages). Asian Americans are and have been directly affected by cultural disconnect. As Asians immigrate to America from their homelands, many are forced to assimilate into American culture, eventually losing track of their own culture as time passes. This cultural disconnect directly impacts their youth as they grow up feeling different than others in their cultural communities. This throughline of experiences creates similarities and differences in the way disconnect exists between generations. Someone who is first generation experiences cultural disconnect differently than someone who is fourth or those who are mixed or adopted. Depending on how much one has been exposed to the narratives and stories of their culture affects how connected they feel to their culture. Each experience is different, depending on who you are. And while all experiences may seem similar, each one is unique in its own way.

First-generation (adj.): denoting the first of a generation to become a citizen in a new country, or the first of a generation to be born in a country of parents who had immigrated (Oxford Languages). As first generation Filipinos, seniors Carlo Lesaca and Adreal Manansala from Garfield High School share with us their stories. Lesaca describes cultural connection as embracing one's culture, and all the aspects of one's culture, including the language and the food. Manansala agrees, stating that cultural connection means "being able to embrace that side of you." Explaining that despite being full Filipino, he "didn't really know much about [his] Filipino side," as he grew up in a predominantly white community in the United States. Similar to mainstream narratives of Asian-American experiences, Manansala "felt pretty disconnected" specifically due to public experiences with food. He remembers he "felt scared when my friends saw me whip out the adobo during lunch. It was like, oh, what is that?" Nowadays, he's reached a point of tentative equilibrium where he's "...able to learn through others, as well [as] connecting with others who share the same culture as me. And accepting that fact absolutely. But also, part of me is American because I have been raised here for so long." Lesaca states that he connects more to his Filipino culture than his American identity. When asked about what side he identifies with more, he answered that his parents live "like [they're] in the Philippines." As an example, he notes the extreme emphasis his family makes on saving water. Although he isn't against the practice, it is a notable experience that distances his at-home-life from others his age

here in the U.S. Manansala agrees, “I guess I’m more comfortable expressing my Filipino side because that’s what I’ve grown up with,” explaining that his family has Christmas decorations up in September because Christmas starts on September 1st in the Philippines. They now both embrace both sides of their culture, as Manasala puts it, he indulges his “American side in the way that [he] lives”. Lesaca builds on that his “parents have those traditional Filipino values”, so he wants to “stay true” while “not assimilating too much”. To be able to find the balance between each culture so that they feel connected to both while not assimilating too much to one of them. Through “clubs and speaking the language” Lesaca says that he is now learning to embrace both sides of his identity. “I’m so proud of my culture now, you know, like I’m not scared about it anymore.” Lesaca and Manansala decided to start the Filipino Student Association (FSA) at Garfield High School in Seattle, WA. Lesaca explains, “One was the reason I already said, I felt more connected to my culture. Also, when we went to APISU (Asian Pacific Islander Student Union) events my sophomore year, there was no Filipino club.” FSA creates a safe community where one is able to share, learn, connect, embrace, and celebrate their Filipino culture. With FSA, Manasala and Lesaca show their community that they can and should celebrate and embrace both sides of their culture. To be able to teach others that they too can find the balance and stay connected to both sides of one's identity.

A photo of most of FSA’s officer team and a KSA officer from the Winter Potluck 12.12.23, Photo Credits: Hamin Chang

Second Generation (adj.): denoting the offspring of parents who immigrated to a particular country (Oxford Languages). Tia Lam, a senior at Garfield High School, is a second generation Chinese American as both her parents immigrated to the U.S. for college. Lam’s personal definition of cultural connection is to “understand how your parents or ancestors grew up at home” and with that information “apply that to your own culture” or self being. Being a child of first generation parents, Lam feels like she has had “less opportunities'' than “people who have had parents who grew up here and know a lot more about American culture” whereas she felt as if she wasn't “given as much guidance”. Her “parents' perspective is way different from [hers]'' as they’re a lot more open minded and “kind of brush off racism'' while Lam on the other side is “more vocal and against it”. Though she identifies with being a Chinese American, she feels “very Americanized” and not “associated with mainland Chinese people ''. Lam expands stating that she felt like her “parents also assimilated when they came here” as they came here for college and tried to fit in more with the Western stereotypes so they “aren’t like typical first generation Chinese parents”. Lam says that she too assimilated into Western culture as she “used to speak Cantonese, but now no longer speaks it,” because she “felt like [she] had to assimilate to Western culture and just speak English” as a child. With this, when Lam was younger she decided to just speak English at home as well. With her parents being able to communicate in English or Cantonese, it made it too easy to make the transition. Reflecting back, Lam says that losing the aspect of being able to speak her parents native language has made it so that she feels disconnected from their culture. She stated that in the future, she wants to “go back to Hong Kong or somewhere that does speak Cantonese more regularly so that [she] could reconnect parts of [her] identity”. But currently, Lam has found ways to try and stay connected to her culture. Through Asian Pacific Islander Student Union (APISU) and Chinese Student Association (CSA) she is able to “speak with

