ASIAN AMERICAN VOICES

VOL. 3 SPRING 2021

LaGuardia
Community College

LaGuardia Community College

Asian American Voices

Magazine of the Students

May 2021

Vol. 3

50 YEARS OF DARING TO DO MORE

Acknowledgements

Asian American Voices Committee

Editors

Anita Baksh (English) *Editor in Chief*
Tomonori Nagano (ELA) *Production Editor*
Tuli Chatterji (English)
Dana Trusso (Humanities)
Richa Gupta (Natural Sciences)

Cover Design: Anastasia Aponte
Cover Photo: Amal Toaimah

PUBLISHED BY
The English Department
LaGuardia Community College
Asian American Voices. Magazine of the Students.

This document has been typeset by LaTeX.

DISCLAIMER
The English Department is not responsible or does not share the opinions expressed in The Asian American Voices. No portion of Asian American Voices may be used or reproduced in any form without the expressed written permission of the publishers. All rights are reserved.

Note from the Editors
Asian American Voices
No.3, 2021

We are proud to present the third issue of the *Asian American Voices* journal. The journal features essays, reflections, interviews, creative writing, recipes, and art by LaGuardia students and alumni that engage with Asian and Asian American narratives, cultures, languages, literatures, and more. It reflects LaGuardia Community College's core value, *diversity*: "we believe that diverse perspectives make us stronger and seek to learn from everyone's unique experience and cultural inheritance."As such, *Asian American Voices* aims to bring visibility to the diversity of LaGuardia's Asian and Asian American students, who make up 23% of its student body.

The works published in this issue highlight *at least a dozen* different heritages linked to Asia and its diaspora: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India, Sri Lanka, Guam, Guyana (diaspora), Philippines, Palestine, Singapore, Taiwan, and Tibet. A range of themes are addressed including Covid-19 pandemic experiences, health and the trans community, immigrant and refugee experiences, food, culture, migration, language practices, gender, family, orientalism, and stereotypes.

We are heartbroken by the recent wave of anti-Asian discrimination that plagues our city and nation. Anti-Asian violence increased in March 2020 at the beginning of the pandemic, and surged even further in March 2021. These heinous acts, including verbal and physical attacks and vandalism, have instilled on-going fears of being attacked within many Asian American community members and business owners. We dedicate this issue to the Asian American lives lost as a result of this hate. We stand firmly against racism, xenophobia, and violence. We also stand in solidarity with other BIPOC communities in combatting white supremacist ideologies. Our hope is that this journal will engage dialogue around these issues as well as express Asian American hope and joy. Finally, *Asian American Voices* would not have been possible without the support of students, staff, and faculty. We express gratitude to faculty and staff who encouraged students to submit their work: Allia Abdullah-Matta, Olga Aksakalova, Lee Boyer, Stacey Chen, Tara Coleman, Maureen Drennan, Dahlia Elsayed, Lidiya Kan, Alice Rosenblitt-Lacey, and Filip Stabrowski.Thank you to our students: Anastasia Aponte, for the cover design, and Amal Toaimah, for the cover photo.

We begin this issue by spotlighting Asian American faculty and staff member Dr. Kyoko Toyama for her support and mentorship of students, staff, and junior faculty.

The Editors

Long Island City, New York
May, 2021

Contents

1 Reflections from the LaGuardia Community: Faculty, Staff and Students: Dr. Kyoko Toyama 1

2 Breaking Stereotypes Project 5

Part I Creative Writing/Poems

3 Untitled, Kandahar, and Pashtun Woman
Mrhaba Ahmad 11

4 Lola & Me
Amourelle Barnese 16

5 Woman and Flute & Woman in Nature
Popy Chowdhury 21

6 Turquoise Nose-pin
Popy Chowdhury 23

Part II Reflective Essays

7 Tsampa: The Poetics of Food
Pema Dolkar 27

8 Retracing My Indo-Guyanese Migration Story Across Generations
Latchmie Dookie 29

9 ABC Daughter
Becky Huang 32

10 My Personal and Academic Journey as I pursue my Career Goal
Chethana P. Gallage Dona 34

Part III Critical Essays

---

11 The *Sinahi*: The New Moon Necklace
Edward Molina 39

12 Orientalism and the Exoticization of the Brown Asian Body
Brianna Jo Hobson 44

13 "Illegal Immigrants": The Rhetoric and Politics
Pema Dolkar 48

14 How COVID-19 Has Affected The Indian Migrant Crisis*
Maaz Dorria 52

15 A New Invisible Language
Xiaolin Tan 55

16 My Mixed Language Plays a Role in My English Writing
Liting Tang 57

17 Women Need to Be Seen and Helped
Huiling Liang 59

18 Immigrant Identity in Purvi Shah's "Made In India"
Ashly Chacon 61

Part IV Interviews

19 Gender, Health, and Trans Activism in Bangladesh: An Interview with Dr. Riffat Lucy
Kashfia Mahmud 65

20 Case Study: Interview With An Urban Bilingual
Victoria Lutzky 68

Part V Art and Photos

21 7am in Singapore, Chinatown Hawker, & Little India
Jeremy Orozco 75

22 Maruchan Ramen & Soup Dumplings
Gabrielle Lin 78

23 Photos
Amal Toaimah 80

24 Girl with Short Hair
Rongxin Xu 83

25 Ms. Manon
Yingchao Wang 84

26 Home: Photos of my Family and Family Gatherings
Annie Wu 85

27 Life
Ayako Moriyama 89

Part VI Recipe

28 Hot and Sour Soup
Andrew Chen 95

Part VII Authors

29 Authors' Bios 99

1.

Reflections from the LaGuardia Community: Faculty, Staff and Students: Dr. Kyoko Toyama

Kyoko Mary Toyama

Kyoko Mary Toyama has been at the center of LaGuardia Community College since 1986. Dr. Toyama is a Professor in the Counseling Department and the College Discovery Program, and Adjunct Professor in the Department of Education and Language Acquisition (ELA). Dr. Toyama also teaches Japanese at LaGuardia and has been part of a Virtual Exchange with Matsumoto University/Matsusho Junior College in Nagano, Japan. In addition to teaching and counseling, she serves as Faculty Adviser to the student club, Chi Alpha Epsilon (XAE) Honor Society. It is impossible to overstate the difference that Dr. Toyama has made in the lives of the many students, and the many junior faculty, who she has mentored and advised over the years.

Dr. Toyama is originally from Japan, born in the linguistically and culturally distinct Okinawa prefecture. She conducted her graduate study in New York, receiving a MA and M.Ed. from Teachers College of Columbia University and a PhD from New York University. Her prolific scholarly contributions cover research areas such as cross-cultural counseling, women's psychological development and college student retention, interracial, interethnic and interfaith families and identity development.

Dr. Toyama has also played a key role in the network of communities in New York City in which LaGuardia is embedded. She has served for many years on the board of CUNY's Asian

American/Asian Research Institute (AAARI). She is also very active in New York's Japanese American community organizations, and works with her church, the Episcopal Congregation of Saint Saviour. Dr. Toyama is also an avid Japanese Taiko drummer and an instructor who uses drumming as a therapeutic intervention for children and adults with special needs.

Ann Matsuuchi
Instructional Technology Librarian and Professor

In the Japanese language, the word "person" 人間 comprises two characters: 人 - "a human being" and 間 "among/within," suggesting that a human being exists in connection to others. Everything Kyoko does is a loud and graceful reminder that we live in the human family and every one of us is responsible for the well-being and growth of others.

I have had the pleasure of working with Kyoko in the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) program. In addition to her counseling duties in the College Discovery program, Kyoko teaches Japanese in the Education and Language Acquisition department. Every semester, she goes the extra mile to give her students the opportunity to cross borders and virtually connect with students in Japan, enabling empathetic dialogue and deep cross-cultural learning. Kyoko goes beyond superficial topics of cultural and linguistic exchange; she challenges her students to discuss UN Sustainable Development Goals, such as quality education, and contribute to each other's learning through peer critiquing. Kyoko respectfully and skillfully invites them to take an active role in their learning. Recently, Kyoko has engaged students from her College Discovery Honors and Leadership Seminar in the COIL project with graduate students who study psychology in India. This innovative project focuses on mental health and resilience through a cultural lens of caste, gender, socio-economic class, race, ethnicity, and religion.

The COIL community at LaGuardia, CUNY, and across the world recognizes Kyoko as a very resourceful, empathetic, and supportive colleague. Her devotion and commitment to her work is absolute. No matter how busy she is, Kyoko always participates in COIL forums and student events, and always finds ways to support her colleagues and their students, to ensure them that their work matters, to pose new questions and build new bridges.

On behalf of your COIL family, Thank You, Kyoko!

Dr. Olga Aksakalova
Associate Professor of English and COIL Coordinator

I've known Kyoko for a long time and can always count on her for her friendship and her knowledge of Japan. A few years ago, I was researching an international anime hit *Attack on Titan* and needed help with translation. Despite her busy schedule, Kyoko was so generous with her time. She helped me identify some crucial sources and translate them into English. Without her help, I couldn't have finished my project. Thank you, Kyoko!

