

# A Scary Trip to a Grocery Store



Written by Shu-Chen Jenny Yen  
Illustrated by Jessica Lin

Hello! My name is Emily. I am 9 years old.

I live in California with my mom, dad, and sister, Mei Mei.

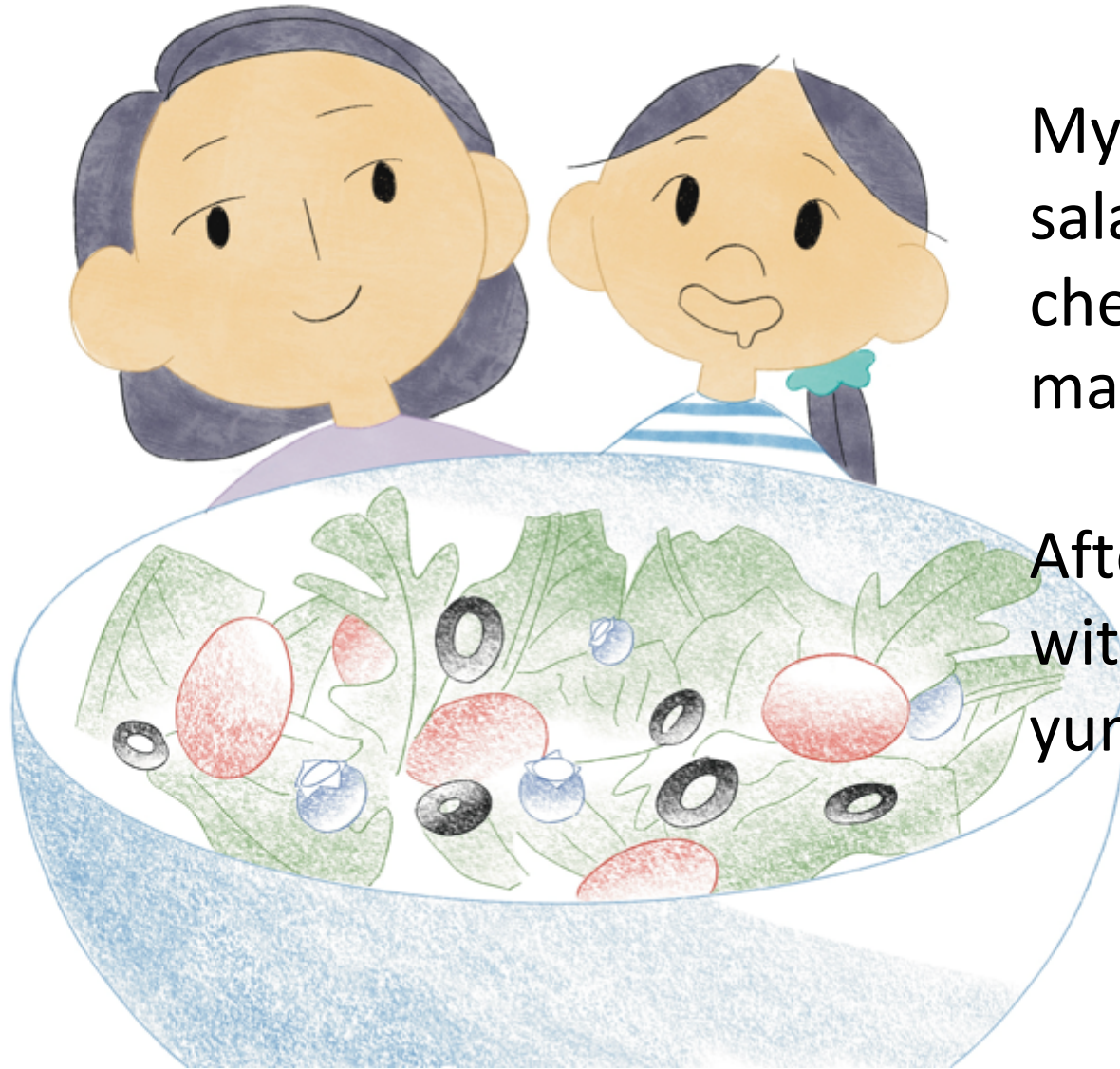
Mei Mei is 5 years old.



