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Bridge 4 Rough Draft

**Malaysian Fever**

**Proposal**

I always get asked “Where are you from?”. I was born and raised in California but I know that wasn’t the answer they were looking for. Knowing that, I would say “My dad is from Malaysia and my mom is from Hong Kong.” I wouldn’t say I was Chinese or Malaysian, I would just tell them where my parents were from and they were usually satisfied with my answer. Growing up, I remember celebrating Chinese holidays like Chinese New Year and the Mid Autumn Festival but I never celebrated any Malaysian holidays. In my household, my parents spoke Cantonese and English to me but I grew up solely speaking English. As I grew into my questioning phase as a child, I asked my dad “How many languages can you speak?”. He would count them off with his fingers and by the end of his list, all of the fingers on his right hand were up. He could speak five languages when I could only speak one. From then on, I knew that I was missing part of my culture on and I felt incomplete.

In order to feel more complete, I had to go back and figure out how my family ended up in Malaysia. According to my dad, my grandfather moved to Malaysia to escape the Communist Party who had just risen in China. In the Revolution of 1949, Mao Zedong led his small communist party into a revolt against the Chinese government.[[1]](#footnote-0) Before the revolution, China’s communist party made several attempts to overthrow the government. One method was rallying up all the peasants and getting them to support their cause. With their shear size, they believed it would possible be able to take over. But the Chinese Communist Party at the time thought that the peasants were too backwards and the party turned to the working class in the cities instead. Another method was getting support from the Nationalist party in China and even aligned themselves with the USSR. The Nationalist party provided more people while the USSR provided weapons and training for the party. After these attempts, Mao led the Revolution of 1949 and he was able to gain control because of the war that was happening around them and across the globe. Because of the devastation caused by WWI and WWII, the Chinese were worn out and ready for different people to be in charge.[[2]](#footnote-1) Thus the Communist Party took power in China by promising to help China move forward. Although the Communist party was supported by many, some Chinese citizens were against the party to they emigrated to other countries to escape with the most popular destinations being in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Southeast Asian countries. After the communist revolution, over 100,000 Chinese immigrants moved to Southeast Asia.[[3]](#footnote-2) My grandfather was one of those immigrants who emigrated out of his home in the Guangdong Province to Malaysia where my dad would be born.

It wasn’t until recently that I had a desire to learn more about Malaysia and its culture. Recently my dad went on a trip to Malaysia for his high school reunion and he sent me pictures of all the food and places he visited. Today I pride myself on being Malaysian and being able to enjoy the smelliest fruit on earth, durian, but I still feel like there is a lot about Malaysia I have yet to experience. My sister has already begun her process through gradually learning Hakka which is a Chinese-Malay dialect.[[4]](#footnote-3) She only knows a few words but it’s more than me. I hope to learn a few phrases myself to save for a possible trip to Malaysia

The last time I went to Malaysia was when I was six. My dad took my sister and I to his hometown to see his family. I don’t remember the trip too clearly but there are a few glimpses that stand out. Malaysia is a tropical place with a lot of humidity. I remember it was so humid that my sister had to go to the hospital for a while because she was dehydrated. I know that my aunt owns a stationary store and I remember sitting on one of those tiny plastic children’s stools while drinking milo, a Malaysian malt drink, out of a plastic bag with a straw. I also have a memory of going to a temple with my dad and my sister. Outside of the temple were bushes with little red flowers and my dad taught me how to make bracelets and necklaces. And as an ending, I remember that when had I come home from that trip, I had forgotten my favorite stuffed rabbit at my dad’s old house and I would never see it again. Those are the few memories I have of Malaysia.

After my trip to Malaysia, which was over ten years ago, the closest I’ve been to Malaysia was during a trip my family went on to Singapore this summer. My siblings and I had been wanting to visit Malaysia and Singapore was something different for him so he thought it would be a good choice. We stayed in Singapore for a week and I was able to get a better sense of Malaysian culture. My dad was so excited to show me the cuisine and I got to try traditional Malaysian dishes that I’ve only heard of. We would go eat hawker food and buy things to eat from vendors along the street. My dad always talks about how fresh the fruit back in his hometown was and in Singapore, I tried some really fresh fruit that doesn’t compare to the fruit in the United States. This trip also sparked my interest in my Malaysian culture. Now I want to integrate the Malaysian culture my life more prominently.

I realize that it isn’t a choice to choose where your parents are from and where you were born but you can choose what culture you want to be a part of.

**Treatment**

The goal of the project is to bring awareness to the idea of someone missing a cultural identity and their desire to discover this lost part of themselves. The purpose of this documentary is to explore my Malaysian culture for myself and document my discoveries in order to share my findings. My intended audience is other people who feel are in the situation I am in concerning my Malaysian culturel. My intention it to have people watch the documentary and take my search as an example and go on their own journey to discovering a part of them they never knew.

The ideas in my proposal will be carried out in a five minute documentary that will be filmed and edited. In the beginning I want to introduce my goal for the project by bringing light to the idea of missing part of my cultural identity. In order to do that I will interview my friends and family who also feel like they have two separate identities or believe they are missing part of their identity. This will allow me to obtain more information about how others feel and behave according to their situation. I will arrange the footage of these interviews in the beginning of the documentary so that the audience will be more aware that there are other people who also feel like part of their identity is missing.

Then the documentary will go into a slideshow of images of my grandfather. Because I don’t have many pictures of my grandfather, I will draw pictures of him over the sceneric pictures my dad took of Malaysia and my pictures of Singapore on our trips. This way the viewer is able to place an image of my grandfather in the correct setting. During this slideshow, I will narrate the story of how my grandfather moved to Malaysia and I will mention a little bit of the historical aspects of the Communist party in order to create a timeline of when my grandfather’s move occured. In the middle of the documentary I will be documenting my process.