Dr. Ting Man Tsao
Professor of English

When I first shared the news that I would be joining the College Discovery team at LaGuardia, several of my colleagues noted "Oh, you will get to work with Kyoko. How fantastic!" I would soon learn why Kyoko's reputation preceded her. Dr. Kyoko Toyama has served as a College Discovery Counselor and Professor of Japanese at LaGuardia for over thirty years. Anyone who knows Kyoko recognizes her tireless dedication to students. Supporting and advocating for students –their academic success and personal wellbeing –is her guiding star and at the heart of all that she does.

Dr. Toyama co-supervises College Discovery's intensive graduate counseling internship program, designs and leads College Discovery's Honors & Leadership efforts and has secured tens of thousands of dollars in grant funding to support College Discovery student engagement opportunities. Kyoko's contributions to College Discovery have helped develop the program into what it is today. I would be remiss if I did not note Kyoko's passion for Japanese Taiko drumming, which she has graciously shared with College Discovery staff and students over the years.

The College Discovery team and students are so fortunate to have Kyoko has a counselor and colleague!

Julianne Salazar
Program Director for LaGuardia's College Discovery program

Dr. Kyoko Toyama has greatly influenced my journey and experiences at LaGuardia by uplifting me, encouraging me, and believing in me. College Discovery is blessed to have a counselor who enjoys motivating students to strive harder and trust in their potential. I admire Dr. Toyama because she saw a leader in me and granted me opportunities to grow. She made me believe that motherhood would not stop me, or my academic endeavors but enrich it instead. She cares deeply about inclusivity and understanding different cultures. She always finds ways to enhance the college experience by encouraging students to take part in projects such as COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) and the LHI (LaGuardia Humanitarian Initiative). She embraces all students with her kind, considerate, and understanding nature. Dr. Kyoko Toyama's beautiful character is so valuable to students and staff alike. LaGuardia is fortunate to have such an influential counselor on campus.

Salwa Quhshi
College Discovery student and Psychology major

Kyoko is an individual with many different talents and responsibilities. When I joined LaGuardia in the early 2010's, I only knew her as a fellow compatriot from Japan, but it didn't take too long to learn how versatile she was. In her role as a counselor, she has always been an advocate for students and I have learned a lot from her dedication to students. Outside of school, she is a mother of two sons, an active community leader, an advocate for social justice and world peace (the testimonies by Hibakusha at the U.N. in the past few years wouldn't have happened without her leadership), and a performer of the Japanese Taiko drumming (if you ran the NYC Marathon, you probably saw her Taiko drumming performance right after the Willis Avenue Bridge, the most challenging part of the NYC Marathon course). I cannot think of any better role model among LaGuardia faculty of Asian descent for her passion and dedication towards LaGuardia students and the larger community.

Tomonori Nagano
Associate Professor

2.

Breaking Stereotypes Project

The Asian American Voices “I am, but I am not” Breaking Stereotypes Project, inspired by a similar initiative created by the New York Region of PTK, celebrates the diversity of LaGuardia Community College by providing a space for students to share their stories in order to break down stereotypes that can lead to bias, discrimination, and violence.

Participants were given an image of a book and asked to write inside their book qualities they identify with, and on the outside, qualities others identify them as. This is representative of how we can all be judged by our “cover.” We can start to break stereotypes by understanding that there is more to everyone’s unique story if we are willing to listen.

Link to the project slides: https://bit.ly/3ervriU

Dana Trusso
Faculty Advisor of PTK

I am not...

Illegal

Spanish

Rude

Lazy

Low

greedy

One story is not the whole story. Your voice matters.

I am not...

My traumas

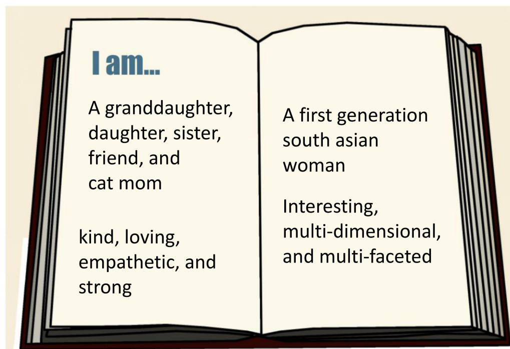
My pain

lazy

My mental illness

"Perfect" and that is okay

crazy



One story is not the whole story. Your voice matters.

Asma Akther

I am not

Violent

Terrorist

Weak

Suspect

Mean

Dumb

All my Muslim friends who wear hijab should feel safe waking down the street just like you.

I am not...

Taking things for granted ❌

A virus ❌

A math genius ❌

Antisocial ❌

Picky ❌

Weak ❌

An illegal immigrant ❌

Unapproachable ❌

Superficial ❌

I am... *Chia Ying Kang*

Grateful 🧡

Friendly 💜

Easygoing 💚

Thoughtful 💗

Still learning math 🖤

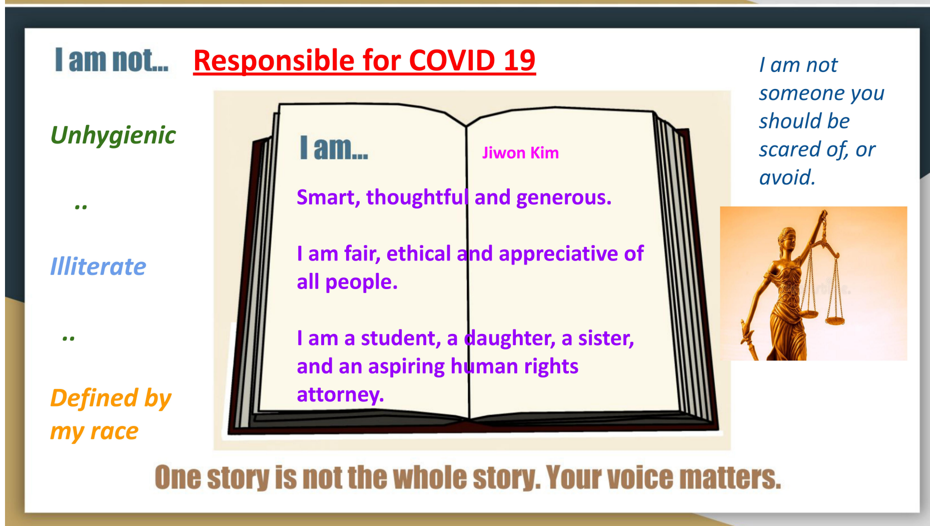
Malaysian Buddhist 🤎

Legal permanent resident 💛

A part of the community 💗

NO LABELS ATTACHED

One story is not the whole story. Your voice matters.



Part I

Creative Writing/Poems

3.

Untitled, Kandahar, and Pashtun Woman

Mrhaba Ahmad

Untitled

I am from hairbrushes
from Revlon and Conair

I am from the window sill, eyes
staring at the busy and crowded streets of New York

I am from cardamom,
the strong aroma

reminds me of my mother and her mother.
They added cardamom to almost every cuisine,
rice and kofta, sliced eggplants sprinkled with coriander

and cups of tea.
I am from attan, where my feet and hands move swiftly in the air
to the beat of drums and rubab.

I am from nang and namoos, pride and honor
from Noor and Aisha.
I am from the resiliency and discipline that my parents hold,
from being told not to sit with my legs open
because it is not “lady like”
and as a woman,
I must maintain modesty
cannot tarnish my family’s reputation.

I am from Islam.
Arabic rolls off my tongue five times a day.
Pashto rolls off my tongue when I speak to my parents.
I am from Afghanistan,
from sugar coated almonds and rice,
from the eye my uncle lost to a landmine,
in the Soviet-Afghan war,
from my mom who became a refugee at age six,
and watched her home burn down to ashes.
Tucked in my mother’s suitcase,
her belongings from life in Afghanistan
from life as a refugee in Pakistan.
I see pictures of my extended family
who look just like me.
Twenty years of life in the diaspora,
I have never seen these people.
I look at the eyes of these strangers–my relations,
I see resilient women
who make magic with their hands,
resilient men
who resisted colonization in the Motherland,
resilient children
who became victims of war,
and lived anyway!

Their strength is with me, always.

Kandahar

Kandahar, city in southern Afghanistan
a city my parents call home and yearn to visit again
a city that produces ripe pomegranates,
but was also the birthplace of the Taliban.

Five times a day, the azaan echoes
views of tall mountains
men chat in Pashto and drink tea
women are nowhere in sight.

Most people in the west see Kandahar
as a place of angry men with kohl-rimmed eyes and dirt,
others see trash, but I see treasure.
I see people with missing limbs
fighting to survive
women widowed & children orphaned.
The world tore this land apart, yet Afghan people
rise up every day despite the ugliness.

They rise up with hope, determination, and resilience.

