

The Little Girl With Indonesian Snacks

I grew up as an Indonesian child in Philly. My parents raised me the way any Indonesian parent would raise their child in an Indonesian household. I learned Bahasa Indonesia, I ate homemade Indonesian food, and I had Indonesian friends that went to my church. By the way I was living my life, I fully convinced myself I was 100% uniquely Indonesian, and I loved it. I went to a very diverse elementary school revolved around cultural treasures, so everything in my childhood made me take pride in my culture. This school had mostly Asian and more specifically Chinese students. I felt a sense of belonging because I'm Asian but I also felt different in a good way, because I was Indonesian. I was in Kindergarten when I had snack time everyday before nap time in my class. The rules of snacktime was no sharing ever because even though sharing is caring, sharing germs isn't caring. Of course as little Kindergarteners we shared our snacks because we were hungry little people and you would be considered mean if you didn't. I had a reputation and so did two other Indonesian girls in my class that we had to uphold. We always had little Indonesian snacks that were very popular in our Kindergarten class, and we would share with everybody. Now that I think about it, it was actually very disgusting how we would secretly pass a handful of these snacks, kid to kid, until it reached the person who asked for it, all the way at the other side of the room. Where do I purchase these snacks one might ask? Well lucky for me, I was also a Christian. I went to this small little Indonesain community church in Philly, and after church, me and my mom would walk to this Indonesian corner store called Pandawa. In this small lovely corner store lays a large variety of Indonesian snacks. The thing about this corner store that was crazy to me, was how everyone there knew each other and would just casually talk to one another like long time friends. It didn't matter who they were, she knew them. This was because Indonesians in South Philly were very friendly and accepting. They were all immigrants and being around people like them made them feel safe and at home. So yeah, my childhood as an Indonesian in Philly consisted of my reputation in my diverse elementary school, church, and Indonesian snacks. Both of my parents were born in Indonesia. My dad was born in Tobelo and my mom was born in Jakarta, and because of this information, I convinced myself that I was 100% Indonesian. One day, I was calling my grandparents from my dad's side in Indonesia. I called my grandma Embah and my grandpa Enkong. We started talking about our family trees when my grandma kept on mentioning all her relatives were Chinese. I was really puzzled because I expected her to have Indonesian roots. She told me she was 100% Chinese. I stopped for a moment. I laughed a little and said, "What? Embah, how am I Indonesain if you are 100% Chinese?" She laughed as she answers in Indonesain, "You're Enkong is also Chinese but only a little Indonesian." I was a little appalled, shocked, and confused. I couldn't get a hold of all the mixed feelings I felt. I felt worse when I found out my grandparents from my mom's side were also fully Chinese. This was when I realized I was more Chinese than Indonesian. At that moment, I felt betrayed, like I was living a lie. Why was I living like something that was barely a part of me. I felt so fake and out of place, I felt so stupid for taking so much pride in being Indonesian when I wasn't even genetically 25% Indonesian. I looked at myself in the mirror and I didn't know who was staring back. Now looking back, I don't know why I got so riled up about finding this out. I now understand that we are all a part of something, and even though that part is not a whole, it's just as special and important. It was the Indonesian snacks, the tight knit Indonesain Christian community, and the small little shop next

to my church that always made me feel nostalgic that made me the person that I am today. I've learned to love every part of myself, even the parts that felt foreign.