

Lifting Up Asian American and Pacific Islander Staff Voices



Meridith Aki

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"I grew up in Berkeley, and attended Berkeley public schools: Thousand Oaks, Columbus (now Rosa Parks), King Jr. High, and Berkeley High. My mother immigrated to the US from Japan when she was 11 years old. She attended Lincoln (now Malcolm X).

"Growing up, I was very aware of my Japanese heritage because I spent most of my childhood with my Bachan and Jichan (grandma and grandpa). They took care of me before and after school. Neither of them speak English, so I spoke "Janglish" with them. They spoke to me in Japanese, and I would respond in a mix of English and Japanese.

"I can now see how much the normalization of whiteness influenced my sense of self growing up. I now know that whiteness and the normalization of white racial identity have created a culture where nonwhite people are seen as inferior or abnormal."