Pashtun Woman

The Pashtun woman is the most brilliant creation.
She is an odd contradiction of you're a whore, you need to be controlled,
but you are honored because you carry children in your womb.

Shunned and largely ignored
for much of her life
constantly under supervision by the
father, brother, cousin, uncle
married off for money
then forced to abide by quiet servitude
she gives birth to future terrorists,
or buries her dead children with her own hands.

Despite this quiet servitude,
she combs her long, silky hair
lines her eyes with kohl
applies blush to her cheeks.
You will not catch her without a smile
on her face, even when she feels immense pain
even when she hurts,
she dances at every wedding,
she knows the cures to sickness
and she steals people's hearts.

The Pashtun woman is living proof
of one who endures the most terrible grief
and still goes about her life anyway
with tremendous grace.

Works Cited

Huylebroek, Jim, director. Human Rights Watch, 13 Mar. 2020, https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/06/30/afghanistan-taliban-rights-efforts-fall-far-short

4.

Lola & Me

Amourelle Barnese

Lola & Me

When spring comes,
Lola walks to church,
She prays for her family health and love,
And hopes god will grant that in return,
When summer comes,
Lola likes to cook,
She makes so much rice in the morning,
It looked like it can feed a village,
Along with a cow, bird, and chicken,
When fall comes,
Lola likes to shop,
She ambles,
She looks at items with both hands,
She touches the fabric gently,
Then she buys it and begins to sit on her sewing machine,
When winter comes,
Lola brings the family together,
She gives her gifts of sweaters and scarfs,
She made rice pudding to stay warm,
When spring comes again,
Lola saunters to church,
She puts her foot up because it hurt,
She took some pauses,
And continue to church,
When summer comes again,
Lola smacks a watermelon,
She places it to her ear,
She senses that it's ripe enough,
To eat and to share,
When fall comes again,
Lola sat by the window,
Smiling gently under the moon,
Holding a rosary cross in her soft hands,

When winter comes again,
Lola warmth stood forever,
She smiles from afar,
Watches her family,
She spreads her gift through snow,
And then disappears,
Lola was no longer here.

The Foolish Man

There lived a traveler in a forest,
With no permanent place or home,
There grew fruits and berries,
Herbs and veggies,
He chewed on wild taro that grew in the ground,
And took some in his bag,
So, he had something to eat, and his health wouldn't go wrong,
He traveled out the forest and saw a village,
He walked towards it,
And shouts hello,
But everyone was too busy,
And left him alone,
He sat on a tree stump,
Watched everyone go by,
Then came a beggar asking for food or money,
The traveler looked in his bag,
He gave the beggar his taro,
And the beggar smiled and ran away,
The traveler was happy someone came,
Then came a woman,
Walking around in distress,
The traveler asked, "My lady, what has happened? Why are you in tears."
She looked at the traveler and said, "I have no more food for my children because my husband is at war!"
The traveler thinks for a moment and takes out some taro from his bag,
The woman stares at the traveler for a moment,
She hugs and thanks him,
She leaves, and he feels happy that someone came,
The traveler began to walk through the village,
He sees a small show,
Some men were sparring.
In return for some food or gold,
The traveler placed some taro in the bucket,
The men gleamed with thanks,
The traveler was happy once again,
When the traveler was leaving to go the forest,
Some people followed,
They begged for food,
The traveler gave lots of taro from his bag,
The villagers have thanked him and walked away,
The traveler was happy someone came,
The traveler enters the forest,
And looked at his bag,
There was only one taro left for him to eat,
As he bites onto the taro,
He heard tiny cries,
He looks to see a small and fragile dog and, on the verge, to die,
The traveler sighed and smiled and gave his taro to the dog,
It barked as a thank you and left the forest,

Yet the traveler was happy it came,
The traveler sat under a tree,
While looking around with his eyes for something to eat,
He felt his heart start to beat slow,
And it was hard to breathe,
The traveler got up and looked for food,
But there was no wild taro,
Or berries and fruits,
Or herbs and veggies,
The villagers had found his sanctuary and took it home,
Before he had returned from the village early,
The traveler lays on the ground,
His heart had beaten more slowly,
A tear on his eye rolled down his cheek,
The traveler smiled and said, “At least I’m happy someone came.”
And closed his eyes with his pain,
There lived the traveler, the foolish man who gave his food away.

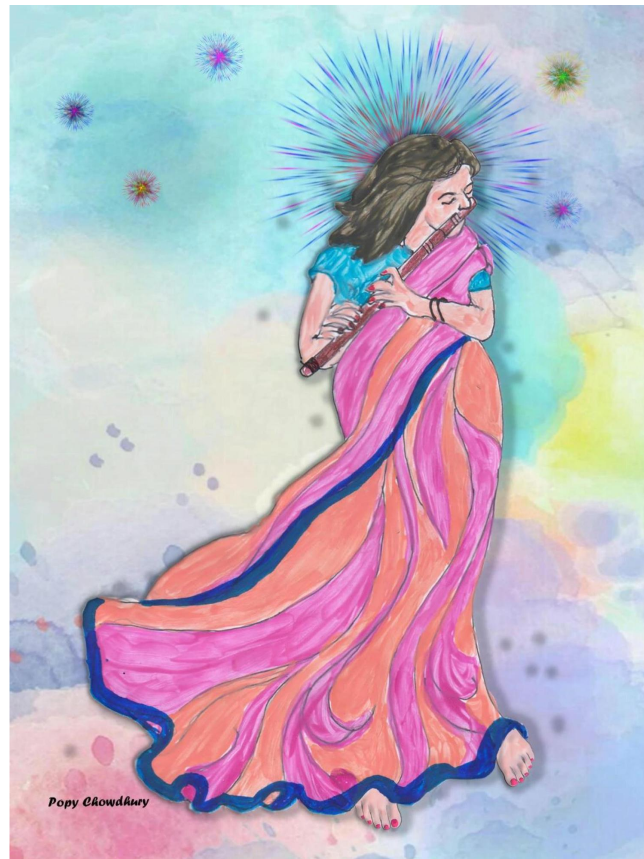
Rose Grape

I am not poisonous,
Not even close,
I am pink, red and purple,
And bloom beautifully with small fruits,
I am edible,
People use me as decor,
Some eat my stems and leaves,
I am not poisonous,
So, do not be so cautious,
I only spread happiness and no despair.

5.

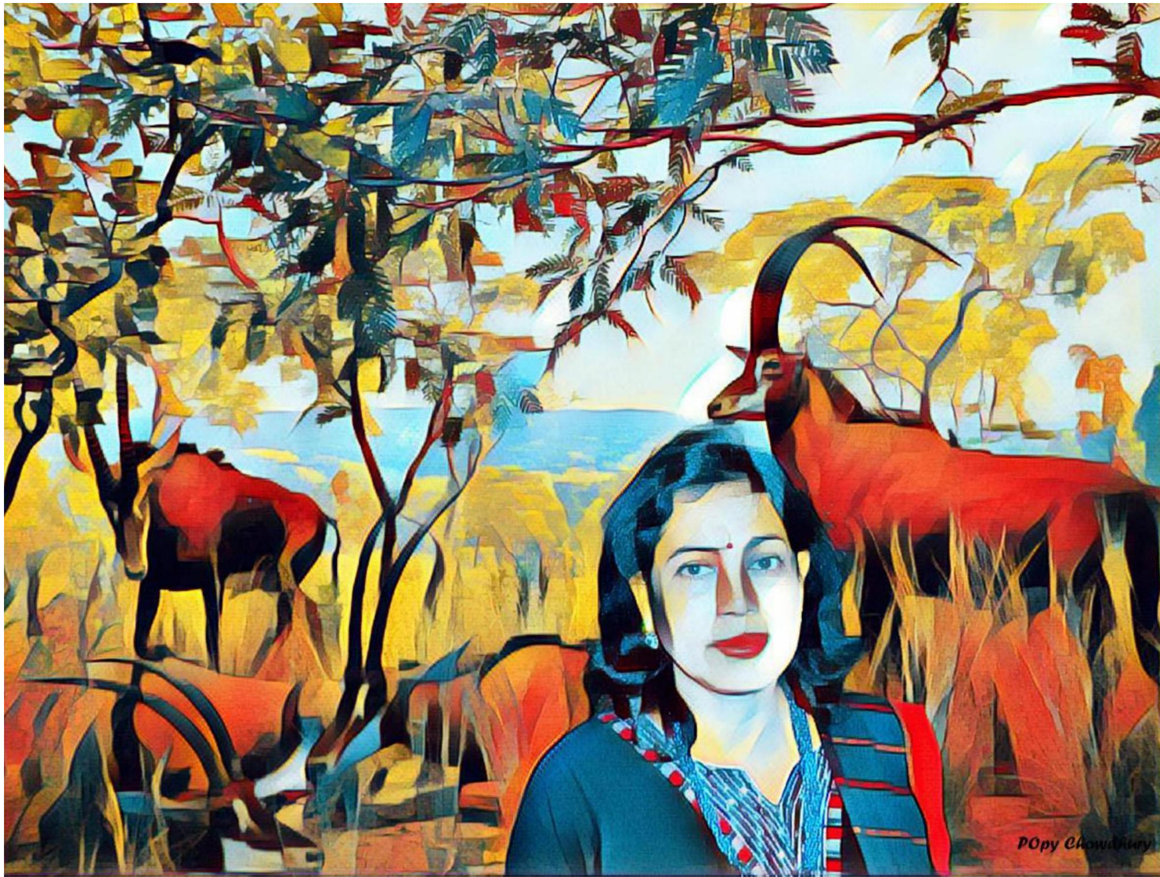
Woman and Flute & Woman in Nature

Popy Chowdhury



Woman and Flute:

The above painting foregrounds my bond with South Asian Women. As a Bangladeshi myself, I tried to portray a Bengali woman in my picture. The woman is playing a flute, the melody of which spreads far and wide; I wanted to convey that charm through the sparkles. The woman is wearing a sari, the traditional dress of women in Bangladesh and India. In Bangladesh, men usually play the flute while women are not commonly seen playing this instrument. Here, I wanted to break that tradition. I used pencil sketch, pen, and watercolors to first draw the picture, after which I photoshopped to create the final effect.