Garfield High School APISU Officers after hosting a Winter Potluck 12.12.23; Photo Credits: Hamin Chang

[her] parents on how they grew up in Hong Kong" and does "celebrations like the Dragon Boat Festival" with her family. Adding on, she says that "food is a huge thing that connects [her] with [her] culture" referencing moments where her Mom would make her family dumplings for special days.

Generation (n.): a body of living beings constituting a single step in the line of descent from an ancestor (Merriam-Webster). My brother and I are four, five, and six "steps" away from our ancestors who immigrated to America, thus making us fourth, fifth, and sixth generation Asian American. As Asian Americans with far connections from these ancestors, I too have directly experienced a disconnect to my culture. I'm a junior at Garfield High School of Japanese and Chinese descent; three-quarters Japanese and a quarter Chinese. On my Japanese side I'm fourth and fifth generation while on my Chinese side I'm sixth. I've always felt more connected to my Japanese side than my Chinese side. This may be due to me being a couple generations closer on that side, being more Japanese bloodwise, or having a Japanese last name. When I joined a club at Garfield, I decided to join and be more involved with the Japanese Student Association (JSA) over the Chinese Student Association (CSA). Why is this? Honestly, I'm still trying to figure it out myself. Why did my instincts bring me towards my Japanese side over my Chinese side? Lately after realizing this, I've become more self aware and have been trying my best to celebrate and learn more about my Chinese side while still maintaining connection with my Japanese side. My personal definition of cultural connection would be to be able to celebrate your culture. To know about important events and connect to your culture. Culture makes you unique; it makes you, you. My brother and I have greatly been affected by disconnection as not only are we Mixed (Japanese and Chinese) but we are also many generations away from our ancestors who lived in Japan and China. We were brought up in a Western culture, and didn't have many opportunities to learn and connect with our cultural groups. I never was part of any Japanese or Chinese cultural group growing up, and didn't have any Japanese friends until I joined the Japanese Student Association at Garfield. My family has always done a bit of cooking traditional Japanese and Chinese food and celebrating cultural holidays such as Lunar New Year, but I've always had the longing to learn even more about my culture. I never had many opportunities to know about my Japanese and Chinese culture as we never practiced it much in my family as we are so many generations away from them. As generations go on, less gets passed down about our culture and thus, the more disconnected one would feel towards that side of their identity. I sometimes wish we had joined a Japanese or Chinese community as a child so I would have been able to learn and connect more with my cultures. Through APISU, JSA, and other cultural groups at and outside of school, I am able to connect, learn, and have fun with my culture; to experience the cultural connection that I was missing from the beginning of my life. Through JSA, I am able to learn about my Japanese culture, talk to people who share the same culture, and make new everlasting friends. Every now and then I stop into CSA to learn and talk to others like me, as there are people who also feel disconnected from their culture. Together we are learning and growing, helping each other form connections and bonds with our cultures that we didn't experience when we were younger.

Mixed-race (adj.): (of a person) having parents of ancestors of different racial or ethnic backgrounds (Oxford Languages). Senior Christopher Bernard, who identifies as a mixed European Chinese American, expands on my ideas. He defines cultural connection as "a lot of things", it's not only the language but it's also the food, clothing, and more. When asked about societal norms surrounding race, Bernard explains that "being multicultural is an advantage" in our society, especially as a Wasian (White and Asian.) Though he may not appear White, having a "White name" like Christopher Bernard has an upper hand; "if you read it, you're going to assume I'm a white male" he states. The norms today surrounding racism and discrimination give POC an unfair disadvantage to those who are White in our society. With the prevalence of identity based discrimination, Bernard's White name provides him with an advantage over others to escape some of the racism towards POC. Although having a "White name" comes with its advantages, Bernard wishes that he connected to his Chinese half more. He explains that he's third generation on his Chinese side and that his "grandparents on [his] mom's side immigrated here" but even though he's half Chinese, he "doesn't participate in any Chinese cultural things besides Chinese Student Association (CSA)" which he just joined recently. Surrounded by western culture, Bernard states that he wishes "school would cover anything in Asia" so that he would be able to learn more about his culture through school. Unfortunately, schooling is still very euro-centric, especially in high school courses. Throughout my years of schooling, each history class I sat through, I can only recall one or two units where we talked about Asia or Asian culture. Most of the time, these units were downplayed or just covering the tip of the iceberg. We're in the twenty-first century, so why aren't we learning about all of the diverse cultures of America? Bernard wishes that he would be able to learn more, understand, and connect to his grandparents because "as they get older, they forget English." Not being able to communicate with them makes it so that it's hard to learn their culture, especially because school does not teach it. But through the CSA community, he is able to get a taste of his culture and learn about his Chinese half. Yet it isn't enough as Bernard wishes he had more communities and opportunities to learn and better connect with. To be able to know his culture better so that he can have a connection with his Chinese half.

