

My Favorite Asian Arts and its Influence on Me

I am from “Hello yi-yi and hello sook-sook,” calling all my friends’ parents “auntie and uncle” to show respect and manners. I am from “Can I have number 14?” when it comes to ordering food. I am from pasta with bok-choy. I am from Sunday morning dim sum and McDonalds for afternoon chicken nuggets. I am from Sriracha hot sauce and ranch on pizza. I am from streets where the numbers of signs in Chinese rival those in English. Where I’m from is the perfect fusion of Asian American culture.

I was brought up in a community of clashing cultures. It might seem like I am Americanized, because I dress according to the American styles: jeans and a t-shirt or a dress for special events. Conversely, when Chinese New Year comes along, I wear the customary Chinese dress to parties. Or when I perform my Asian dances, I wear the conventional costume to tell a story. I am not embarrassed to wear these outfits and dance on stage because it merges with my “American” side to form my identity.

Chinese dancing helped me discover my identity. I started dancing pretty late; 8<sup>th</sup> grade to be exact. It came as a fun side activity to do but I really didn’t expect it to affect me so powerfully in four short years. With every new dance my teachers taught me, they would start by explaining the story and significance behind it. I have been an exuberant village girl giving thanks to the good harvest with drums, a pompous lady on the emperor’s court, a stealthy spider trying to overpower the guardian monkeys from the Chinese folktale, and even an aboriginal mountain girl performing a ceremonial rain dance. Each time, I take in a new persona

that is really just another aspect of my background. Dancing in these traditional Chinese styles with the significance behind it truly opened my eyes to the different components that form my character.

I see things with in a new perspective with dancing and my eyes are open to diversity. Instead of thinking of dancing solely as the provocative seduction or the hip hop that I see in the media, I think of dancing as different forms of expression. Chinese dance uses graceful and refined movements, usually with props, to convey a story or express the jubilation of an event. It tells a story that I otherwise would not have ever heard. I love stories and dancing is the greatest way to depict it. It shows me that there are many different ways to see one thing and has been channeled into my everyday life. When I am presented with a scenario or situation, it allows me to analyze all the different angles to help me reach my optimal judgment.

The key to self discovery comes hand in hand with my dancing. Every teenager struggles to define themselves and dancing made my struggle much easier. It is less difficult when I have a clear picture of my roots and my beginnings; it provides me with a strong foundation that I can build upon with the rest of my life. To me, self discovery is the key to a successful life. I can't go far in life and achieve my goals and aspirations without starting at step one: knowing who I am. I do not know my end result, but I know I have a strong foundation from my dancing and I can add a little more definition to it brick by brick.