

Pluses and minuses on being Asian in Japan:

Plus—The natives feel more comfortable with you and will probably open up more easily to you, i. e. chances of producing lasting friendships are higher.

Minus—Natives are more interested in (intrigued by) Caucasian Americans and are therefore more interested in interacting with them. Often, however, its seems as though mostly superficial friendships are produced.

Kyoto, Japan 1989-91
Chinese-American Male

I had the most wonderful time of my life! I wasn't treated differently but because I looked swarthier I got a lot of compliments because of my "exotic" look. That had never happened before!
What a country!

Stockholm, Sweden
Mexican- American Female

NO, and I didn't encounter any problems

Copenhagen, Denmark 1987
Asian Female

Because of my race I was treated worse and looked down upon as being a maid or lower class, until people found out that I was a student from the U.S. My U.S. citizenship saved me. It made me better than their own black people. The same way that here in the U.S. some white people can deal with Africans, blacks from the Caribbean or anywhere else better than us low-down homebred Negroes.

It was weird because in the same way that all-American here means blonde-and-blue eyes, so does that stereotype prevail abroad. America is red, WHITE and blue. Red skin (as in rednecks), white people and blue jeans and blue eyes. So it's hard to fit the gringo image when you're a person of color. And that's good and bad. It's good when people are anti-American. They don't look at you as much and maybe not at all. (e.g.. The black hostages were released first during the Iran Hostage crisis.) I marched in an anti-American march in Bogota. Nobody looked twice at me. They just assumed I wasn't American. But it causes a sense of confusion. What was I really? I was American even though people in and out of the U.S. didn't readily recognize or accept me as such.

I lived with a mestizo (European and Indian mixed) family, heavy on the European side, i.e. white. They had two young boys (2 1/2 years and 6 months) and whenever we went out together, people always assumed that I was the maid or nanny.

No one ever thought I was a prostitute (that I know of!). But being of African descent and female had this intrinsically sexual essence to it, not unlike the way it is in the U.S. culture. The word "Negrita" literally means little black girl or little black woman, negress, "sweet little black thang", etc. It wasn't only used with black women - it stretched over and meant "baby" or "chick". It was a sexy/sexual kind of word. I began to despise hearing it. To be a black woman meant being a sexual, erotic, exotic, fiery being. A sex slave. A savage. (The more I think about this, the more I see how this experience shaped some of my views on sexism as well as racism.)

Bogota, Colombia 1983
African-American Female