

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Esther Tseng: “Moving East”

Esther Tseng · Wednesday, April 15th, 2020

I moved west to head towards my east

Born and raised in the land of cheese

The land of milk, beer and cheddar

Cold weather

And colorful trees

with gold, ruby autumn leaves

Last fall, I went back to where I came from,

Drove in with my brother

Wanted to remember how it felt like to be the other

Never forget those small town values

Be kind to your neighbor, no matter what their use, to you

We weren't white, but we were white collar in a sea of blue

My city employed by Miller Beer, Harley Davidson

and the Brew Crew

I am yellow. I am different.

To everyone, I am Chinese, Japanese,

and have dirty knees

I do what is prescribed

I play the piano, I play the violin, I skate on ice

I was born in the Midwest

wishing I was white

Needed to move east towards my inner peace on the

open Coast

I needed mountains, beach and snow

not just slush on the flat open road

And then I'm in Westwood, with my fellow brethren

Asian American,

but I had assimilated to make myself unlike them

Believing the lie of the model minority, good over bad immigrant,

Yes, I speak English well

and with no accent
 I'm not ignorant
 I'm embarrassed of my parents and their being immigrants

That's why I moved west to move east
 Towards my roots, to feel complete
 But it wasn't immediate relief

Asians on this side of America did not greet me with
 ease
 They called me whitewashed, I was Midwestern nice
 A façade masking layers of inner strife

Expecting a melting pot, I got a salad bowl
 Walking into a city bursting with racial harmony was a naive goal
 Self segregation by students aligning along color lines
 Opened up my eyes, struck down the lie that is being colorblind

So started my reclamation
 Of the journey over the destination, my reeducation
 Gaining historical knowledge
 in ethnic studies courses in college
 Meeting humans of different races
 learning in third spaces

Experiencing a wide range of cuisines
 Made all my fears go unseen
 Tapioca pearls in milk tea, doro wot over injera, green
 curry mussels in coconut soup

Pineapple slices on tacos al pastor, abalone in my jook
 Yakitori on Sawtelle, kebab on Brand
 Biryani in Artesia, Michelin starred chef on Grand

I am just another transplant in Los Angeles
 Twenty-three years I've been down for this
 Thinking I'd leave, but transience gave way to
 permanence
 Los Angeles is acceptance, deceptiveness and
 indifference
 I love that light shines through the cracks in those
 sentiments

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