Woman in Nature

This is an experimental digital art where I used Photoshop and PicsArt to recreate my photograph. In the image, I wanted to draw connections between the beauty of women and the beauty of nature.

6.

Turquoise Nose-pin

Popy Chowdhury

Turquoise Nose-pin

I have never seen my mother
Or maybe I did but can't remember. I have no memory of her.
But I can remember a magical beam I saw in my dream
Many years have passed
A chubby enchanting face just
I saw her in my dreams
Still, it's in my mind. There was glittering on her nose,
Turquoise nose-pin like a rose.
I can't remember my mother
That face, I can only remember
I can't remember her compassion
Joys and sorrows of affection
Only can remember the adorable face,
by the dream and imagination pace.
I have no other way
Mom is so far away
Cutting the bond of affection
Staying in a new world, new location.

ফিরোজা নাকছাবি

মাকে আমি কখনো দেখিনি
কিংবা দেখেছি হয়তো মনে নেই
তাই মনেপড়ে না কোন স্মৃতি
মনেপড়ে কেবল স্বপ্নে দেখা
সেই কোমল মুখখানি।

সেই--- কবে, কত বছর আগে
গোলগাল মায়াবী মুখখানি,

দেখেছিলাম স্বপনের মাঝে
এখনও যা দু'চোখে ভাসে
জ্বলজ্বল করে জ্বলছিলো নাকে তার
ফিরোজা নাকছাবি।

মাকে আমার মনে পড়েনা
মনেপড়ে স্বপনের সেই মুখ,
কী জানি কেমন মায়ের মমতা কেমনই বা স্নেহের সুখ-দুখ।
কেবল মনে পড়ে সেই মুখ
কল্পনা আর স্বপ্ন দিয়ে ঘেরা।

কেমন করে জানবো তারে
মা যে আমার অনেক দূরে,
মায়ার বাঁধন ছিন্ন করে
দূর ভুবনের পারে।

Part II

Reflective Essays

7.

Tsampa: The Poetics of Food

Pema Dolkar

Being a political refugee is living in a constant state of in-betweens—always being part of something but never wholly belonging. In our constant effort to make sense of a home in a land we can't really call ours, our food is a symbol of collective memory of a home we left behind and a perpetual hope of a home we wish to build in a foreign land. After 60 years of being in exile, as any other immigrants, Tibetan refugees everywhere in the world are trying to preserve their culture and identity, including their food culture. *Tsampa*, flour ground from roasted barley, has been eaten by Tibetans for centuries. It is an integral part of the people's life, and countless generations of Tibetans have grown up eating Tsampa as the only staple food. Tsampa can be eaten as paak, barley flour kneaded with butter and tea made into size of a dumpling. It can also be made into semi-solid paste known as "Jhamdur," which is made by adding tsampa to a larger quantity of salted yak butter tea, or "Tsamthuk," a porridge made by tsampa boiled in water with other ingredients of choice.

Tsampa signifies a political resistance of the Tibetan people who are in a balancing act of preserving culture on one hand and adapting to cultural norms of the host country on the other. As part of a political movement called "White Wednesday," many Tibetan households eat Tsampa on every Wednesday in an effort to introduce the tradition to younger generations. However, many parents like Tenzin, with young kids born in a foreign country, find it hard to pass this food culture to their kids. Tenzin, a chef, who owns a small Tibetan restaurant in Jackson Heights, Queens, NY, told me this story in a personal interview. As we sat in his restaurant decorated with Tibetan paintings and five color prayer flags, he said, "I have made some butter interesting for my kids," and showed me his innovative creation of Tsampa cake! It was sweet from the hint of chocolate and very nutty with the dried fruit, nevertheless maintaining the taste of Tsampa without overpowering the taste. He said although it is never the same as eating paak, he wants his children to remember the taste as they grow older, quickly adding that it is the most popular dessert in his restaurant. He said, "At first my kids wouldn't even touch Tsampa, they said that it's too strong for their taste or it makes their stomach ache," with the clear disappointment on his face. I refrained from smiling, as I was reminded of myself as a kid.

My own experience with Tsampa as a kid hasn't been the fondest; however, looking back now, it is the only vivid memory I have with my grandma. As a child, health isn't the most important factor in choosing a food. I have always sworn by the rule that I will eat the food only if it tastes good on my seven-year-old tongue. My grandmother, however, was always a step ahead of me in making sure that I ate the very last "Paak." As I stood by the old wooden table rubbing my eyes, my grandma would fold her chupa sleeves and carefully take out a few spoons of the tsampa, and put it in the wooden tsampa bowl. As the morning ray of light beamed in through the window, I could see

the fine barley dust soaring in the ray when my grandma added a blob of yak butter to the bowl of tsampa, making the flour dust fly around. She would then add the hot butter tea on top of the blob of butter and bring the butter to melt into the round of the bowl. Despite being in her sixties with many decades of farm labor taking toll on her health, I remember her slender fingers, decorated with wrinkles and scars, create magic! With her left hand holding the tsampa bowl, and index and middle finger of her right hand in the tsampa bowl, she expertly mixed the ingredients together, twisting the bowl round. Finally, she would stick her whole fist and squeezed the tsampa mix until it became well kneaded. I remember all the times I have had a sulking face when she started to make it into a small, dumpling-size paak out of the kneaded tsampa and divided pieces between me and my brother. When she would hand me the bowl of paak, I would reluctantly take the bowl with my both hands (taking something from someone with one hand, especially an elder, is a sign of great disrespect; a lesson I have learned after many spankings from my mother). All the while, I was thinking of excuses to not eat at all or eat fewer dough than my brother. But my grandma never cared whether I have stomachache, or if I was not hungry, or if I had to pee, or someone was at the door. After a while, I gave up on my excuses and slowly started to take tiny bites of the paak. Eating paak alone is a bit dry so my grandma always gave us a warm cup of salty butter tea to go with it.

Tsampa connects me with the only memories I have of being a child because escaping to exile has stripped my childhood of much of its innocence. Every breakfast was a battle between me trying to pull a fast one and my grandma's trials with a picky eater. The battles I lost so badly, mostly ended with a lecture on how incredibly healthy Tsampa is. She would often lure me with stories of how my brother used to be small and weak, and become tall and strong after eating Tsampa, while my brother would stand up and start flexing, partly in support of my grandma's story and partly to annoy me. In retrospect, I should have continued eating Tsampa when I left for India at eight. If my grandma was still alive, she would probably blame my 5 feet, 2-inch height on not eating Tsampa.

In hindsight, those moments with my grandma have been my only vivid memory of my eight years in my home country. Being a political refugee and in our constant efforts to make sense of a home in a land one can't fully call one's own, Tsampa is not just a food, it's a shared experience of national history, struggles of accommodating multiple belongings and a memory of home we had to leave behind. The familiar taste that I used to dislike so much, became my solace, companion and a constant reminder of my grandma with the kindest eyes, as my life in exile prolonged.

8.

Retracing My Indo-Guyanese Migration Story Across Generations

Latchmie Dookie

Migration in my family started centuries before I was born. It began aboard the Exfoyle 1899 sailing non-stop from India to British Guiana. It was Great Britain's agenda to populate her colony and make a profit, but in reality she was planting my roots. She was moving precious cargo, politely labeled as indentured servants. After the abolishment of slavery, Great Britain imported indentured servants from India to fill the labor shortages on sugar estates in British colonies. Aleana No.81352, my great great grandmother, along with her five year old son, Dukhi No. 81463, migrated to British Guiana as indentured laborers. Under the indentureship, Aleana was obligated to work on sugar cane plantations for five years after which, she could either stay in British Guiana and purchase land or return to her home country.

