

When I was in high school, I was bullied. Now I wasn't bullied by the beefy jocks or the preppy cheerleaders--okay, fine, maybe I *was* bullied by those guys, but I was *also* bullied by my guidance counselor. After seeing glowing STEM scores on my standardized tests, she decided to put me in all of the advanced STEM classes, despite my protests. She ignored me, and then had the audacity to wonder out loud why "someone like me" would later stagnate in classes like *this*. And you know, somehow, I *feel* like she wasn't talking about my test scores. Surprise! It's *racism*, Sharon. According to NBC of August 22, 2017, the image of the "studious Asian American" is rooted in the model minority stereotype. Since the 1950s, this stereotype has been glorifying Asian Americans as naturally studious and law-abiding citizens. But Shayla! You shriek. That's *positive* racism! Oh, shut up, you oxymoron. And take this article from the Atlantic of June 6, 2017, stating that, "The 'model minority' stereotype is often used as 'proof' that racial labels can be flattering". But in reality, this stereotype results in subtle--but devastating--consequences, not just for Asian Americans, but other minorities. **And because the Washington Post of January 12, 2018 shows that even President Trump, during his "shithole countries" debacle, was, "open to more immigrants from Asian countries because he felt that they [would] help the United States economically." - it's imperative we dissolve this Modern Minority myth.** So, problems, causes, and solutions--because I *can't* do math. And I'll be damned before I let someone else convince me otherwise.

**Problems! There are (counting joke) two. Minority rifts and psychological distress.**

**First, According to NPR of April 19, 2017, since the end of World War II, white people have used Asian Americans and their "perceived collective success" as a racial wedge. This results in minimizing the important role racism plays in the struggles of other minority groups,**

especially black Americans. Dr. Karthick Ramakrishnan furthers this by illustrating the comparison between blacks and Asian Americans stating. “Instead of complaining and protesting, why can’t [African Americans] succeed in the same way?” And hopefully I don’t have to be the one to tell you this, but that’s like... kind of racist. Urban Wire of May 3, 2017, reveals why it might be understandable to have that mindset: on average, the median education level of Asian Americans is higher than that of a non-Asian American. But these are general statistics that do not take into account individual countries of origin, whereupon things vary substantially: for example, according to the previously-cited Atlantic, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean Americans have made inroads into white-collar professions, but Laotian, Cambodian, and Filipino Americans, such as ya girl, remain overrepresented in lower-wage jobs like salon owner, nail technician, manicurist, and pedic- those are all the same thing.

Second, this false narrative causes serious Asian mental distress, especially when we don’t conform to it. The previously-mentioned NBC article tells the story of Shannen Kim, who, after getting good grades her whole life, got to Harvard and promptly received the D. Oh God, no, not that kind of D, a D on her first midterm. To be fair, it was pretty hard. Kim noted that it was like an attack on her identity. And no, not the fun kind where someone uses your credit card to buy a TV... *Shayla Cabalan of Mobile, Alabama. They don’t even let my kind in Alabama.* (audience react) *Can you prove it? Case Closed.* Furthermore, a 2012 mental health study revealed Asian Americans tend to not seek professional help for their mental issues. Why? Nkauj Iab Yang, the director of California policy and programs for the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center, explains: Growing up, teachers naturally expected her to do well *because* she was Asian, but Yang actually needed tutoring. Even as her grades and mental health deteriorated, Yang did

not seek help, because, quote, “when you feel like you’re *supposed* to be performing well, you feel like you shouldn’t need help at all”. Which I assume are the words Trump makes Melania whisper in his ear... during coitus. All that spray tan on her nice white suit.

Like the protein choices at a mall “asian food” counter, our Causes are two: chicken or beef - NO - History and Perpetuity.

So history. Brown University economist Nathaniel Hilger found that sudden strides in Asian American success between 1940 and 1970 was largely due to the fact that white people suddenly became less racist towards us. But why? According to the Washington Post of November 2016, it’s because we were rebranded. We’re like KFC: constantly trying to be hip and cool, but still completely dominated by the white man. In the early twentieth century, we were portrayed as threatening, #InternmentCampsMuch but by the end of the 1950s, we weren’t. #CrabRangoonMuch. So what changed? Well, suddenly, the upstanding Asian American narrative became convenient. In the context of the Cold War, historian Ellen Wu, in her book “The Color of Success”, writes that, “Embracing Asian Americans provided a means for the US to proclaim itself a racial democracy”. It’s like when your friend Becky claims she knows everything there is to know about Chinese culture just because she ate kung pao chicken that one time. Like, come on, get outta here witcha kung pout Becky, you know it’s true.

Second, the media just LOVES an Asian scientist. A 2011 study done by Texas A&M University explored the negative outcomes through the idea of cultivation theory, and before you say anything, no, I don’t mean the cultivation of rice. Rather, cultivation theory notes that continued exposure to television messages can have long-lasting cumulative effects on audiences. What doesn’t help is not only a lack of good Asian representation, but also systematic

stereotyping. A multi-university study released in September 2017 analyzed 242 TV shows and 2,052 series regulars.. They found that 155 out of the 242 shows did not have Asian regulars. Further, the shows with Asian characters fell into one of five stereotypes, and guess what one of the most popular stereotypes was. Come on guys, take a wild guess. Okay, yes, nail technician is one. But also: That's right, the model minority. Based on cultivation theory, this lack of accurate representation in mainstream media can perpetuate the idea that *all* Asian Americans fall into the model minority stereotype. Which simply isn't true. These glasses aren't even real, I just wear them to look more Asian.

Now, solutions! There are two. First, awareness! And second, engagement. But first, awareness.. Perpetuate the idea that we are more than just a stereotype. This can be something simple. According to the New York Times of May 25, 2016, the hashtag *StarringJohnCho* began trending, which replaced popular white actors with John Cho on movie posters. It helped to raise awareness of the representation issue. Fun fact, John Cho popularized the term MILF. Which has nothing to do with this speech, I just thought you all should know. Seriously. Look it up on Wikipedia. It's literally the second sentence, mentioned *before* Star Trek.

#MILFSBeforeTrekkies, #Fem-MILF-ism. You can also support organizations like the Center for Asian American Media, which is dedicated to presenting stories that convey the diversity of Asian American experiences. You can help to support them by donating or volunteering at [www.caamedia.org](http://www.caamedia.org).

Second, engagement. Most of us are college students. Find out if your university has a student Asian group. Spoiler alert: they do. And if they don't... You're the student Asian group... what? See if you can join in on a few activities and expand your horizons. Even better,

you could sit in on a larger organization within your community. For me, there's the Philippine Cultural Community, which operates in my home state and hosts a variety of events every week. If you do your research, I'm sure you can find numerous diverse Asian groups in your community. And drag some friends along for the ride. Not only will this be a good time, but it will also allow an understanding that the term Asian American isn't just a huge block of people. **Most importantly, the Model Minority myth barely scratches the surface on the plethora of backward thinking that keeps minorities and people of color held in their current status. Be an advocate for all fights for progress: March with Black Lives Matter, learn more about DACA, call your Congress people and make your voice heard on behalf of all minorities. Think of this way. There's lots of different kinds of rice, - Some are white, some are brown, some are... long grain... but none of them are delicious if they don't get the attention to detail they need. #Deep.**

So today, we discussed the model minority stereotype and its problems, causes, and solutions. Listen, I graduated high school just fine, and I'm happy to say that I have finally--*finally*--put advanced math and science behind me. But if all those years of forced biology and math classes have taught me anything, it's that I can add up the sum of my parts - Asian and American - together any way I want. And it doesn't have to be model.