You Have to Live in Somebody Else’s Country to Understand

By Noy Chou

What is it like to be an outsider?

What is it like to sit in the class where everyone has blond hair and you have black hair?

What is it like when the teacher says, “Whoever wasn’t born here raise your hand.”

And you are the only one.

Then, when you raise your hand, everybody looks at you and makes fun of you.

You have to live in somebody else’s country to understand.

What is it like when the teacher treats you like you’ve been here all your life?

What is it like when the teacher speaks too fast and you are the only one who can’t understand what he or she is saying, and you try to tell him or her to slow down.

Then when you do, everybody says, “If you don’t understand, go to a lower class or get lost.”

You have to live in somebody else’s country to understand.

What is it like when you are an opposite?

When you wear the clothes of your country and they think you are crazy to wear these clothes and you think they are pretty.

You have to live in somebody else’s country to understand.

What is it like when you are always a loser?

What is it like when somebody bothers you when you do nothing to them?

You tell them to stop but they tell you that they didn’t do anything to you.

Then, when they keep doing it until you can’t stand it any longer, you go up to the teacher and tell him or her to tell them to stop bothering you.
They say that they didn’t do anything to bother you.

Then the teacher asks the person sitting next to you.
He says, “Yes, she didn’t do anything to her” and you have no witness to turn to.
So the teacher thinks you are a liar.
You have to live in somebody else’s country to understand.

What is it like when you try to talk and you don’t pronounce the words right?
They don’t understand you.
They laugh at you but you don’t know that they are laughing at you, and you start to laugh with them.
They say, “Are you crazy, laughing at yourself? Go get lost, girl.”
You have to live in somebody else’s country without a language to understand.

What is it like when you walk in the street and everybody turns around to look at you and you don’t know that they are looking at you?
Then, when you find out, you want to hide your face but you don’t know where to hide because they are everywhere.
You have to live in somebody else’s country to feel it.