I often ponder Aleana's decision to leave India. How could she leave her home? Did she not feel the Ganges boiling in her veins? I can only speculate what might have happened, but if there is one thing that history has taught me, it is to never underestimate the sacrifices a mother will make to protect her child. The year Aleana left India it was experiencing a devastating famine. Author, Kallie Szczepanski states, "In 1899, the monsoon rains failed in central India [...] Food crops and livestock died as the drought stretched [...] The Indian Famine of 1899-1900 killed millions of people - perhaps as many as 9 million in all." Providing for a family under those circumstances was close to impossible. Staying in India might have meant battling starvation, but which mother can stand still and watch her child starve? India might have been Aleana's birth place, but home was with her son. The journey to the unknown was dangerous, but it was also an opportunity for a new beginning. Aleana, like a true immigrant, brought her son to British Guiana with the belief that she could give him a better life, and she did.

Arriving in the green lands for the very first time, I can only imagine what a sight it might have been. She might have perceived the acres of land as blank canvases aching to be touched. Over the years, my family flourished in the new world with each generation standing on the shoulders of the last. I remember stories of my grandparents cutting fields of paddy with mere grass knives in their hands. We toiled the land as farmers and were rewarded with all that we needed and much more: culture, comfort and most importantly traditions. Traditions that unfortunately buried Aleana's story within my family's history.

Starting over is difficult for anyone, let alone a single mother in a new world with a strange language. Working in a man's world ankle deep in mud, cutting and carrying sugar cane is not the fairy tale a woman dreams of, but it was Aleana's reality. She worked long hours for very little, but she kept her son healthy and happy. Alean's sacrifices are the reasons I have a family. Yet my father

tells a different story of his family. He speaks of the glory of his grandfather, Old Dukhi, the man responsible for the development of our family. He is seen as the founding father and the breadwinner. It is as if his mother, Aleana, had never existed. Traditions set the balance of a man, and a woman's place in the family and society ensures that it stays that way. It seems impossible to these power hungry men that a woman is capable of navigating her own life and protecting her family. Aleana's hard work and sacrifices became a myth forgotten by my generation because the women in my family were seen as mainly homemakers and mothers. Most got married between the ages of 16 and 28, but no one ever seemed to object. It became the norm.

However my mother's family was different; she grew up in a home where her mother, a laborer, was the keeper of happiness and progress. She learnt at an early age that you have to work to achieve the things you want in life. My mother ensured that no matter the circumstances her children were given the best opportunities. She always believed that we have the power to shape our own destinies. So after four generations of Dukhies living in Guyana, my older sister was the first female to work a formal job. She started a revolution; one that I would soon follow. But where did I fit in this collage of unique women?

Growing up I've always been me, a clumsy combination of "What ifs" and "Maybes", challenging everything around and within me. I never quite understood why society's expectation of me was to get married. I wanted to be remembered for more than just a well-kept wife. I wanted to be me; so like the moon eager to catch the sun, not even traditions could stop me.

In 2014, I got my first job as a primary school teacher which is where my enthusiasm or hope in psychology was born. While I enjoyed learning with the children, I realized that they needed much more than academics. Unfortunately, from my experience Guyana's education system scarcely caters for mental health. So I decided that I was going to study psychology and spend my life helping children.

The greatest challenge I've experienced was telling my parents that I wanted to study psychology in the United States. It was like taking a shower while trying not to get wet. I was drenched. Suffocating with questions I was too embarrassed to answer. So, I did the only sane thing I could think of; I lied, feverishly. I told them everything they wanted to hear and eventually, they agreed that my happiness was worth more than grandchildren, and so my journey started. I was going to be an international student.

Though this was not my first flight to the United States, I felt a cold like no other. It was entwined within my bones and in every breath. I remember praying for it to be over. Was this going to be my life in New York? My eyes opened and I was greeted with a blanket of twinkling lights, all across the streets. There it was, a sudden surge of heat ran through my body. It was at that moment that I knew that I made the right decision. After disembarking at JFK, my sister picked me up from the airport with her overly excited smile and together we went to my New York happy place "IHOP". I know arriving in British Guiana Aleana did not see a blanket of twinkling lights or acres of virgin land. The true reasons for her journey still remains a mystery to me but I'm glad she took it. My great great grandmother, Aleana No.81352, started a cycle of hope that gave birth to generations of women built to carry the strains of the world on their shoulders. She was able to pass down land to her son and future generations. She created a legacy for her family. I will ensure that she's never forgotten through my continuation of her pioneering spirit and my telling of her story.

Works Cited

Szczepanski, Kallie. "The 1899-1900 Famine in India" ThoughtCo, 14th April, 2019, https://www.thoughtco.com/famine-in-india-nineteenth-century-195148. Accessed on 28th March, 2020.

9.

ABC Daughter

Becky Huang

As a child of an immigrant I am fortunate. I grew up in a life far removed from my mother's recollections. I never needed to ration what I ate, nor did I receive coupons from the government to exchange for commodities. I don't have siblings, but my mother tells me about hers—how her brothers swam to Hong Kong under the cover of darkness to find work. When I was little, she was very careful (a younger me would call it "strict") with my sugar intake. She warned me that if I ate too many sweets, I would end up getting diabetes, just like her. In later years, she would add that her diabetes was a result of eating too much sugar as a child. It took longer for her to tell me that she couldn't afford to be picky with her food, that meat was scarce, but at least there were coupons for grain. I grew up aware of my privilege. My childhood home could be described as a particularly wide corridor given walls, but I watched morning cartoons while my mom packed my lunchbox, because I hated the taste of cafeteria food.

There are certain things a fortunate child cannot tell her immigrant mother, however, like how it feels not knowing how to pay respects at a Buddhist temple, or always forgetting the major Chinese holidays because they are not listed on the calendar like Thanksgiving or Christmas. I am jealous of friends who easily navigate Chinese websites instead of needing a translating tool, and commiserate with friends who also laugh through family dinners without fully understanding the jokes. There is a dissociation that is difficult to discuss with my parents, because despite having lived in America for decades, they were never uncertain as to where they stood with their culture. I do not know how to explain the feeling, sometimes, that I am missing something by not growing up in Guangzhou, China, except that it is capable of conjuring in me wistfulness and errant envy.

There are names for us Chinese-Americans amongst the Chinese community, with a range of benign to derogatory connotations. The one most pertinent for me, as a Cantonese speaker, is the word "zuk-sing" (竹升). Firstly, the characters that devolve it are 竹 (zuk), meaning "bamboo" and 升 (sing), meaning "ascending." It was derived from the word "zuk-gong" (竹杠), meaning "a stick of bamboo." "Zuk-gong" refers to the bamboo plant as one strongly associated with Chinese culture, but is also hollow within. Thus, Chinese-Americans are visibly identified as someone with Chinese heritage, but lacking knowledge or practice of those customs. Bamboo is also a plant with high moisture absorbency and stores water in its cells. Another explanation is that knowledge from the Chinese or American culture pours through one end of the bamboo without exiting through the other side. The two lifestyles do not mix, so the Chinese-American is not part of either community. 杠 (gong) was substituted out because it was a homophone of 降 (gong), meaning "descend," and its antonym 升 (sing) was more auspicious.

However, this veneer of auspiciousness cannot hide the negative connotations of its etymology. When the word is closely tied to the idea of not-belonging, its subsequent usage creates a stereotype of a Chinese-American who can't speak their home dialect and is clueless about Chinese customs. The word, when directed at me, is often in conjunction with the speaker's surprise. Many times, I have been told that for a "zuk-sing," I speak Cantonese and Mandarin very fluently. Or, when I struggle to read and write Chinese characters, it was expected because I was "zuk-sing." It comes up rather often during work, because my coworkers equate my youth to their understanding that young Chinese-Americans are usually monolingual English-speakers. It is not malicious or used with ill-intent, but all the same it refers to and feeds the existing stereotype.

The stereotype, to be fair, has a basis in Chinese-Americans who aren't well-connected to their Chinese roots. However, it does not acknowledge the difficulty for us to do so. Standard education in America educates us in the English language and American customs while at the same time a child in China would grow up learning both Mandarin and Chinese culture. There are a limited number of weekend schools in NYC that offer lessons for Mandarin Chinese, fewer still for Cantonese, and neither of them will ever equate the hours spent learning in public schools. English fluency is stressed in essay composition, state standardized testing, and college entrance exams. In comparison, the stress to learn Chinese in America is very minimal. I expect many adults in the Chinese community to be ingrained with the idea that success in America is hand-in-hand with speaking English and celebrating American culture, because that has been the societal mindset for decades on a national level. It can also be difficult for Chinese families to practice their customs in the same manner as they would in China, even in culturally-rich communities like Chinatown. For one, not everyone lives in or near Chinatown, and may not have time to travel there for festivities. Another reason would be cost. This year, the cost of a box of mooncakes during the Mid-Autumn festival was around 40 USD. My family decided that tradition wasn't worth the expense.

