

## **CET Taiwan, Spring 2024 | Anonymous**

**Privacy & Sharing:** "I am OK with CET sharing this piece in a public manner, but only if I can remain anonymous."

**Who are the intended audience(s) of your Perspective Piece?** "Students of color studying abroad in Asia, specifically Asian Americans."

\*\*\*

### **Being Asian American in Asia**

For most of my life, I have identified as both biracial and Asian American. My mother is Italian and my father is Chinese American. I grew accustomed to my biracial identity being one of the most prominent facets of my life. This was partially by choice. I am very proud of my heritage, but it is also something I cannot hide from the rest of the world. Some of my earliest lessons on race were through personal experiences, realizing that people perceived me in a certain way. I am not white, and in most contexts, I stand out based on this difference. In the US, my Asian identity comes first and American identity comes second, which is something many Asian Americans can relate to. This was something I struggled with, as I do not feel very connected to my Chinese side, yet it is still something that defines me—not always by choice.

When coming to Taiwan, I was expecting to have a different experience. I was no longer going to be a visible minority. For the first time in my life, I was surrounded by people who shared my ethnicity. On top of that, Taiwanese understanding of race is very different from the United States, as the country is quite homogenous. I wondered if my biracial identity would make me stand out, and if people would question where I am from (as they often do in the US).

I assumed that I would stand out as an American, but upon first glance most people thought I was Chinese. I noticed a stark contrast between my experience and those of my non-Asian peers. We were all foreigners, but I was afforded the privilege of blending in. Of course, I still got stares, but this was usually when I was speaking English or acting "American." There were many times when someone asked if I was from Taiwan, or I was told that I look Taiwanese/Chinese. Being Chinese became something that connected me to others, as opposed to something that made me different. I found that the roles had somewhat switched, and now my American identity came before my Asian identity.

I am incredibly grateful for my time in Taiwan. I feel so fortunate to have experienced Taiwan's rich culture and learn about its complex history. This trip taught me a lot about the world and myself. I found my worldview and self-identity challenged at times, but this has given me a newfound appreciation for who I am and where I come from.