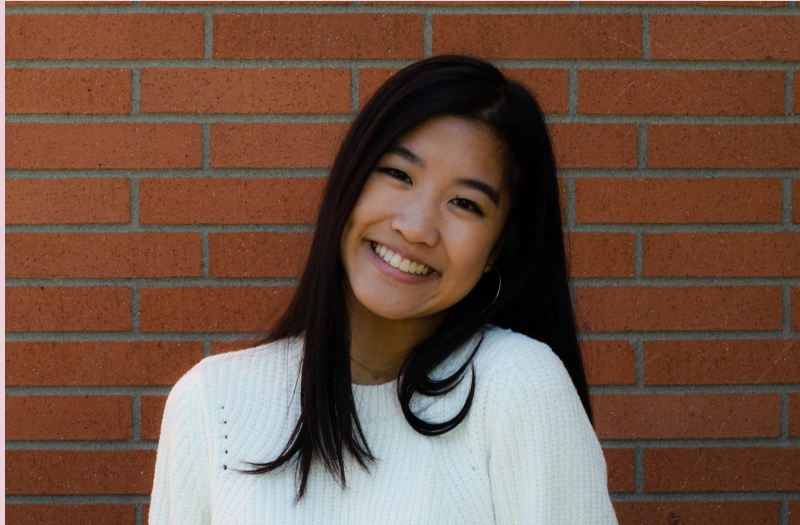


# *The Big America*

## **the story of Nicole Wong**

Greeted by golden fields and many farmlands, Nicole and her family get ready to settle into their new Oregonian home, 8,000 miles away from where she's used to. The air feels different and this place seems big, only three years old taking on the land of the free.



She was originally born in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and then moved to Singapore for her father to pursue his career at Intel. With this, she eventually developed a familiarity with her small island and the connections with her family and their friends.

One memory that she can remember from these times is not having a car to travel around the island with since it was so small. Transportation there was oriented to subways and there was no need for a family vehicle. A close family friend, however, owned a very special Honda Odyssey. Like any toddler, she had her fun in the backseat and would always be fascinated with the amount of space in the car; this gave her a new hope for obtaining one on American soil. Once her father and family had transferred to Hillsboro, Oregon for work, her parents followed through and ended up getting a Honda Odyssey. This created a more comfortable atmosphere while settling into her brand new, slightly intimidating environment. It may have also made it a little easier to adjust to all of the subconscious stress that comes with moving to a new place.

Over time, Nicole's perspective on America has definitely altered as the government has changed. With Donald Trump in power and the influence of social media, she realizes how warped America really is. In one of her writing classes, she read a memoir about a man who had been tortured in Guantanamo Bay and that sparked a new realization. She says, "It's just crazy

how people perceive America. Immigrants, especially, think it's the 'Land of the Free' and it's so great and stuff but then we get here. America, especially right now, just seems to be going downhill."

After high school, Nicole plans to eventually make six figures straight out of college and head right into bioengineering. As a child, she always found anything revolving around the medical field extremely interesting. One memory in particular is that her parents would watch medical dramas or hospital oriented shows and shield her from any sight of blood. However, she would always want to see more and really understand what was going on. With her strong passion for bioengineering, she often ponders why we can't discover a cure to cancer - maybe one day she will be the one to discover it. If she can help at least one person in her career, then it will guarantee happiness in her occupation.

Sophomore year, she experienced a very big epiphany that helped her with her self-growth. Every year, she would apply to student government but would always seem to be rejected with no explanation. She could never understand why they would not accept her into the class. She noticed that all of those who were accepted seemed to have similar characteristics: outgoing, charismatic, and always willing to make a difference. This made her assume that there must have been a certain reason that restrained her from getting in. She believed that those who got in are not ones to mess up. However, upon observation, she noticed that they *do* indeed mess up, just like the rest of us. Another observation was that those who saw their mistakes would acknowledge them for a few minutes and forget it almost instantly. This brought her relief and provided more motivation for her to keep trying, resulting in her finally getting accepted for her senior year. Now she says, "The worst that can happen [when you make a mistake] is that maybe people will laugh for a moment and then forget it the next day. I realized that I just shouldn't care that much anymore because life will go on."