Another issue with the stereotype of "juk-sing" is that it's too broad. Its usage extends to every Chinese-American, but not everyone fits the stereotype. Language fluency and understanding of the culture varies greatly. For example, I had a friend who spoke in accented Cantonese because their parents were fluent English speakers and that was the language they spoke at home. However, they were very knowledgeable about the various dragon dance troupes found in Chinatown. Another friend of mine is an avid reader of Chinese web fiction, but can't read Chinese. To circumvent this language barrier, she reads novels that have been translated to English by biliterate fans. Evidently, not every "juk-sing" can be slotted cleanly into the mold of "fake-Chinese," and it is important to take into consideration that many of us do try to embrace our roots.

In actuality, the word "juk-sing" alone isn't harmful. It is its usage along with the implication of the stereotype—the expectation of ignorance—that leaves a sour taste in my mouth. If the relationship between the word and the stereotype could be severed, we could reclaim the word and rewrite the meaning derived from "ascending bamboo." Instead of viewing bamboo as a plant with hollow insides betraying its outward appearance, its meaning could be taken from the fact the bamboo retains water. As Chinese-Americans, we absorb the cultures of both the land we reside and the heritage of our family, and store it within us. Water is water, no matter which end of the bamboo it was poured from, and we can use our combined knowledge to our advantage as we navigate a global community. We can subvert the stereotype by separating the word from any negative connotations. To start with, we could stay away from using "zuk-sing" in sentences that imply the Chinese-American wasn't fluent enough or knowledgeable enough to really be part of the community. By putting in this effort, we ensure that future generations of Chinese-Americans can take pride in being 竹升.

10.

My Personal and Academic Journey as I pursue my Career Goal

Chethana P. Gallage Dona

From vibrant India to dynamic South Korea and back to my home country, Sri Lanka, I have lived around the world. As a civil servant for Sri Lanka's diplomatic services, my father was reassigned to a different embassy every three to four years, taking my family to new settings, cultures, and perspectives. My nomadic lifestyle has come both with its benefits and drawbacks. Physical distance from friends and relatives often makes me nostalgic about the past. However, the experiences gained through my travels have allowed me to gather a unique toolkit of perspectives, which I continue to use as I settle in the United States to pursue a future in medicine.

As a six-year-old, in South Korea, I was selected to participate in a TV program that took children from diverse backgrounds to experience the world through the eyes of different professionals. One day, I would find myself at a fire station learning how to use a fire hose, while another day, I would be at a hospital learning how doctors tend to their patients. Parallel to the program, I had a chance to attend Dr. Von Hagens' Body Worlds anatomical exhibition of real human bodies, leaving me in awe of the complexity that exists inside us. The inquisitive spirit that a TV program instilled in me as a child, coupled with the immersive visuals of the exhibition, sparked an interest in biology and anatomy, which nine years later persuaded me to explore the medical field, as I started my high school education in India, in 2010.

While living in India, after having witnessed vast health disparities that plunged the worryingly high number of the nation's orphans, I decided to volunteer at an under-resourced orphanage. Most of the children suffered from advanced-stage health conditions, yet they strove to maintain a semblance of a "normal" life despite their visible pain and malnourishment. In my stay, I spoke with a young boy, "Ali," whose deteriorating heart condition resulted from the lack of accessible medical care. If Ali had the proper healthcare he needed, his quality of life would not have taken a diminishing turn. I learned from this experience that medicine does not always reach everyone. It is the need to expand access to medical care, combined with my values of providing compassionate and culturally competent healthcare for children like Ali and vulnerable communities, that motivated me to pursue a career as a physician.

Upon my return to Sri Lanka, I was introduced to the nuances of medicine with the death of my grandmother due to colorectal cancer. As my family's attention shifted towards my grandmother, wanting to help, I started scouting the sections of my school library for books and the web for medical journals, treatments, and advice. This provided me with an introduction to the theoretical world of medicine, through which I developed an overwhelming interest in the complexity of the human body. The reality of medicine gradually unveiled to me when I tagged along to my grandmother's hospital

visits. Sitting beside her hospital bed, I saw how the doctors came and went, and was amazed by how they interacted without showing a hint of the pressure they faced every day. As busy as they were, they provided great care to my grandmother and answered my family's questions. Thanks to their efforts, my grandmother lived a year longer than initially anticipated and, in turn, made me want to become a reliable, competent physician who would keep the patient's and their family members' best interests at heart.

In 2015, my father's next overseas appointment took me to New York, where, lacking the credits necessary to attend college, I enrolled in a High school equivalency exam preparation program at LaGuardia Community College (LaGCC). This program also allowed me to volunteer at the Mt. Sinai Hospital, where I assisted patients and their families to navigate the hospital system, specifically the emergency department. With empathy, I listened to patients' concerns and learned about the importance of tailored care for each patient to ensure their successful healing. As research is the stepping stone to future clinical practice, I pursued a research opportunity in the Natural Sciences department of LaGuardia Community College in 2017-18, wherein I studied chromosomal DNA repair mechanisms using the mycobacterial model system, a project with implications in cancer treatment (Dona et al., 2018). As I worked with my mentor to learn various molecular biology and microbiology laboratory techniques, and new scientific concepts, I also refined and improved my time optimization and science presentation skills.

My junior year of college overlapped with the end of my father's assignment in New York, and it was time for my family to return to Sri Lanka. Wanting to continue my educational path in the U.S., I became an international student. This was challenging because I could not apply to many opportunities which kept me from gaining experience as a premedical student, and also placed a financial burden on me. Around the same time, I transferred from LaGCC to Hunter College and the novelty of these experiences impacted my academics. Rather than being discouraged, I worked tirelessly to improve my grades and gain valuable work experiences. I landed a summer research internship in 2019 in a lab affiliated with Weill Cornell Medicine and the Hospital for Special Surgery. Here, I studied the mechanisms by which inflammatory agents produce lower back pain by looking at their age-related upregulation using DNA and protein analyses (Vincent et al., 2020). Looking back at both of my former research experiences, although my initial failed attempts in science experimentation were discouraging, I overcame them by investigating where the error occurred, refining my technique, and repeating the experiment. Altogether, these experiences have instilled in me meticulous organization, perseverance, and discipline; lessons I will apply to both my personal and professional journey.

Recently, after graduation, I was offered a full-time position as a research technician where I am involved in a wide range of animal and clinical studies, to improve the quality of life in patients with Osteogenesis Imperfecta. I am very excited to be working with an interdisciplinary team of physicians, researchers, nurses, social workers, and other providers to obtain the best possible care and outcomes for the patients. My job is teaching me the importance of dynamic teamwork, which allows for greater emphasis on patients' best interests, all while building trust within the team and with the patients.

In summary, I feel my different experiences in my educational journey across different countries have led to a resolute determination of becoming a physician who is passionate about treating everyone with compassion, dignity, and respect. With the understanding that people are more than their medical conditions, I would like to approach care holistically by listening to my future patients' stories. Because of my experiences at the Indian orphanage and the health disparities I have seen in the U.S., I am specifically committed to advocating for the vulnerable and underprivileged communities as a future physician. My background and experiences with diverse cultures have equipped me with

the necessary tools to become a high-quality healthcare provider, who is passionate about delivering holistic care to her patients.

References:

Chethana P. Gallage Dona, Sarah Rodriguez, and Richa Gupta. Role of RecO in the DNA break repair mechanisms of mycobacteria. 2018 CRSP Symposium at John Jay College on July 24; 2018 Undergraduate Research Symposium at the Icahn School of Medicine, Mount Sinai on Oct 13.

Kathleen Vincent, Chethana P. Gallage Dona, Todd J. Albert, and Chitra Lekha Dahia. Age-related molecular changes in the lumbar dorsal root ganglia of mice: Signs of sensitization, and inflammatory response. JOR Spine. 2020 Sep 13;3(4):e1124.

Part III

Critical Essays

11.

The *Sinahi*: The New Moon Necklace

Edward Molina

The crescent moon-shaped necklace known as the *Sinahi* has been found in ancient *Chamoru* (Chamorro) burial sites dated from 800 A.D. to 1700 A.D. The symbolic meaning of the *Sinahi* to the ancient *Chamoru* people has long been lost. However, the *Chamoru* youth of today still wear the *Sinahi* as a symbol of their heritage. Our story will explore the past and present of the *Sinahi* on Guahan (Guam), how it was made, and how it helps the modern culture of the *Chamorus* discover our ancient past.

