

JANE KIM SCHOLARSHIP FINALIST



JANE KIM

is a junior at Beaumont School in Cleveland Heights. She enjoys reading, making origami and watching Asian dramas. Jane plays flute and piano and is about to take up the harp. She is a member of the newspaper club, literary magazine, science club and social justice club. Jane dreams of becoming a Peace Corps volunteer in Africa and travel the world before becoming a doctor. She would like to attend Duke University or University of Chicago.

As I approached a bruised woman whose bandaged face trickled crimson blood, staining her white clothes, it took me a moment to recognize who this woman was. The disheveled appearance and undeniable terror that shone through her eyes contrasted with the strong and fearless mother I knew. This was the second time my mother was beaten and robbed by individuals who viewed her Asian minority race as permission to degrade and disrespect the strong native Korean character she held.

I began to recall the harsh slurs that were hurled at my parents, and soon at me. 'Go back home, chinks!' they yelled while shrieking with laughter. They mocked the broken English that my father used as I cowed my head in embarrassment. People slanted their eyes to mimic mine. They erased the small amount of pride I had for my culture by simply labeling my people "ugly chinks". Having parents who have received cultural insults over the last 15 years, I became so accustomed to the discriminatory comments and stereotypes toward my Asian culture that I began to believe them.

The blood shed by my mother provoked serious reflection on my part. Hadn't my family immigrated to America in hopes of equality and opportunities that no other country could claim to have? Why were we experiencing the hate and discrimination that we attempted to escape? Was 'equality' a term that merely represented the ideal rather than reality? Slowly, these questions turned into one simple question: how can I promote the appreciation of the Asian culture?

I began by joining the Korean American Association of Greater Cleveland and became a member of the Traditional Korean Fan Dancing team. We practiced weekly and performed with other Asian cultural dance groups at multiple citywide events and gatherings. Our goal was to educate others about the beauty and uniqueness of our Asian heritage, that there is much more to any race beyond typical stereotypes and color of skin. In the future, I plan to create a Multicultural Diversity and Awareness club at my school. I will spread awareness towards my peers concerning the cultural discrimination flourishing in our world, and plan community activities and rallies that will celebrate the diverse backgrounds and cultures that every person comes from. I also deeply hope to interact with elementary and middle-schoolers to assist them at an early age in recognizing the significance of their own heritage as well as the cultures of those around them.

My firsthand experiences have taught me that all races should be treated with equality and honor. Society shouldn't shun single groups from the community due to their lack of judgment and education. Nor should any person cower with embarrassment, as I once did, due to his/her race, but rather stand proud knowing where he/she comes from. Confucius once said, "To know what is right and not to do it is the worst cowardice." I refuse to cower any longer due to cultural discrimination, and will do my part in stopping the hate.

