

1992 This was around the age of myself
moving from junior high to high school.
A terrible time. Stuck in the woes
of awkwardness. Very little friends.
Confusion. Uncertainty. No direction.
A time I wish I could relive only if
to possibly do it again in a less painful
way. Lots of sad, uncomfortable memories.
At this time and our geographical
location, we only had bits, pieces,
remnants of Korean culture. We all went
to church. Not by choice. But more so,
because it was community. Strange how it
works now that I think about it. I don't
think my father was ever really the church
going type. But it was an opportunity to
meet some Korean people and feel somewhat
at home. Besides the obligations, the
tithes, the rituals, the prayers, the
singing, the eyes-closed, the hands in
the air. It was all par for the course.
The things you had to do to say hi to
your people. And I am not sure, but pretty
sure, my father was sitting there, going
through the motions and waiting for those
small moments. The break times. The lunch
times. The gaps in between where he could
feel like a human again. Talk with his
people. I never quite felt that way. I
had trouble going through such motions.
I was again, confused. The things that
were being taught here. I knew they
had good or perceived good in them. But
I can't say that I liked being here.
Everything was always incredibly forced.
I felt that I had to do things. Not things

Letting
Down
My
People.

I truly wanted to. I felt that I had to be there, not that I wanted to be there. I think puberty and junior high school were just kind of unfortunate times. So many things were out of our control and the helpless feeling that there was kind of no choice. We were always stuck. Stuck. We were dependent on various modes of transportation that were out of our control. We were stuck in situations where we had to do things in order to be part of some strange group as a whole. I again, can't say that I ever liked it. But it was the again, the same thing. Here, once a week, I might meet these other creatures that looked like me. That had shared my experiences. That shared my interests. And again, all the posturing and motioning aside, perhaps I did mildly enjoy the small gaps in between where I could exchange with such creatures. But these moments were too few and far between. Just gaps. Gaps in time. Gaps in schedules. Gaps. The rest of the time was filled with just more unfortunateness. Me praying and slowly opening one eye to wonder if there was something I was messing up. Or me being shuffled into some session just because my mother thought it would be good for me. Or me meeting with somebody a few years older than me who was to kind of be some kind of guide or advisor to me. And I could tell this person meant well. But did I want to be with this person? Not really. And I think that person knew that too. It was here that I first became

2

Letting
Down
My
People.

aware of a concept called “white washed” which was an expression that came only within such spaces here. Here, we had a primarily Korean community with all second generation immigrants. And as stated above a bunch of creatures who were in many ways, alike. But here I had heard this expression, “white washed,” for the first time. It was an expression that was used to describe those members of the minority community who catered to the caucasian majority. Those who denied their Korean roots and assimilated with no resistance. I had heard this term here, in this giant house sitting amongst similar creatures. And I often thought that perhaps I too, was “white washed.” Perhaps I too had shown no resistance. Perhaps I too was one of the malleable masses. I had already melted, into this melting pot. I think the older I got, the more I knew that this was probably the case. This was definitely the case. And perhaps for these reasons, I never could let down the feelings that I had always somehow let down my people. Somehow.