The *Chamoru* people settled in the Mariana Islands at least 4,000 years ago. During this time, our ancestors thrived on land and sea. *Inafa' maolek* (respect, balance, and interconnectedness) was central to the way of life. Our contact with foreigners disrupted our way of living. They came with their education, and we were educated their way. We learned their language, but they did not

learn ours. If we did have a history, we were told to forget it because it was a history of savages. Their manners and ways of living became our motto. Suddenly we open our eyes and see our land being exploited. Our ancestors were murdered and enslaved, our values discarded, and our culture vanishes. Now we try to sift through the mess to identify what is our culture and what is not. Our present awareness attempts to build a nation from a U.S. colony. In the 1970s, the United States experienced a wave of black, brown, red, and yellow nationalist movements. In Guam, this manifested in a cultural renaissance that had prominence, social, and political implications. In the early 1990s, Guam witnessed the birth of *I Nasion Chamoru*, a grassroots indigenous rights movement. On April 27, 1992, *I Nasion* occupied the local governor's complex in Adelupe for five months, forcing the provincial government to enforce the *Chamoru* Land Trust Act. By law, only persons identified as indigenous *Chamoru* can own Guam's land, as written in the Act. Besides their political action, *I Nasion* members became widely known for their traditional body ornamentation, whose founder, Angel L.G. Santos, wore a *Sinahi* neckpiece used as a political standpoint against the U.S. government. It is evidence of our long-lost ancient heritage, an indigenous identity that has become more prominent today. A long-time tradition, I hope, will continue to thrive.

The moon has played a role in many cultures throughout the history of time. The same can be said about the *Chamoru* culture. As in ancient cultures, the creation of art in the context of jewelry is a manifestation of one's identity and sense of adornment to one's body. Each ancient culture developed this, and the *Chamoru* people were no exception. In the shape of a half-moon, the new moon (no moon phase), the *Sinahi* is a symbolic necklace that signifies a beginning. It references the first moon, the new moon's shape, and its use as a timeline. The *Sinahi* has been found in ancient pre-contact *Chamoru* gravesites, among other artifacts. The *Chamoru* people can be found on Guam, Saipan, Tinian, and Rota, which make up the Commonwealth of the United States. Male warriors dove in the ocean beyond the reef, picked up these giant clamshells, and then brought them back on land to carve them off. Cut from fossilized giant *Hima* (tridacna) saltwater clams, the *Sinahi* symbolizes *Chamoru* culture, suggesting power and greatness. Archaeologists have discovered the first *Sinahi* on a tiny island called Saipan, a thirty-minute flight across Guam in the Pacific Ocean. It was seen to be much denser and heavier, weighing around two pounds. Recent discoveries have also found the *Sinahi* to contain basalt (volcanic rock), suggesting different villages used other materials. Red and orange Spondylus (spiny oyster shell), *Ifit* (wood), and animal bones are pieces that were cut by hand. Back then, it would take a year to carve a *Hima Sinahi*, and the shaping of animal bones took over a year to make. Rocks were used to shape the *Hima* into a crescent moon, and it was not carved in a solid white piece. Some natural blemishes can be seen on the *Sinahi*. Like the moon, it represents the different lunar phases to see various shades of light gray and brown speckling in it.

Men who had an important position in the family or village wore the *Sinahi*. They can be seen wearing a neckpiece around their neck to signify their status and accomplishments. One example is when men decide to cut down trees and use the wood during the first moon because it is believed during this time, building a home is twice as hard since there was no present moonlight. The chief of the tribe (*maga'låhi*), on the other hand, is a symbol of strength and leadership as he is the head of the clan and the entire village. The significance of the *Sinahi,* worn by the *maga'låhi,* is that he is considered the new moon after proving himself worthy and respected overall. It is only then he would acquire power and greatness from the clan and entire village.

The *Chamoru* culture during the pre-contact period used the *Sinahi*. Now when society began to develop further, the art began to thrive. These are icons that have become symbolic when changes in society have become more rapid. The people want a sense of identity, a sense of place to display their heritage. Modern-day *Sinahi*, or brightly colored Spondylus necklaces, are not only made from giant clams today. Indigenous jewelry-makers of my generation have begun to mass-produce the

Sinahi in Guam and overseas from various other shells, such as abalone shells. Ancient stones, cow bone, intertwined fishhooks, deer horn, whalebone, clay molds, wild boar tusks, fishbone, and *carabao* (water buffalo) horn are now used. The use of power tools to shape the shell and sandpaper to smooth the pendant down is applied. The main focus is to keep the necklace as natural-looking as possible, to keep it similar to what our ancestors may have worn. Unique creations include a blue coral *Sinahi* with a red oyster inlay, three-headed dragon orange oyster necklaces, and contemporary fish-shaped pendant necklaces, to name a few.

Fortunately, there has been a resurgence in traditional *Chamoru* jewelry making in the last decade. As a native of Guam, today's primary objective is cultural awareness, so the materials used are unnecessary. Though the *Hima* symbolizes Guam or a piece of the ocean, a neckpiece made out of this giant clamshell is highly recommended for island locals and tourists. This distinction reveals Guam's broader political, economic, social context and relationship to the United States. As *I Nasion* members continue to fight against the U.S. government for stolen lands dating back to the 1960s, the symbolic meaning of the *Sinahi* continues to grow as the island itself continues to develop and modernize into an independent nation. Now it is common to see men and women wearing carved shells symbolic of ancient *Chamoru* times that signify the island's unity against oppression and U.S. occupation. Anyone can wear a *Sinahi* if they know its cultural significance, even if they are not *Chamoru*. True artisans with indigenous roots say their pieces must be earned by their wearers and worn with respect for *Chamoru* ancestors. They will ask the reason why one wants the *Sinahi*. It is believed one does not have to have the largest piece, which is usually desired. One's karma, one's character, and the person's spirit is what make the piece enormous. For people who ask for the *Sinahi* to be made large into a pendant, this logic will not be understood; hence, their request will be denied. *Sinahi* nowadays is not something a true artisan would typically make.

On the other hand, it appears that hundreds of *Chamoru* locals nowadays are creating replicas of *Sinahis*—a "*Sinahi* R Us" syndrome focused on making a profit. True artisans feel as a carver, one must refine one's work as one grows, one's skills should be growing, and one's refinement is the ultimate goal. The *Chamoru* people are known to pass down this knowledge to the next generation. Though the people have so much westernized influence in their lives, that influence makes locals feel like they have to have what money can buy and what foreigners want us to buy. True artisans do not like working for money that is perceived as not right. It is always nice to earn money, but it is thought that the dollar sign should not be the main reason that dictates why one is carving a *Sinahi* overall.

The *Chamoru* culture is precious, and we have so much to be proud of and thankful for. We are the first civilization in Micronesia, in this region of the Pacific, and we have been here the longest. That means we have had the most time to accumulate so much knowledge and wisdom. Back then, the way one earns their jewelry and gains one's status is through their accomplishments. Nowadays, it is not the same because not everybody goes hunting and fishing; not everybody can do the same things that would qualify them to have earned their adornment. So now I guess our tradition has become a little bit more lenient. The primary function of the *Sinahi* acts as an anchor, a symbolic meaning to our 4,000-year ancient history. It represents our values and principles of *inafa' maolek*, central to our way of living life. It is also important to recognize that the *Chamoru* society is matrilineal. *Chamorus* believed in the ultimate power of women as the source of life and the controller of their environment. "In the home, it is the woman who rules, and her husband does not dare give an order contrary to her wishes, nor punish the children, for she will turn upon him and beat him."

I look forward to learning more about the female version of the *Sinahi* shaped like the full moon when the research of this precious archaeological finding will be disclosed in the future.

Works Cited

Aguon, Julian (Winter, 2008). Comment: Other Arms: The Power of a Dual Rights Legal

Strategy for the Chamoru People of Guam Using the Declaration on the Rights of

Indigenous Peoples in U.S. Courts. *University of Hawai'i Law Review*, 31, 113. https://advance-lexis-com.rpa.laguardia.edu/api/document?collection=analytical-materials&id=urn:contentItem:4WD7-WHK0-00CV-P0RJ-00000-00&context=1516831.

Babauta, Chloe B. "Keeping the Art of Chamoru Jewelry Making Alive." *Pacific Daily News*, Pacific Daily News, 18 Mar. 2018, https://www.guampdn.com/story/news/2018/03/18/linala-chamoru-keeping-art-chamoru-jewelry-making-alive/402209002/.

—— "Chamorro Jeweler Creates Unique, Traditional Necklaces." *Pacific Daily News*, Pacific Daily News, 5 Jan. 2017, https://www.guampdn.com/story/life/2017/01/04/chamorro-jeweler-creates-unique-traditional-necklaces/96098596/.

Bennett, Jesi Lujan. "Guam Museum/Guam and Chamorro Education Facility, Hagatna, Guahan." The Contemporary Pacific, vol. 29, no. 1, 2017, pp. 195–197.

Cunningham, Lawrence J. *Ancient Chamorro Society.* Honolulu: The Bess Press, 1992. *Guam Palau CNMI FSM News*, www.pacificislandtimes.com/single-post/2017/09/30/Feds-sue-Guam-over-Chamorro-land-restrictions.

Hezel, Francis X. "Towards a Theology of the Chamoru: Struggle and Liberation in Oceania (Book Review)." The Contemporary Pacific, vol. 23, no. 2, 2011, pp. 548–550.

