

At Expo 2025 in Osaka, two pavilions left a strong impression on me. The Japanese pavilion, with its focus on cutting-edge technology and a sustainable future. The French pavilion, fearlessly proclaiming love—with creativity, elegance, and irony. It wasn't a matter of liking one more than the other. For me, Japan and France are equally special. Perhaps this feeling is what people call patriotism.

My mother is Japanese. My father is French. Until the age of ten, I lived in France. Now, I live on Yoron Island, a small island of 5,000 people in southern Japan. At school, I study in Japanese. At home, I speak French. The books I read, the videos I watch—they constantly switch between two languages and two cultures.

This balance is my everyday life. One evening, I eat sushi dipped in soy sauce with my Japanese grandparents. The next morning, I share buttery croissants with my French father. To me, neither is foreign. Both belong to me. Both are my identity.

But soon, I'll face a painful choice. While many countries allow dual nationality, Japanese law does not. By the age of 20, I must choose: Japan or France. If I choose French nationality, I must live in Japan as a foreigner—no voting rights, no long-term stay without a visa. If I choose Japan, I must give up my French nationality. But how can I choose, when my life and my heart exist in both countries? Choosing one feels like rejecting the other and losing part of myself.

Sometimes, I wonder if choosing French nationality would be easier. I struggle with kanji. My textbooks are full of characters I can't read. Reading aloud in public is really painful for me. It makes me feel like I'll never truly be Japanese.

And yet, my personality feels more Japanese. I value harmony. I avoid conflict. When my French relatives articulate a strong argument in logic, I often feel overwhelmed.

So I'm not fluent enough to be fully Japanese, and not quick-witted enough to be fully French. I'm in-between. And being forced to choose feels like being told I'm not enough—no matter what I decide.

But one day, something changed. Our local high school invited a French badminton coach to run a workshop. There was one problem—no one spoke French in Yoron island. Except my family. So, I volunteered to interpret.

It was hard. Fast-paced. Technical. I was nervous. But I did my best. In the end, the workshop was a success. The coach was grateful. The students were inspired. And for the first time, I felt proud of being “in-between.” I realized: I can bridge two worlds. I have a mission only I can fulfill.

Since then, I've begun to see my future differently. Choosing a nationality doesn't erase my roots. It doesn't erase half of who I am.

Japan is changing. One in fifty children here today has a foreign parent. Add to that over three million foreign residents are in Japan. By 2065, people with some kinds of foreign background could reach 12% of whole Japanese population. That means more people like me—people balancing two or more cultures. They will face the same questions, the same struggles.

So I hope that one day, Japan will allow dual nationality. But until then, I want to study law and diplomacy—to help build a society where people like me no longer feel divided.

Because I am not incomplete. I am not torn between soy sauce and butter. I am both—together, richer in flavor.

Thank you.

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In Between, Yet Complete