Death of a Butterfly

Felix recalls being in elementary school when his teacher tells his class they all should pick one word that describes them. Felix remembers thinking, “I would rather write an essay”, than just pick one word to encompass all of me. To think of one word that represents you is difficult; he racks his brain and cannot seem to come up with a word better than “differ”. He shares his word apprehensively with his classmate and she makes fun of him and tells him her word is “pretty”. Felix then feels foolish. Felix recalls another day in class when his teacher says something that confuses everyone. She’s says, “Nobody has black hair.” When the students question her by saying, “what about Felix?” she responses by saying, “Felix” does not count. To be a young child and of a minority those words can be heart breaking, and all these years later, Felix can still recall this statement as if it occurred yesterday. To be told that in society you do not matter or you do not count is outrageous. Felix also recalls being asked by the other children why he looked different from them. He recalls the racist comments asking him to decifer gibberish, asking him if it was Chinese. He is then asked to tell his classmates how to say “mom” in Chinese, when he pauses his teacher asks “Is there some rule that you can’t tell outsiders what the word ‘mom’ is?” He is so taken aback by the entire conversation that he has no words, he does not speak Chinese, he does not know why he is being asked this question and he does not understand why his teacher thinks there is a rule against speaking Chinese to non Chinese people. Felix sums up his story by saying about his classmates that “they were not only forcing my
language to be more different than it actually was—they were forcing ME to be more different from THEM than I actually was.”