

The preamble of the Constitution concludes with the unwavering promise to fellow Americans to “secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.” The experiences of my grandparents, parents, and myself confirm that the United States Constitution has upheld that promise.

On the eve of my grandmother’s high school graduation, she left behind her peaceful waterfront life in small town Hoi An, Vietnam to experience the hustle and bustle of New York City. As she emerged from the American Airlines terminal, student visa in hand, she knew she had found her new home. The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision had ended racial segregation in schools in 1954, and this benefitted Asians and African-Americans alike. Asians were previously deemed the “yellow race” by the court’s decision in *Gong Lum v. Rice* and *Brown v. Board* proudly ruled such discrimination as unconstitutional.

Thus, my grandmother, Minh Dau Nguyen, was an undergraduate at Columbia University where she met and fell in love with my grandfather, Kien Thanh Bui. They got married after graduate school and had a baby girl, my mother Kim Chi Bui, at New York Presbyterian Hospital. By virtue of the 14th Amendment, my mother was a United States citizen, the first in her family. In Vietnamese, her name Kim Chi means “golden branch” as she was both the promising offspring of her parents’ aspirations and the solid support for future generations of American buds.

My mother was raised in Vietnam, but with the invasion of the Viet Cong and onslaught of the Vietnam War, she was forced from her home in the Southern half and escaped with her family to America. She petitioned for her parents to immigrate, and they were successful in finding freedom and new opportunities in America. As a result of the Supreme Court case in 1898, *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*, my mother’s choice to return to the States after her childhood abroad was never questioned. This case was pinnacle to the advancement of Asian-American citizens of the U.S. as it affirmed their rights to leave and return to the country of their birth and allegiance.

In America, my mother got her M.D. at Tulane University and worked in a county hospital in Louisiana before finding a new job and moving to Los Angeles. There she met my father, Steven Filkin, a chemical engineer from McCook, Nebraska, a small town with a population of less than eight thousand. With the ruling of *Loving v. Virginia* in 1967, anti-miscegenation laws in America were struck down, allowing my Vietnamese mother to marry my white, Anglo-Saxon father.

I was born in a hospital in Van Nuys to two college-educated parents, who harbored the strong belief that their daughter could achieve anything she wanted to in the country of her birth. I have attended public schools in Los Angeles all my life, often as a part of an integrated magnet program, in which students from various backgrounds unite under a common interest to gain a higher standard of education. With each new classmate I met, I realized that American identity is not a monolith. Rather, the American Dream, the supposed singular goal that we are all seeking,

is a conglomeration of all the aspirations of everyone under the American flag, whether they be white, black, yellow, or some combination in between.

I believe my identity as a mixed-race child and knowledge of my family history grant me a renewed appreciation for how the Constitution, its amendments, and the subsequent rulings of the United States Supreme Court constantly shape to ensure equality for all. I would not be here today, standing proudly as a citizen on American soil, had not the Bill of Rights been drafted and the Judicial Branch recognized the menace discrimination is to the American Dream. As for my share of the dream, I long to be an op-ed columnist, to expose prejudice where it exists in a carefully crafted and compelling argument so as to further the cause of myself and others.