

#2

미역국: Korean seaweed soup; contains seaweed and soup.

Fullerton: Korean town in Orange County; contains Koreans and nerds (but what's the difference?).

Similarities: Korean, bland, homogenous

Differences: the former is edible

One visit to Fullerton would negate the belief that the US is a melting pot.

Ingredients: kids who have been conditioned to excel in everything; parents who expect nothing less than... well, perfection.

I'm no different. There's a mold, and I fit into it. I centered the last few years of my life on academics and believed for the majority of those years that I would be a doctor. Apart from the fact that I don't like kimchi, my deviation from the normal Fullerton kid began with what my dad calls "a waste of talent" and what I call my miniature paradigm shift.

It's important to recognize when something is doing more harm than benefit. My "something" is tennis.

Quitting tennis doesn't seem revolutionary. I didn't even fully quit: it was more of a mental breakup with a toxic green and fuzzy boyfriend. I stopped identifying with it.

I stepped away from something that was pushed on me for years, and stopped conforming to my parents' wishes and the culture around me. This doesn't mean I stopped identifying as Korean-American—I just stopped identifying as 미역국. I don't do bland, or homogenous.

I want to end the generations-long volley of parental control over their kids, and sometimes it doesn't take a full-scale revolt to change things. Small revolutions work too.

#3

I am the initiator. Sounds like a superhero who does cool things like flip cars and control minds. Unfortunately, my actual superpower is plain old follow-through, even when my responsibilities are mundane.

I am also the executor. On the other hand, this makes me sound like an estate planner, and fittingly, I'm often the one doing the boring work.

Being co-founder and co-president of the Student Business Club at my school means channeling both of these characters to get stuff done. It means continuing to email teachers to be our advisor even after numerous rejections (yes, this is a thing, even though all they have to do is be present at meetings) and writing our club proposal. It also means small things: sending out zoom links and taking attendance. Long story short, I'm the one who brings up things we have to do, but I'm equally likely to be battling cleanup on stuff no one else happens to be thinking about.

I write an agenda for every club meeting. Although this isn't "necessary," I've taken the initiative to do it because it allows us to be more organized and alleviates stress. Doing small things like this has allowed us to run the club more smoothly and develop as a newer club.

Being a big-sky thinker and a detail-maven simultaneously isn't for everyone. It's exhausting sometimes. People trust my diligence so much they're happy to pretty much let me do all the work. Sometimes I can't be my snowball-pushing initiator self because I'm simply too busy scheduling meetings and creating attendance forms. (Yes, it is every bit as glamorous as it sounds.) Let's be clear: I'm not a doormat. I don't end up drowning in fliers or bogged down with trivia because I don't advocate for myself. I just understand that being a leader means stepping up to make the push to begin, but also stepping down to do things that nobody else wants to do. The concept of leading by example is really important to me, so I try to be the kind of leader I'd want to follow.