

Personal Identity

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I have a question. Who am I? What do I look like to you? Maybe Japanese, or American, or maybe Mexican. Who knows? Every person has a different opinion about each other. That's because we all have different ideas, opinions, and minds. Every time I visit America, they consider me as Japanese. In Japan, they consider me as American. It seems really simple to answer the question, "Who am I?", but is it really? What truly defines who I am? This question has always been on my mind. When I started thinking about it, I found it to be very difficult to answer.

I was born and raised here, in Okinawa. My mom is Japanese, and my dad is American. I went to a Japanese school with my Japanese friends. My life was fantastic until I got into elementary school. One day, the boys in my classroom came up to me and said, "How come you can't speak English, even though you're a Half?" That was the first time I got offended by people calling me "half". I thought to myself, "I am not literally half American and half Japanese." That comment from my classmate made me realize I was different, and I felt weird. Everybody in the school knew I looked totally different from the others. I looked at everyone and just wished I looked like them. I was upset, and ashamed of myself. I did not like who I was. But then, it also gave me determination. I started to realize that this is my life. I could choose to take the easy way or I could choose to take the hard way. Am I really going to let those kids who called me "half" define who I am? No. I am going to let my family, my goals, my attainments, and my strength define who I truly am.

At that moment, something clicked in my mind. I decided I was going to learn English and make those kids regret that they'd said such things to me. I worked so hard to achieve what I have now. I studied English with kids who were much younger than me. I started from my ABCs when I was 10 years old, but when I got to junior high, I was able to speak high school level English. I was really proud and very confident of myself, and then I realized something that changed my whole life. Looks, nationality, religion, race, or gender are only a small part of your greater identity. What is important is that we all are individuals. Even though you have the same nationality or have the same religion, or even though you have exactly the same hairstyle as someone, you don't have everything that they have and they don't have everything you have. I don't have to be American. I don't have to be Japanese. I can be whatever I want. I am what I am. I am not afraid to be myself and show everyone who I am. I am the only one that decides what defines me. So, ask yourself, what defines you?