

# Growing Up Asian in America

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The first person from my family to arrive in America was my mother. She came to California with her parents in the early 1970s when she was only a small child, when her family was fleeing from the Vietnam War. At first, they escaped to Thailand in a tiny, crowded boat. After living there for several years, they were finally granted permission to come to America as refugees.

It was difficult adapting to a life in a new country, where they could hardly speak the language and the environment was very different from their small village back home. My mother was raised in a one-room apartment with three other siblings in San Francisco above their humble, family-owned business selling roasted duck. Because of their poor English skills, they had trouble communicating with locals, and were always treated as foreigners by the natives. Every day when my mother arrived home from school, she would attend to her siblings, being the eldest daughter in the family. Her mother was often busy running the family business, so the responsibility of the children would often go to her. She had to feed them, change their diapers, and carry out household chores. It was a tough life.

Compared to the lives of my ancestors who first arrived in America, I am extremely blessed. Being born and raised in America with a white father and a Chinese mother, I have celebrated both American and Chinese traditions and customs. For the Chinese part, we celebrate Lunar New Year, Mooncake Festival, Dragon Boat Festival and Tomb Sweeping Day. For the American part, I celebrate Christmas, Thanksgiving and Easter. Both of these traditions are very different.

To conclude, life for my mother and grandparents are tough. They have taught me so much to really appreciate life, and never give up no matter how bad the situation is. They taught me to treat others with respect and always look out for my younger brother, as the saying goes blood is thicker than water.