

Hello, my name is Ellie Zhang, and I want to talk about my experience of being asian.

I am from Tilden Middle School in Montgomery County. I have grown up in a wonderful area and I consider myself lucky compared to others. However, since I have learned about discrimination, hate/bias, racism, and malicious conduct, I have come to realize the flaws in our teachings.

Asians and Pacific Islanders are not treated the same as different races. Sure, everyone is human. The education from my county and the state-wide curriculum have taught me that much. But regarding racism, the hate that the AAPI receive is almost standardized at this point. Constant controversy about races like black and white is to be expected--but to what extent? What does the meaning behind "racism" hold if used to describe any and all bias nowadays? And, to the AAPI, what does it mean if real racism we receive is not considered "racism" at all?

I was in the seventh grade. In society, cliques are bound to form. For me, I was friends with other asians. We had just learned about ancient civilizations in Global Humanities, and my friends and I had a sudden thought. "We learn about the history of America, we learn about the enslaved peoples, we learn about Native Americans--we even learn about ancient tribes! When do we learn about our culture?" We didn't say anything because we assumed the time would come. We never will learn much in this curriculum.

It was May in the seventh grade. Not having my culture and heritage in our curriculum was not the worst outcome because I thought I still had my representation. Asian and Pacific Islander Month. This year would be no different, right? May is our month. Just like how women and black people have theirs--we have ours. Or so I believed. The announcements came on and... "This month we are celebrating Jewish-Americans!"

I don't hate any of these people. I like how we have representation through months. I like how every race is being talked about. I just wished that when ours came, it would've truly been *ours*.

Then it was social media. Memes made out of Chinese songs, *my* culture, were being spread like wildfire. Even now there are memes of Asians speaking with an accent. I admit, it was funny at first. At first. But then people who weren't *us* started imitating and mocking our countries. People my age were posting racist content like that. Never did I believe that people would so easily ignore racism when all they ever talk about is how "you're being racist towards me!"

Asian hate is very normalized now. This is the result of when children aren't educated properly on topics that can easily be turned into jokes. Adding AAPI to our curriculum shouldn't even be a bill; it should be a right. It should be a voice for all Asians and Pacific Islanders. It should be the representation for the thousands of years of traditions that my ancestors have cultivated. It should be something that proves we are humans too.