I LOVE doing gymnastics with Mei Mei! She copies every move I make!

Today, I am taking an online class and am acting like a monkey.  
Mei Mei is a monkey too.





I LOVE cooking with my mom.

My favorite dish is an all-American salad, because it has lettuce, olives, cherry tomatoes, blueberries, and many more of my favorite foods.

After mixing everything together with a homemade sauce, it tastes so yummy!



One time, we went to a grocery store to buy all the ingredients.

Mom needed to go to the restroom, so Mei Mei and I waited outside with our shopping cart.



We were playing Rock-Paper-Scissors and were having a good time.  
Every time Mei Mei won, she laughed loudly.





Suddenly, a man got close to us.  
He frowned his eyebrows.  
He looked angry.  
Then, he yelled at us,  
“You stupid Asians! You should go back  
to where you came from!”



Mei Mei started to cry. I was scared  
and didn't know what to do.

I pulled Mei Mei closer to me and felt  
her trembling.

I searched around and found a lady  
across the aisle, who was looking at us.





With a sad face, I made eye contact with her. Our eyes met, and she walked toward us.

She shouted back in a loud voice to the man, “Excuse me, sir! You shouldn’t talk to these girls like that. You are being a racist!”

The man looked angry, but he did not say anything and just walked away.



“Are you okay? Don’t listen to him. You belong here. He is being rude. Where is your parent?” The lady said to us.

Mom soon came back from the restroom, and she thanked the lady for speaking out and standing up for Mei Mei and me.



On the way home, Mei Mei asked, “Why did he yell at us? We didn’t do anything wrong!”

Mom replied, “You are right. You did nothing wrong. He was wrong to yell at you.

He might be upset about the coronavirus as it was discovered in China, so people might be angry toward Chinese people in general. He is being racist.”



“Some of the kids at my school say that people are mad at Asians because they caused the coronavirus.” I said.

Mom replied, “Coronavirus was first found in China, but being Chinese or Asian has nothing to do with whose fault it is or how the sickness is spread.

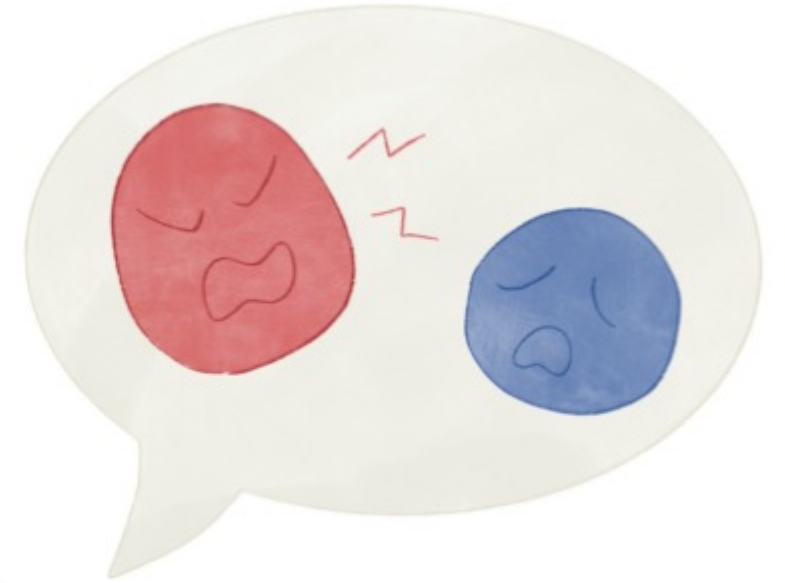
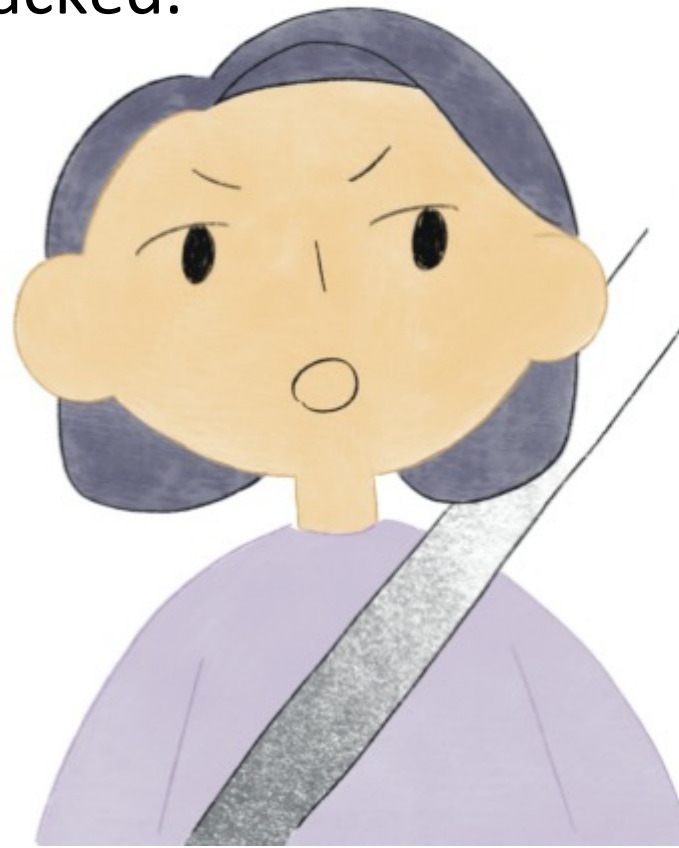
People are being unfair when they say Asians caused coronavirus.”





