

My grandfather on my dad's side was born and raised in Syria and helped run a farm with his parents and six siblings. He told me they would all have to sleep in the same room together on straw beds, and to go to school, he would have to walk five miles everyday. In 1958 at 20 years old, he immigrated to America to study at a college in Washington D.C.. He met my grandmother and eventually had two half-Syrian sons.

My grandfather on my mom's side was born in South Korea. My grandmother, on the other hand, was born in North Korea. Her father served as a high military official during the Korean War and eventually worked as a spy for South Korea against the North Korean government. Her family was deemed undesirable by the Russian government and they were going to be sent to concentration camps. Luckily, they were able to hide underground for a year before eventually escaping to South Korea with the help of her father. My mother often describes my great-grandmother as a badass, since she was the one who was able to get my grandmother and her siblings across the border. My grandparents immigrated to America in 1964 and had two Korean American daughters.

My parents met when they were both living in New York and when they married they ended up having two half Korean children who were also a quarter Syrian, and a quarter white. My sister and I grew up in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and eventually moved to Mountain View, California to spend the rest of our teenage years.

My race is something I don't often think about. But when I fill out surveys and applications, I have to ask myself if I'm checking the "correct" boxes. I feel I have to determine whether or not my personality, my character traits, and my socioeconomic status affects my racial identity more than my existing heritage.

The first box says "Korean." I check that box. The second box says "White (including Middle Eastern)." I check that box as well. But before moving on to the rest of the survey, I can't help and stop to ask myself questions. Am I checking that box just because I'm white? Or am I checking it because I'm white and I'm Middle Eastern? *Am* I Middle Eastern? I technically as white as I am Syrian, but I don't *look* Middle Eastern, so is it okay with me to identify with that group for this simple question?

I do not call myself Middle Eastern, I do not call myself Asian American, and I don't call myself both. Despite knowing and resonating with the history of the different sides of my family, what has resulted from those family trees connecting is a boy whose racial makeup is mixed in a blender. Because of this, I'm not able to give a one-word answer that encompasses my entire racial makeup.

I'm Korean, white, and a quarter Syrian. While others often label me with the endearing term, "wasian," I can't help but bar it from representing me. Despite not having any identifiable features that would accompany the word "Syrian" or "Middle Eastern," I refuse to deny any part of my cultural heritage that makes me who I am.