Adopted (adj.): (of a child) legally made the son or daughter of someone other than a biological parent (Merriam-Webster). Garfield senior Elizabeth Jensen, tells us her story, "I was abandoned on the doorstep of an orphanage in China, when I was six months old. And then three months later, I was adopted by my parent's family. They flew down and they had to stay there with me for about a month and a half I think while we went through all the customs. And then they just brought me back and I've lived in Seattle ever since then." With her parents being both white and her brother Black, Jensen "sees the privilege that [her] parents have", telling stories that she has seen "[her] brother get turned away at an ice cream truck because he was black" and at the airport they've gotten stopped multiple times when they were younger especially because "people there thought that [they] were being kidnapped."Jensen's personal definition of cultural connection is that it "can be as broad or as little as you want it to" and that it's hard to explain but it is "something you personally can feel." You can feel a connection through "even the smallest things like eating a certain dish, dressing a certain way". Jensen explains that she has grown up in a very white family while not having "the normal normal average family experience out in public together" and due to this throughout her childhood she never felt connected to her Chinese culture especially in elementary and middle school. Jenson explains that when she was younger her family tried to celebrate Chinese events like "Lunar New Years, Autumn Festival, the moon cakes and other stuff" but didn't truly understand

and experience her culture. Going into high school Jensen wanted to expand her scope and learn more about her culture. She explains that she achieved this by talking to people "in orchestra [because] a lot of people are Asian" and through getting to know them better she was able to "learn about their cultures and have that shared understanding and experience". Not only that but through clubs at Garfield Jenson is able to learn and embrace more of her culture. She explains that "there is a lot of variety and a lot of different clubs here that I've learned a lot from. Just visiting even for one session with my friends I learned a lot from them." These cultural clubs at Garfield provide a safe space for people to be able to connect, embrace, and learn about cultures. Not only through clubs but through her friends, Jenson is able to learn and connect with her culture describing that "they invite [her] over to their house" where she is able to learn and experience her culture more. Whenever she's with her friends or her cousins who are Asian, she feels a connection as she is able to relate more to her identity. Recently she has felt more comfortable with her identity but she reflects back saying that she was "in a very white elementary school, and then in middle school [she] was always trying to look like someone [she] wasn't". She would watch "tutorials of girls with blonde hair and blue eyes" trying to be someone she wasn't trying to fit in with Western culture. Jensen explains that she thinks that she "put [herself] into a more white person box because of [her] parents". But in the present, she explains that she is now "happy where [she is] right now because [she] feels like there is a lot more room to learn about it. She feels like there are "so many opportunities to learn from" and that she can go out there and "form that connection" if she wants to. Though adopted, Jensen has found ways to connect to her culture and find and embrace her true self. Through her friends, community, family, and support, she has found a balance between her cultures where she is able to experience cultural connection.

Each story is unique, but shows the direct impact that disconnect to culture has on adolescents. Through clubs at school and people that surround us, we are able to learn and share our culture with each other. Cultural disconnect is something that affects us Asian-Americans, no matter who you are. Hopefully, as time goes on, people in our nation will be able to find a balance between both cultures, being able to embrace all sides of our identities. But each story is different, from person to person.

So, here are two questions for your own reflection. What does cultural connection mean to you? How has disconnect affected your youth/adolescence and you as a person today?

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APISU members lining up for food at the Winter Potluck 12.12.23, Photo Credits: Hamin Chang

Awesome turnout for APISU Boba Social 10.4.23, Photo Credits: Sakura Lahnastein

A photo of most of CSA's officers at the Boba Social 10.4.23, Photo Credits: Sakura Lahnastein

Storybooks

BY ALLISON CHAN

One thing I loved about being a kid was all the books my mother would read to me. When sketching this piece's basic outline, I needed help using my imagination. I was trying to put myself in my younger self's shoes to see what I used to be interested in, but I found myself at a loss. This artwork represents a quiet place for everyone to use their imagination. As an American-born Burmese, I often found trouble looking for books about my identity in school libraries. Because of this, I'd have my mom tell me Burmese tales that helped me spark my imagination and connect me to my identity, culture, and who I aspired to be.


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