

# Glenn



*I feel almost embarrassed to complain, because we're the 'model' immigrant. The stereotypes about us are to our advantage. We blend right in, and that's your path to success. But, it's like thinking and feeling you belong to something and finding out everyone was playing a joke on you. I struggle with it.*

My name is Glenn. Gosh, where do I begin? I am married. That's a huge part of my identity. What else? I work a lot, and I've always worked a lot because I wanted our family to be, you know, happy, successful, and provided for. I'm a Christian. I'm also very progressive. I don't know if those two things are contradictory, but it's part of who I am.

There's another contradiction. My father was a World War II baby from the Philippines. That's why I have a Western European name and why I look Asian. I did a DNA test and found out that I'm also the descendant of an American Revolutionary War veteran – one of the founders of this country! But I was also an illegal immigrant, officially, even though I feel very strongly that being American is my birthright because of my grandfather.

I remember the day I was naturalized as a U.S. citizen and the people there were like, "Wave the flag!" And I was like, "I'm not your freakin' monkey. You wave your damn flag!" Excuse me. "This was mine to begin with, asshole!" Excuse me. I was a little bitter.

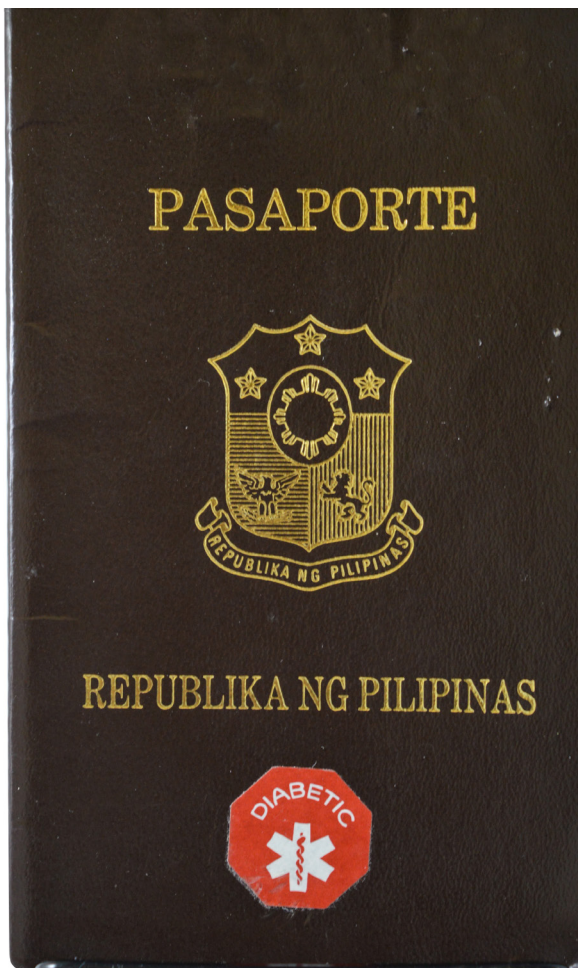
I was made for so many years to feel like a poser here. Every time there would be something patriotic going on, it made me feel guilty that I was here. And I think part of that also is what motivated me in life – I'm gonna belong! I'm gonna assimilate! – because of all these things.

Given my name, people make a lot of assumptions about who I am. The name on a resume has gotten me several interviews, sight unseen. And I've had business associates I may not have met physically who alter their behavior or attitudes when they meet me in person and see that I am Asian.

At a conference once, I even literally got told that the Mitsubishi meeting was next door. I laughed along with them! I thought it was funny at the time. I feel like I've been programmed to believe these kinds of comments are acceptable, and that they don't hurt me because a lot of the stereotypes about Asians are to my benefit.

These weren't horrific, traumatic experiences compared to what a lot of people have gone through. But for the most part I like to think, you know, that I'm just part of the crowd. I got this diploma, and then some prestige, and I have a sense of belonging among intelligent people. There is a sense of betrayal when I experience these comments and looks. They made me realize that, after all is said and done, you're just another chink. You know? You're just another dog-eating chink.

Sometimes I feel trapped. I subscribed to the idea that I was a model, and I fit in, and this was the meaning of



Glenn's Pilipino passport, representing his birth nationality, though American citizenship was also his birthright.



"We're expected to do well academically. We're expected to be hard working professionals. We're expected to almost be emotionless. We're expected to succeed, and also at the same time to assimilate. We don't rock the boat, you know? We blend right in. And that's who we are. And that's who you're gonna be."

success. I just went along with it. And, you know, I strived for it. It's gotten me jobs. It's allowed me to have some financial stability in my life. But now I'm at the point where I'm saying, "What was the cost for that?" My peace, for one. To have someone just step up to you and say, "No you don't," and take away everything you've worked for, take away your dignity ... that's hard to swallow. It keeps me up at night.

My wife and I have been together since I was 17 years old. We were teenage parents, and I'm very proud of that. My wife is my rock; she's the closest friend I have. But because she is Hispanic, we have been made to feel not very welcomed in my family.

I used to force our kids to go to all of the family gatherings. No one would talk to my children. It wasn't a language barrier — we're Pilipino, we speak English! My grandmother never extended the offer to watch them when they were little. She watched all the grandkids except for my kids. When my son and daughter were in their teens, I decided to just sever all ties to my extended family. I was just thinking, you know, why am I forcing them to fit in where they don't? Why should they have to suffer the indignities of being rejected?

It's not just an American thing. Prejudice comes from all sides. And this feeling that I've done everything I was supposed to and I still don't belong, it's consuming a lot of my time, my energy, and my emotions these days. I'm just trying to make sense of this world, and I don't know how to reconcile everything. It drives me crazy, these two Christian nations — the U.S. and the Philippines — "under God." What God are you talking about when everyone's so hurtful and cruel? It baffles me.