Mom continued, “Right now a lot of Asian people are being treated unfairly or even getting hurt by people who think that coronavirus is their fault.

It makes me sad and angry that Asian people are being attacked.”



Mei Mei asked, “What does that word mean-- Asian? That man called us Asian when he was yelling at us.”

"To be Asian means that you or someone in your family comes from a country in Asia. Our family is from China, so we are Chinese.”

“There are lots of other countries in Asia, like your friend Ji Hyun—her family came from Korea. Or your friend Jay—his family came from Thailand.”



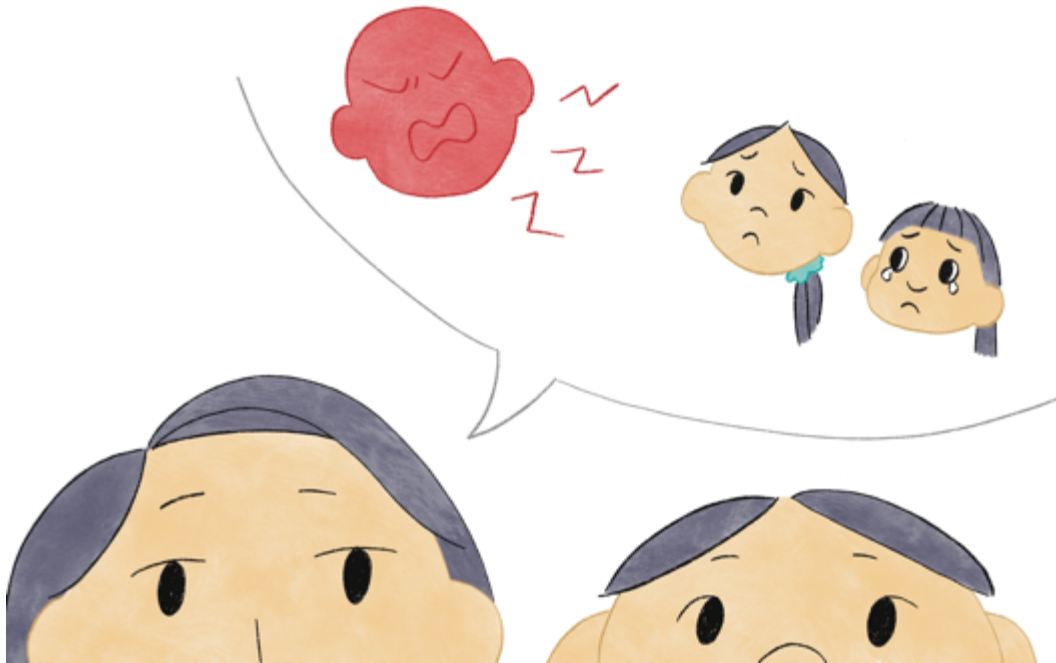
“People from Asia usually have dark hair and dark eyes. They can have light skin or dark skin.

