People ask me about bullying and are often surprised when I tell them that I was teased on the basketball court.

Growing up, it was not very common for an Asian-American to be spending so much time playing basketball. On many of the teams I played for, I was either the only or one of very few Asian-Americans. This made me an easy target. Unfortunately, I was often mocked.

In middle school, some of the players on other teams called me a “Chinese import.” They also told me to “go back to China.” When I started playing basketball in college it became even more open. During some of our games, people called me hurtful names. They made fun of me by chanting Asian foods like “shrimp fried rice.”

**A Proud Chinese Heritage**

I am proud that my family came from China. I felt furious that they would use my race to try to embarrass or hurt me. During one game, it got to me so much that I became angry while playing. My emotions led me to play badly in an important game.

One of my coaches at the time was named Kenny Blakeney. He noticed that my game had suffered and told me that when people use racial insults, they’re trying to upset me. When I become angry and lose control, they have succeeded.

Blakeney is black. He told me about his own experience of being bullied. I was shocked at what he had gone through. He told me that I could let the bullying get to me. I could also use it to become a
better basketball player and a better human being. His story gave me hope and encouragement. Instead of letting his experience make him angry and bitter, it made him stronger. Maybe I couldn’t control what people said to me, but I could choose how I felt about myself.

**Bullies Try To Rise Up By Pushing Others Down**

Bullies try to raise themselves up by pushing someone else down. They might try to find something that is different about you. They might use your differences against you. But your differences are what make you special.

When you get bullied, you might want to become like everyone. Do not do it. Hold on to what makes you special. It might be what makes you an artist or a scientist some day. You can help others who feel the same way you do. You would be surprised how many people you admire now were once bullied for being different.

If you aren’t being bullied right now, stand up for other people. They might be teased because they do not look or act like everyone else. Speak up for them. Also help them find someone who they can talk to. My coach made me feel less alone and helped me remember not to let it get to me. No matter how old you are, you can help people feel safe to be themselves.

**Grateful For What I Do**

I am extremely proud to be an Asian-American in the NBA. If I had let the name-calling get to me, I would not be able to go to my dream job every day. I play for the Charlotte Hornets. If Coach Blakeney had not encouraged me, I might have continued to lose my temper. I also might have given up.

Now, I’m grateful to do what I love. I enjoy teaching my teammates Chinese phrases and introducing them to other Chinese things. Most of all, I love encouraging young people to be proud of their own differences.