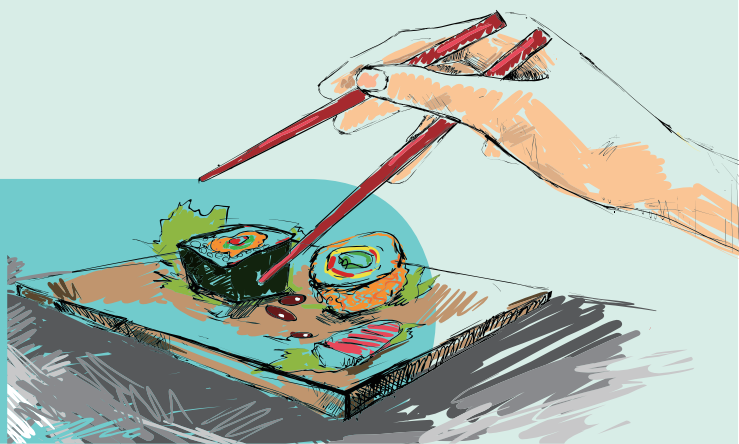


# How I Overcame my Outsider Complex

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To a member of an immigrant family, living can be quite a challenge. He may have difficulty adapting himself to the local traditions and cultures.

A Filipino in Macau, I used to have insecurities and doubts. When I was about the age of 8, I once went to my friend's house to play and do homework with her. At noon, my friend's family invited me to stay for lunch. However, the problem was that I had not learned to use the chopsticks properly at that time and I was very embarrassed when I asked for a spoon. I thus realized for the first time that I was different from my friends.

In school, I felt inferior to my schoolmates just because of my nationality. I remember asking my mother to try to adopt the local way of living as I was eager to be one of them. In fact, I gradually developed a fear of not being accepted as a citizen of Macau.

Fortunately, I have got very good friends. They are like my second family. No matter what I do or how silly I am, they are always there and accept me for who I am. They truly love and support me.

A few days ago, I invited some of my closest Chinese friends to join my 18th

birthday celebration. It was not just any ordinary celebration but a grand party to commemorate my entrance into adulthood.

I was very worried when I extended to them my invitation. What if they did not enjoy the way my family celebrated my 18th birthday? What if things started becoming awkward after the party just because they could not accept my culture, or worse still, they could not accept me?

All doubts vanished once the party started. I could see my friends really enjoying themselves. Although things seemed awkward at first, they had all the glee of young people let loose once the party was at its peak. I heaved a sigh of relief and joined them cheerfully. The feasting and merrymaking went on as if the night would never end.

Now, I realize that I am loved by my friends not because of what they want me to be, but because of what and who I am. I feel proud of my nationality and of being a bit different from my non-Filipino friends. My advice for those in the same boat is: "When in Rome, do what the Romans do" and, most importantly, embrace your nationality with pride.