This man looked at your hair and your eyes, and he decided to treat you unfairly based just on how you looked and what he thought he knew about you. That was wrong. It was racist of him.”



I asked, “What does that word mean--racist?”

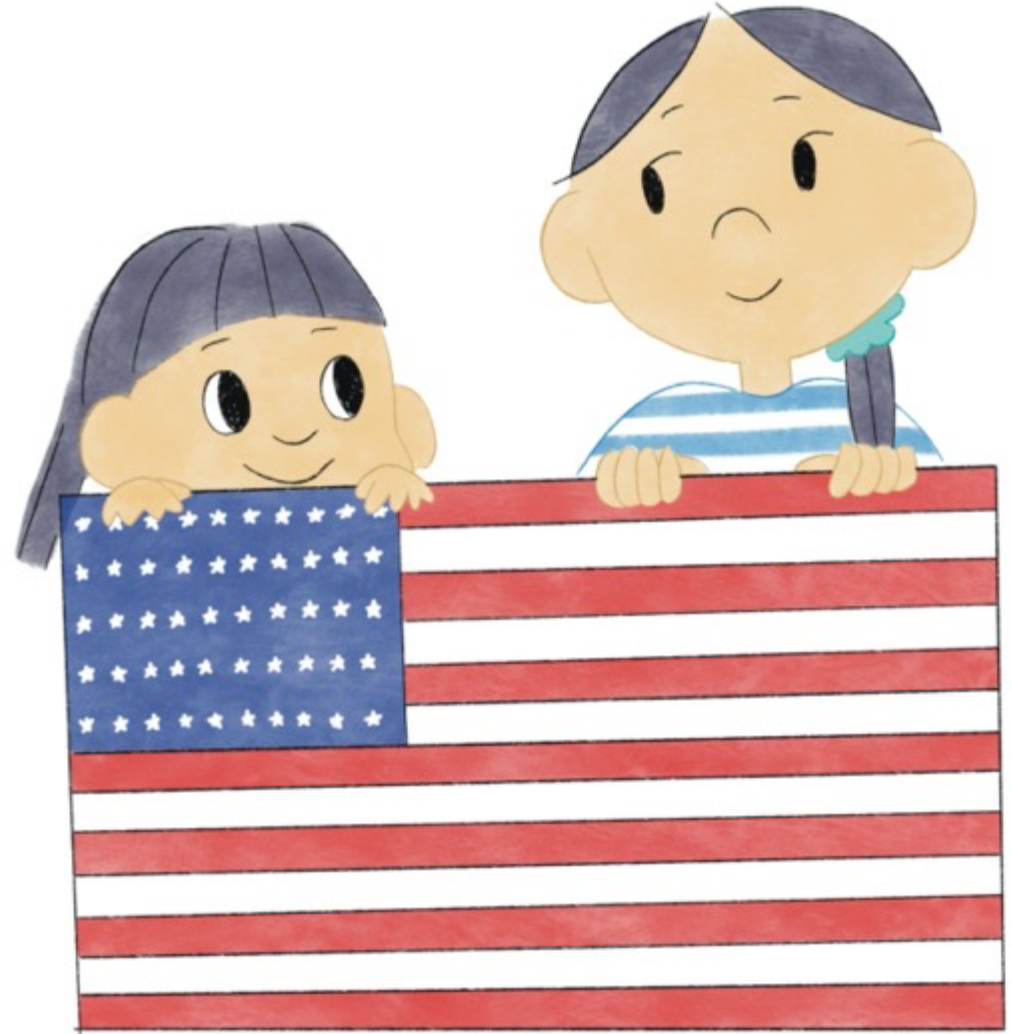
Mom continued, “Being racist means that people treating other people unfairly based on their looks or people believing that some groups of people are better than others just because of what they look like. Just like the man did to you and Mei Mei.”





