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Honors 499
*Asian Americans and Self-Identity
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My end product, my video, is something that indeed means a lot to me and is a project that I am proud of. As stated in my video, the thesis was a labour of love, for the issue is one in which I hold close to my heart as an Asian-American. I am glad that the Honors College provides opportunities such as this, for students.

At the beginning of my semester, I knew that I wanted to do a project that dealt with Asian-Americans, but I was unable to decide on which area to focus. I then decided to do a project that would show the struggles that Asian-Americans face in reaching a positive self-identity, because I too struggled with my identity. I began planning to do a paper, but throughout my struggle as an activist I have realized that many people have a false perception of Asian-Americans as a whole as being the "Model Minority", a group without problems. Thus, I decided to take on a more challenging project & create a video. It was especially challenging because prior to this project, I had never even run a video-camera. Nonetheless, I felt that my issue was one that I wanted others to learn about. I thought that the opportunity to see & hear how we are affected by racism, negative media portrayals, stereotypes, and how we were taught (or not taught at all) about our History in school would be much more effective.

I recall while growing up wanting so much to have blonde-hair and "big, blue, 'American' eyes", because everybody that I saw on T.V., in films, in magazines, and as "role-models" that were not evil, that were successful,
intelligent, and beautiful, possessed these physical characteristics. After all, to be a model, you must be tall and have long legs. Furthermore, when my school-classmates told me to, "Go back where I came from", called me slant-eyes, fucking "commy", and even told me about how their relatives, who had been in the Vietnam war hated me and all those other "Gooks", I further felt the need to be like them, to belong, and not to be single out or blamed because I was Asian. Also, growing up in Indiana, I did not have very many opportunities to refute what society and the media told me about "Other Asians", so until I returned to Korea I too believed some of those stereotypes about OTHER Asian-Americans. I was reluctant and uncomfortable with dating Asian-Americans, because I felt as if they were nerds and usually unattractive; after all that's what I grew up learning. None of my dolls were Asian, none of the stories (positive ones, anyway) were about Asians, my History text talked about the "Sneaky Japanese: and their "inscrutability", and the movies and Television portrayed Asian women as mysterious, submissive, erotic objects, and the men as kung-fu masters or computer nerds, and we always said "Aa-soo" or spoke broken English with a heavy accent. That's what influenced my identity while I grew up. Arriving at where I am today, a very positive, strong, and proud Asian-American who consistently challenges and confronts racism and stereotypes directed towards people of color, was not easy. However, I hope to make it easier for the younger generations of Asian-Americans.

Although this video is not specifically about me, my story is told along with other Asian-Americans. Furthermore, this video shows the great pride of being Asian and the powerful struggles against injustice in which Asian-Americans constantly face. Today, we are lumped together into one group, we are blamed such things as the trade imbalance (note that racists don't separate,
they group us all together), we are used as an example to tell other people of color that we have made it; after all we are THE model minority, and the list of stereotypes, scapegoating, and discrimination continues.

Overall, although society does not adequately show our diversity or the beauty in being Asian, I have tried to project that through my Honors project. I hope that if an Asian individual sees my video that he or she will appreciate the video within their own personal struggle, even if it makes them feel uncomfortable; if a person of color sees it, I hope that they can see the similarities in our fight against injustice; we are all in this together; and if an individual of European descent sees it, I hope that this video will make he or she realize all that they take for granted, simply because of their physical characteristics, and will never again ask or wonder, "What's the big deal?", because he or she will now know.
REFERENCES CITED


2. Interviews and Discussion, Ball State's Office of Multicultural Affairs:
   Cecilia Bordador Courtin Pugh
   Dr. Brenda Greene Randy Wozniak
   Keith Hackett
   Brian Kreider
   Mr. Pablo Pagan
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