

Dear Senator,

I unknowingly walked into and began participating in my first organized protest when I was 14 years old.

They held an American flag that belonged to me just as much as it belonged to them against the "Love Trumps Hate" sign I stood behind, as if the two were contradictory symbols. I wanted to ask them, my white, male peers that stood defensively with stars and stripes whether they thought that the concept of love was unAmerican.

It stings to think that there might be students in the hallways I pass every day that think my family and I, along with those who shared the same heritage, do not deserve to be here. When I see people stare at my grandparents for speaking too loudly in their mother tongues of Taiwanese and Mandarin when we go grocery shopping, I glare back, perhaps a defense mechanism for every time I hear, "This is America, speak English," muttered under a breath. I've always considered myself American first ("Where are you from?" "California." "No, where are you *really* from?" "Oh! Like where I was born?" "Yeah, like where are you *actually* from?" "Florida."), and when I am denied that identity, patriotism becomes a flag that I am ashamed to fly.

The protest ended with the lunch bell. I still wonder if the students on the other side still hold the same sentiments that they did that day as I still hold mine. I still stand in solidarity, a young Chinese woman, with women as everyone and her best friend attended the local Women's March, with my Muslim brothers and sisters as my World Geography teacher scrawled hotlines on the whiteboard for those with family detained at SFO, with those still struggling in Flint, Michigan and Standing Rock for the basic human right of clean water, with Black Lives Matter, because I know that they will stand with me.

And that, Senator, is what I implore you to do: to stand with the people you represent. The beginning of four years has already seen a rise in behavior that endangers minorities and immigrants. As this melting pot of a country continues to be stirred, the only thing I can ask is that you can become one to stand with the API community. It is more important now than ever to recognize that it is truly the solidarity within immigrants and minorities that make America great and what it is. The flag belongs to all of us, and it is time that we make sure everybody knows.