I said, “Mei Mei was really scared when he yelled at us. I was scared too, and I didn’t know what to do. Should I have said something to him?”

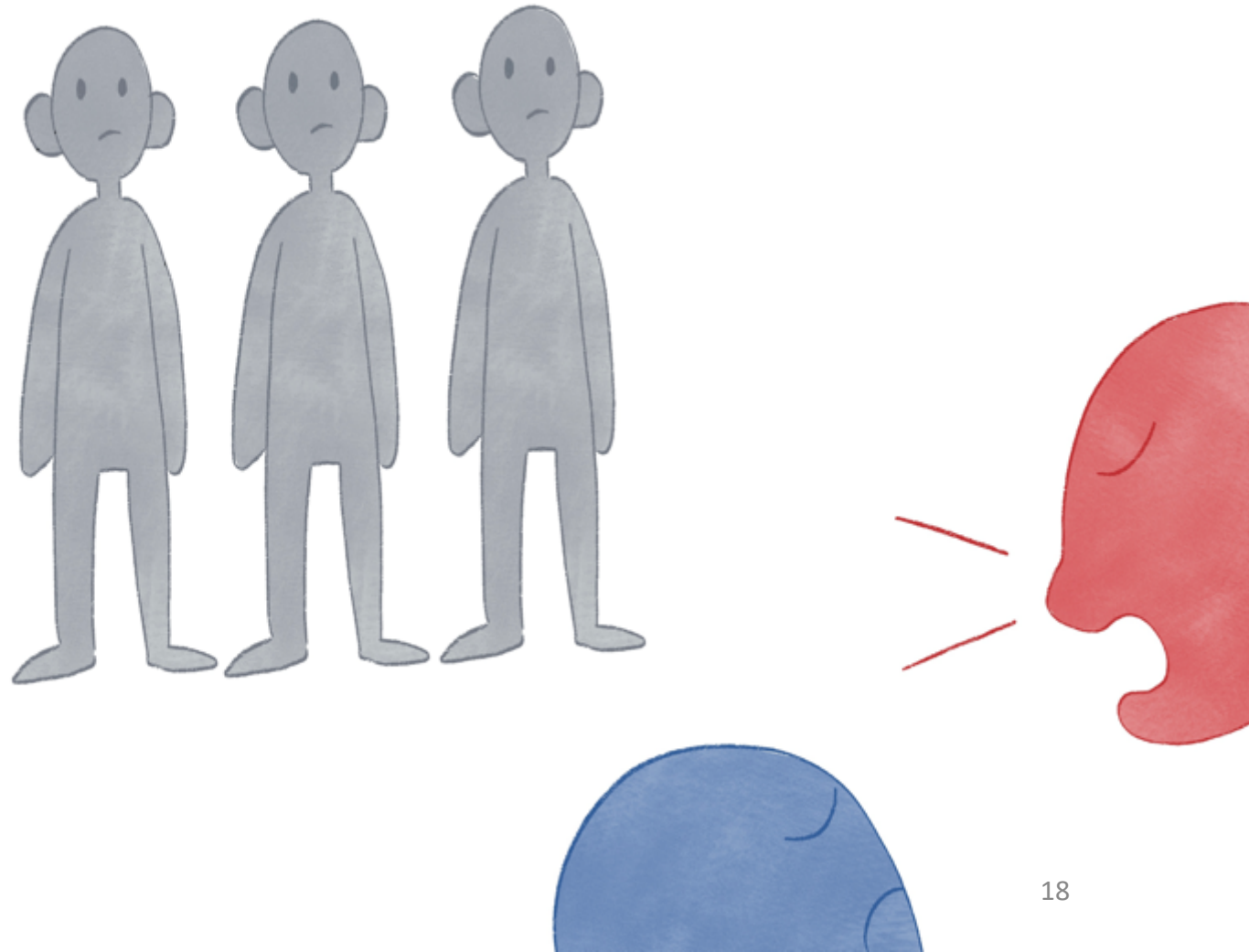
Mom said, “You don’t have to say anything to him. You belong here. America is your home!”