For the audio portion of the middle section, I want to have a phone call with my dad in which I ask him questions about Malaysia. I want to ask about what he hopes that I will gain from knowing my Malaysian heritage and what his opinions are about being Malaysian. After collecting the audio from the phone call with my dad, I will compose a sound piece that will be layered over the video of me going through my Malaysian learning process. The use of voice overs and music will be used to tie the piece together as well as give a constant focus for the audience to be engaged with. When I play the music, it will be really soft as to not distract from my voice recordings. The music will be soft and calming because I want the tone of the documentary to be a little relaxing. My hope is for the audience to be reflective while still engaging with the documentary. .

For the visual aspect of the middle section, I want to document myself learning more about Malaysian culture by learning the language as well as eating the food. I will find different restaurants in New York City that serves Malaysian cuisine and document myself trying the food. I also want to try cooking Malaysian dishes using recipes I get from my dad. I will buy the ingredients and try to cook at my dorm and then I will try the food to see how it tastes. I will also attempt to learn Malay or Hakka either online or by asking my dad. Throughout this process, I will document how I feel about the different Malaysian things that I try and reflect on how I felt after each activity. Then I will take footage of my experiences and compose a video including all the activities I did to become more aware of my Malaysian identity. I want to use the trip to Singapore that I took last summer and the information my dad tells me to spark my journey in learning about my Malaysian roots.

Then at the end I want to include video of me reflecting on how I thought the process went and whether I believe it was successful. By doing this I want to go full circle. My personal goal for this project is to learn more about Malaysia and its culture as well as how I personally fit in. Using the information I gather, I want to compile my experiences into a documentary that my intended audience will be able to watch in order to encourage them to embark on a journey of their own.

Bibliography

Hays, Jeffrey. “Daily Life in Mao’s China.” *FactsandDetails.com*, 2009,

<http://factsanddetails.com/china/cat2/sub5/entry-5525.html> (accessed November 15, 2018)

In these statements that Jeffrey Hays comprises, he collects information based on quotes by individuals living under Mao as well as facts taken from Chinese history to give the reader a sense of what it was like living in Communist China under Mao Zedong’s rule and influence. By adding in the quotes from different individuals, the reader can get a glimpse of someone’s actual experiences and thus get a sense of what it was like. By using facts such as different policies passed by the party, Hays helps us understand why Chinese individuals were living a certain way and we can compare this to the way we live to understand the differences. Hays divides up the daily life of individuals by different categories such as jobs, consumer goods, and wages so that we can compare these categories between our own life and those of the Chinese. By selecting specific quotes from individuals instead of the Communist Party, Hays is able to tell the reader the effects of the party’s policies on daily life.

Hays, Jeffrey. “Chinese in Southeast Asia.” *FactsandDetails.com*, 2012, <http://factsanddetails.com/asian/cat66/sub418/item2729.html> (accessed November 15, 2018)

In these statements by Jeffrey Hays on Chinese in Southeast Asia, Hays breaks up the information into categories which makes finding and learning information much easier. He first breaks it into sections about Chinese moving into the Southeast Asia region through immigration. Then he touches upon the different aspects of moving to a different country including assimilation, language, and communities. Then to be more specific, Hays lists statements about Chinese in Southeast Asia by the countries in Southeast Asia. This way it makes finding information about the Chinese in a certain country in the region much more efficiently. This is helpful to me because I only need the information on Chinese in Malaysia.

Mitter, Rana.“The Communist Revolution of 1949.” *The Historical Association*. Podcast audio, 2008[www.history.org.uk/student/categories/495/module/3374/podcast-series-modern-china/3390/the-communist-revolution-of-1949](http://www.history.org.uk/student/categories/495/module/3374/podcast-series-modern-china/3390/the-communist-revolution-of-1949).

In this podcast, Rana Mitter, a Professor of Oxford, talks about the rise of communism in China and the Communist Revolution of 1949. He starts by going over the beginnings of the Communist party in China and how their previous attempts to make china communist failed. Mitter talks about how the Chinese used the Marxists theories and Soviet examples to form their own methods for bringing communist rule to China. He goes on to talk about how the Communist Party and Mao Zedong was finally able to take control because of the effect of war, mainly World War II. Through explanations of the process and results of actions made by the Chinese Communist Party in its early stages, Mitter is able to clearly describe how the Communist Party was able to take control and how they were able to last.

Skeldon, Ronald. “Migration from China.” *Epithelial Tissue*,

<http://www.iupui.edu/~anthkb/a104/china/chinamigration4.htm>

In this entry to the Journal of International Affairs, Ronald Skelton writes about the large migration occurrences of Chinese people in history through three main periods. By using the different periods, Skelton is able to organize his writing so that readers can think about the migrations occuring on a timeline. He also states the main reasons for the Chinese migrating in each period and the location in which the Chinese moved to so that we can see how historical events such as the rise of the communist party and the Gold rush affected the migrations. Skeldon then goes on to talk about the different types of immigrants and they reasons for moving such as settling in a different country or studying in a different country.

1. Rana Mitter, *The Communist Revolution of 1949,* podcast audio, 2008, <https://www.history.org.uk/student/categories/495/module/3374/podcast-series-modern-china/3390/the-communist-revolution-of-1949> [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Mitter “The Communist Revolution of 1949” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Ronald Skeldon “Migration from China” *Journal of International Affairs,* <http://www.iupui.edu/~anthkb/a104/china/chinamigration4.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. Jeffrey Hays “Chinese in Southeast Asia” *Factsanddetails.com,* 2012, <http://factsanddetails.com/asian/cat66/sub418/item2729.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)