

## Different in Many Ways

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There are many different types of people, there are white people, black people, yellow people, red people, mixed people like me, and as far as I know I don't think there are purple people.

Japanese people use the word half to describe racially mixed people. However nowadays some people think it's a discriminative word because it sounds like you are only worth one half of something. One of my friends asked me 'is half a discriminating word?' I didn't know what to say because I have been called half my whole life and the ways others treated me were understandable. To me, being recognized as a half, a double, a mixed kid, all felt the same. Then she asked me 'Do you feel bad when people call you that?' I said '...yes'.

I've been living a mixed kid's life. And one thing about being a mixed kid is that you get the same questions constantly. For example, 'Are you a mixed kid?' 'yes'. 'Where are your parents from?' 'Dad's from Japan, mom's from Turkey'. 'Where were you born?' 'Japan'. 'Where were you raised?' 'Same, Japan.' 'What languages can you speak?' 'I can speak Japanese, Turkish and English.' 'Oh, wow...' And then they start asking me about certain words. 'Hey, how do you say 'thank you' in Turkish?' 'Oh, 'Teşekkür ederim'. 'Wait, what? Say that again!' 'Teşekkür ederim.' 'Tesheedem, what?' 'Teşekkür ederim.' 'What a long word to say thank you.' Yeah, everybody reacts like that'. 'How do you write Turkish?' I spend a lot of time explaining, just for someone else to come and ask, "What are you talking about?" And I start the explanation again from the beginning. Also the reactions I get in Turkey are not much different.' 'Hey, how do you say thank you in Japanese?' 'Oh, Arigatou'. 'What did you say?' 'Arikado'? 'No, it's arigatou'. And you can't even believe what they told me the next day. 'Hey Selin, Avocado!' '!' Arigatou, arikado, avocado.

Some people tell me they wish they were a mixed kid like me, because they think they will be able to speak different languages too, or go to other

countries, though it's not true. To me it is not all cool or good like some people seem to think, in fact many mixed kids aren't always comfortable with their identities. The biggest problem is our appearances. There are some of my mixed friends who couldn't even go to Japanese schools, because when they did they were constantly being bullied and called 'foreigner'. There are also mixed kids who have lived their whole life in Japan and can only speak Japanese, so they feel like a Japanese person. They are still regarded as a foreigner because of their looks.

There are also mixed kids like me looking like both, when I'm in Japan I look like a foreigner and when I'm in Turkey I look like Japanese. I used to be called foreigner a few times when I was in elementary school, I was also called Japon, or Japanese, in Turkey. But I didn't take it that seriously. However, for many kids like me, at a young age to go through something like this, it's easy to think, 'they don't accept me here. They don't accept me there. I hate being a mixed kid because nobody accepts me anywhere'. Even though I didn't worry a lot what people called me, I still get a bit anxious when I think, what if they don't treat me like they treat other people? Even if they don't say it out loud, what if they look at me differently?

There are times when my abilities are only seen as result of my background. Like when I do well at arm wrestling or running, people say it's because I'm half. I do get mad when they tell me, 'Well she's Japanese so she must be strong'. Or, 'She's Japanese, so she can play violin'. I wish I could respond saying that 'I was the one who was practicing the violin for many years, it's not because I'm Japanese'. But I don't.

Well, not everything is frustrating. There was a time in Turkey when I was asked how to say stupid in Japanese, and I just said mizu. It was fun to watch them shouting to each other saying mizu! mizu!

There are many different types of people in the world, there are white people, black people, yellow people, red people, mixed people, people with different personalities, talents, thoughts, people who speak different languages, people with different disabilities, people with different friends, many, many kinds of people. Difference makes our lives more fun and interesting. Difference can make others think differently.

Because I'm different, people who I never met had a chance to ask me, 'Are you a mixed kid?' And that question made many of my friends today. So I just want to say, I'm proud to be a mixed kid, I'm glad that we all have differences, because it's ok to be different.