“Many people saw the man yelling at us. Why did only one lady help us?” I asked.

Mom explained, “Those people are called bystanders. They saw something unfair happen but did not say or do anything.”

Mom continued, “It is wrong to be a bystander. When you see something that is not right, you have to speak up or do something to help. Just like the lady did for you and Mei Mei.”



After we went home, we made an all-American salad together.

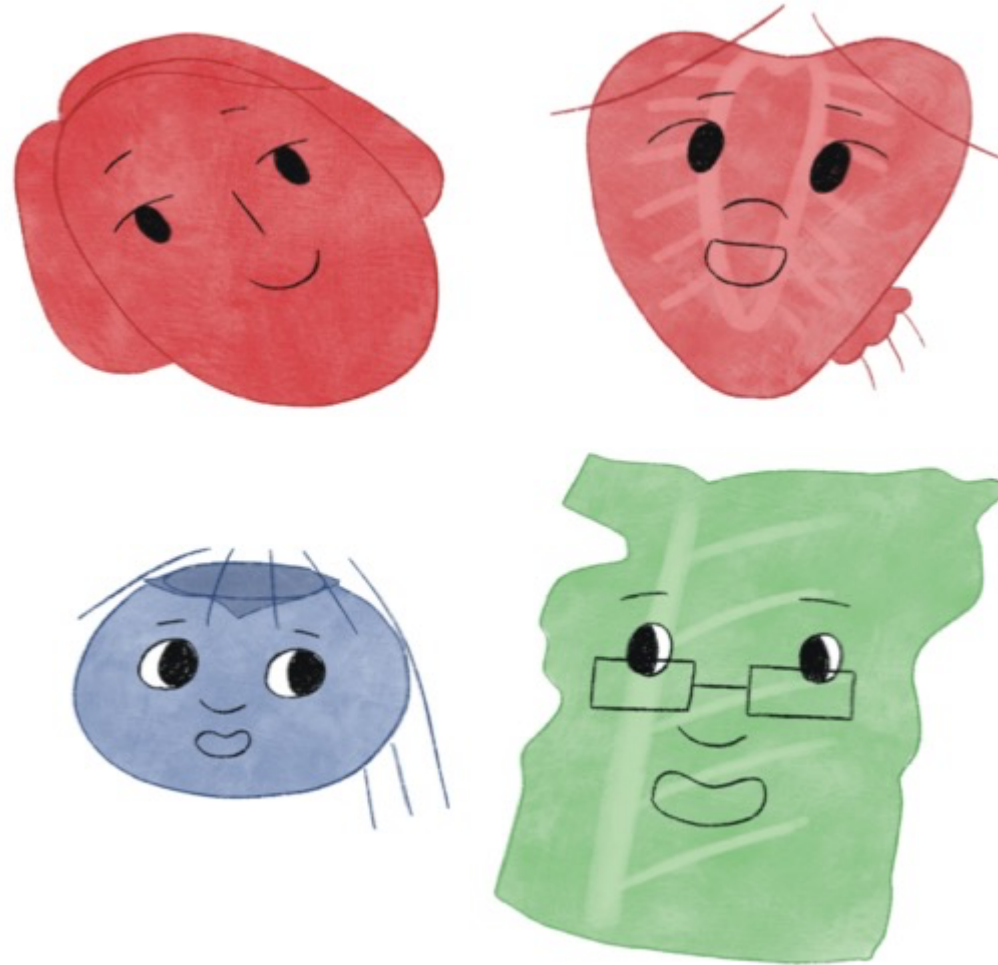
Mom asked me, “Do you know why the all-American salad is the best?”

“Because you can mix a lot of veggies and fruits and eat them all together!” I giggled.



Mom smiled, “This salad reminds me of America. We are a big country with lots of different people and cultures. Every one of us is unique and is an important part of our country.”

