What’s so Bad About a Little Shine? A Reflection on AANHPI Heritage Month

ADWEEK will be all over Cannes. Subscribe to unlock unlimited access to all our coverage and analysis.

I don’t seek the spotlight and I never felt held back by my identity. Yet I am still reminded every day of the harsh reality of prejudice and discrimination our community continues to face post-pandemic. This has changed how I view my own identity and the importance of visibility and representation. It’s why I’m sharing my journey. I hope it can inspire future Asians in advertising and others from diverse backgrounds to benefit from the opportunities this industry can bring, whether you like the spotlight or not.

And, what’s so bad about a little shine?

It’s a rarity in today’s landscape to be at an agency network for a long period, and yet, I’m reaching 17 years at McCann. During my tenure, I have embraced challenges and opportunities alike, gone where needed (literally). It has sparked a profound shift in my perception of self and how I lean on the strength of my cultural values and more actively embrace my roots to show up.

As we close out another Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Month, here are reflections and learnings from my time in advertising.

Find a workplace that works for you

There is no creativity without individuality. Individuality and your worldview make the work unique, interesting and exciting. If every piece were made without personal influences, it would all be the same. And in the workplace, that's important for us business folks working with our creative and strategic partners and finding unique ways to sell and present to our clients.

Individuality, and being in an organization that encourages that, is crucial.

There's an empowerment that comes with embracing individuality. It's allowed me to build my path and lean into what brings me joy and purpose, even if it means moving across the world to take on an opportunity and new role I didn't see coming.

Enjoy the ride

Have a point of view. Have a genuine passion for what you do, whatever that might be. It will show and everything will become more enjoyable as a result.

Having been at an organization for a long time, while it may seem almost against the zeitgeist, it's where I've found the most support. People chase a quick hit or a quick promotion, but you're missing the support system, the advocacy and mentorship needed for professional growth.

It's funny. My true self is direct. Some people read into that a lot but it's just me trying to get the job done. If I were to fully change that, I am sure people would consider it disingenuous and that is not a great foundation to start any relationship, professional or personal.

Do great work, get it done with people you like and enjoy the ride. Embracing your individuality is equally important to

bringing your true self to work every day and giving it your all.

Hang on to your cheerleaders

At each stage of my career, I've been fortunate to have advocates who championed me, allowing me to deliver against any challenge set before me, quietly and with my head down.

Find your advocate but know they will also seek you out – that one person who you know has your best interest at heart, the one who champions you for what you deliver, respects you for who you are and pushes you to be better. It will make all the difference in your growth. And when you have that, hang on to it as long as you can. Happiness and fulfillment are essential to survive in this industry as it is a demanding job with many ups and downs.

it's important to pave the way for inclusivity and empower the next gen of not just AANHPI trailblazers, but all underrepresented and marginalized groups. My journey has been different, and I'm inspired by the visibility and representation I see.

And to those who made this space for me—thank you. You know who you are.

Recommended articles
https://www.adweek.com/agencies/whats-so-bad-about-a-little-shine-a-reflection-on-aanhpi-heritage-month/