I think Mom is right!  
Mom is a sweet cherry  
tomato, Dad is a  
crunchy lettuce, Mei  
Mei is a tasty blueberry,  
and I am a BIG, JUICY  
strawberry.





After dinner, it was time to go to sleep! Mom tucked us in, and Mei Mei slept right away.

But... I couldn't sleep! I keep seeing the man's angry face.

I said "Mom, I was scared today. Why was the man so mean to us? "



Mom said, “I know. I would feel scared, too. It makes me feel lots of emotions.”

I asked, “What kind of emotions?”

Mom replied, “I am thankful for the lady who spoke up for you, but I am angry because the man was being racist to you due to your appearance.”



“It is not fair!”, I said.

Mom agreed, “Yes, it is not fair!”

Mom continued, “We need to stand up against racism and treat people with **kindness, respect, and love** instead of hatred.”



I asked, “Mom, how can we stand up against racism?”

Mom replied, “Racism has been in our country for a long time. We need to take action to make people aware of racism and to stop treating different people unfairly.”





Mom continued, “If everyone speaks up and stands up against racism, like the lady did for Mei Mei and you, our country could be full of LOVE, JOY, and PEACE instead of hatred.”

“And the experience that you and Mei Mei experienced won’t happen to other children.” Mom said.



I asked, “Mom, so what do I do next time if the same thing happens to me again?”

“Remember, the most important thing of all is that you tell me what happen as soon as possible so I can help too.”



Mom continued, “Next time, you can do two things to protect yourself. First of all, you should **Use Your Voice** to make sure people know that a grown up is being mean to you!”



“Next you should **Seek Help!** Find a group of adults near you and say, ‘Excuse me, a grown up is being mean to me! I need help!’” Mom said.





“We hope this experience won’t happen to you again, but if it does, let’s practice so you know what to do.” Mom said.

I felt weird and silly yelling these words out loud, but I heard that my voice is strong. I knew what I could do if someone attacks me again.



Mom said, “Okay, now it is time to go to sleep. It has been a long day for you.”

Mom continued, “Thank you for taking care of Mei Mei for me today! You are two, brave, little girls!”



“Mom, can we make an all-American salad tomorrow?” I asked.

Mom nodded, “Yes, let’s get all the veggies and fruits tomorrow.”

“Good night, my sweet cherry tomato.” I said.

“Good night, my big juicy strawberry.” Mom said.



# Note to Parents, Teachers, and Educators

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Anti-Asian hate crimes have increased by nearly 150% in 2020 in the USA. Many Asian-American children, unfortunately, witness or experience Anti-Asian hate at an early age. Therefore, Asian-American parents can no longer afford to simply tell their children to ignore racial discrimination and attacks or avoid discussing emotion/feelings with their children.

In most of the Asian cultures, parents typically teach their children the value of obedience – to follow the rules and avoid causing trouble. If a child is confronted, the traditional Asian parents may tell their child to "just ignore them." Parents may not discuss feelings with their children as restraining emotion is a common practice in Asian culture.

The "Cycle of Silence" is a common problem in the Asian-American families. A scary thing happens, parents do not talk about it, so the children think they shouldn't ask any questions; parents believe the child is fine because they have no questions. The Cycle of Silence hurts Asian-American children's socioemotional development and must be addressed, especially during the unprecedented time of a twin-virus attack of the COVID-19 and anti-Asian hate on the Asian-American community.

This book intends to do the following:

- Raise awareness of racism and anti-Asian racism
- Teach children how to respond when encountering a verbal racism attack
- Condemn racism and teach children the values of kindness, love, and peace
- Teach children to appreciate everyone's differences, be inclusive, and embrace diversity

Copyright ©2021 by Shu-Chen Yen and Jessica Lin. All rights reserved. This book or any portion may not be reproduced, relabeled, or used in any commercial manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the author. Permission is not required for personal or professional use (e.g., classroom setting). For more information, please contact Shu-Chen Jenny Yen at [syen@fullerton.edu](mailto:syen@fullerton.edu)