Hoppe-Cruz, and Kisha. "I Kareran I Palabran Mami-the Journey of Our Words." *ScholarSpace at University of Hawaii at Manoa: Home*, 1 Jan. 1970, https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10125/24267.

Hotta, Gina. "Guam Hopes for a Vote." *Asianweek*, Dec, 2008, pp. 5.

Illarmo, Christina. "U.S. Military Plans Mega-Base for Guam (Guahan): Women Organizers Lead Opposition." Peace and Freedom, vol. 70, no. 2, 2010, pp. 4–5. *KUAM.com-KUAM News: On Air. Online. On Demand.*, https://www.kuam.com/story/36916393/2017/11/Friday/did-ancient-chamorros-really-wear-the-sinahi.

Ladd, Harry S. Bridge - Southern Marianas I (Guam, Saipan, Tinian, Rota), May 2 - June 13, 1946. 1946.

Lizama, Tricia, et al. How Are Traditional Chamoru Healing Practices Being Perpetuated and Preserved in Modern Guam: A Phenomenological Study, 2011, pp. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

Na'Puti, Tiara R. "Speaking the Language of Peace: Chamoru Resistance and Rhetoric in Guåhan's Self-Determination Movement." Anthropologica, vol. 56, no. 2, 2014, pp. 301–313.

—— and Michael Lujan Bevacqua. "Militarization and Resistance from Guåhan: Protecting and Defending Pågat." *American Quarterly*, vol. 67 no. 3, 2015, p. 837-858. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/aq.2015.0040.

Nash, Phil. "Washington Journal: Anonymous Mailer Hurts Democracy, Not Rep. Underwood." Asianweek, 2002, p. 9.

Owen, Amy. "Bamboo!! Improving Island Economy and Resilience with Guam College Students." Journal of Marine and Island Cultures, vol. 4, no. 2, 2015, pp. 65–75.

Perez, Teresita. "I Hinanao-Ta Nu I Manaotao Tåno' I CHamoru Siha (The Journey of the CHamoru People)." Contemporary Pacific, vol. 31, no. 2, 2019, pp. 576–580.

Souder, Laura M. T. *Daughters of the Island—Contemporary Chamorro Women Organizers on Guam*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America; Micronesian Area Research Center (MARC), University of Guam, 1992.

Tydingco, Eric (Director), (1996). Chamoru Dreams. Honolulu, HI: Pacific Islanders in Communications. [Streaming Video]. Retrieved from video.alexanderstreet.com/watch/chamoru-dreams database Wyttenbach-Santos, Richard. "Micronesia in Review: Guam." Contemporary Pacific, vol. 10, no. 1, 1998, p. 180.

12.

Orientalism and the Exoticization of the Brown Asian Body

Brianna Jo Hobson

According to Edward Said, Palestinian American professor, founder of post-colonial studies, and author of the book, *Orientalism*, Orientalism is a socio-economical fantasy conjured up by the West. It, in essence, is indicative of a distribution of power strategically established by European and Western imperial and colonial exploits. Orientalism has been the force for the domination, erasure, predation, and displacement of colonized peoples. Orientalism is not exclusive to race but is a conscious act of *othering*. Orientalism includes the subjugation, pillaging, co-opting, discrimination of Asian peoples, and stereotyping of their culture. Suheir Hammad, Palestinian American poet, feminist, activist, and spoken word performer, commonly tackles thematic issues pertaining to race, war, disenfranchisement, and bondage in her transgressive poetry. Her poem, "Not Your Erotic, Not Your Exotic" turns racial stereotypes manufactured by Orientalism on its political head, by confronting the exoticization, fetishization, and commoditization of the brown Asian body. Her poem seeks to controvert the difference, presenting Asian people as *people*; not objects to be owned or masses of countries to be overpowered and overthrown.

According to Asian American Studies scholar Sylvia Shin Huey Chong - as she writes about Orientalism in the textbook, *"Keywords for Asian American Studies"* - "The 'Orient' only exists as a figment of the European imagination. It is done by lumping together disparate peoples from Asia and Africa into an undifferentiated mass of colonial subjects, slaves, servants, and unwanted immigrants" (Schlund-Vials et al., 182). Orientalism thrives on the presumed and theorized difference of the 'Orient' by illustrating the people as exotic, foreign, primitive, savages. Orientalism, in fact, refers to both "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'The Orient' and 'The Occident' and an academic field in which theories about the East are applied (Said 2). The 'Orient' is defined as the conglomerate countries of Asia, especially Eastern Asia, and 'Occident' are "the countries situated in the West, especially in Europe and America. Edward Said writes that "The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (Said 5). In the realm of literary criticism, theory, cultural studies, and post-colonialism, Orientalism is as much historical and geographical as it is social and political. There are direct ties to structuralism and language. Similarly, as detailed in the Introduction of his book, *Orientalism*, Said describes "The Orient as an integral part of European material civilization and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part, culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines" (Said 2).

Said states, "The Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that has given it reality and presence in and for the West" (Said 5). While the 'Orient' as a geographical region, does exist in reality, the idea of Orientalism is a conceptual theory

or way of thinking that originated in Europe and in the West as a way to suppress narratives and dominate what is said about the East. Said elaborates this mere detail when he notes, "that the East was a career" and "American interest in the Orient was political" (Said 5, 12). With the practice of Orientalism and Orientalist notions, the Eastern narrative is usurped by the West. In turn, the West solely speaks on behalf of the East, "Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as a corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it making a statement about it, authorizing views of it [..], and as a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient," which is in itself, is problematic (Said 3). Basically, if you are not from Asia, what gives you the right to write discourses on the 'Orient'? You see, this is a testament to inexplicable power. The West can write about the East but very little is written from the Eastern perspective about the West. Said says, "Orientalism unilaterally determines what can be said about the Orient" (Said 3). The problem lies in the complexity of this generality. So who gets to decide what an 'Oriental' is and what the 'Orient' looks like? Analogous to race and ethnic structures, Orientalism is a social and political-driven construct that is based on the assumption that the East is not "an inert fact of nature" but almost entirely man-made. In short, the theory of Orientalism is a hyper-illusory fallacy (Said 4).

The interesting thing about Edward Said is his belief that the creation of the Orient is not entirely false or fictional. He asserts the fact that the 'Orient' *exists*, but he deducts that the predominant problem with Orientalism is the presence of a one-sided perspective. This is evident in the fact that Europe and the West can talk and write freely about the East but the East can or will not reciprocate. Withal, this corroborates the notion that Orientalism is about power dynamics and distribution, and is primarily about who gets to say what about whom. It is the act of erasure and of whitewashing history that makes Orientalism, an inimical construction. Orientalism was created to speak on behalf of the 'Orient'. Said emphasizes that "Orientalism is not a European fantasy about the Orient but is a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment" (Said 6). This itself is detrimental because of the presence of inherent bias. It is easy to see why so many stereotypes about the 'Orient' persist even today, especially when you look at the behemothic influence, the West still holds. Even by looking down, differentiating, and separating the West from the East in terms of culture, belief, customs, Orientalism has facilitated colonialism and effectively made historical incidents like slavery, indentureship, and forced migration, possible. With the teachings of Orientalism, people in positions of power have used these preconceived differences to treat Asian groups as the *Other*.

When Edward Said talks about Orientalism, "The Orient was almost a European invention– a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences," he talks about the romanticization and exoticization of the brown body and experience (Said 1). The binary becomes that of submissive exotic or bushy-tailed savage. In her spoken word poem, "Not Your Erotic, Not Your Exotic," Palestinian American writer Suheir Hammad touches on the depraved heart, root, and foundation of Orientalism. Her poem presents the idea that women of color are perceived as collective flesh to be sexually usurped or economically and politically conquered. This idea is seen in the poem's first line, "Don't wanna be your exotic" (line 1), and later, "Don't seduce yourself with my otherness" (lines 11-13). The brown body is effectively terminated as a living thing or person and devolves into, rather an artifact or contrivance. For example, when she says, "In fact, nasty necrophilia cause my beauty is dead to you, I am dead to you" (lines 20-23), Hammad pictures a culture that is exploited, utilized for perversion, a body that is traumatized, dehumanized and left empty with death. Because of Orientalism, women of color are seen as what the subject craves the most and in turn, they become a projection of desires, devoid of their own will and autonomy. By employing the words, "necrophilia" (line 23) and "dead," (line 24), Hammad willfully and painstakingly uses metaphors of violence to provoke thought and, in its purest form, elicit a reactionary cry of protest.

When Hammad describes herself as, "Some dark, fragile colorful bird" (line 2), she uses animal symbolism to depict an allegory of predation, vulnerability, and isolation. The bird is colorful and seen as precious but is despite this, "imprisoned" (line 3) and enclosed in a cage, "In a land foreign to the stretch of her wings" (line 4). There is a connotation of learned helplessness as well. Be as it may, the bird will want to fly away but is still caught in a cyclical tangle of assimilation, shame, guilt, and cultural-washing-away. Additionally, the bird-in-a-cage metaphor could be a substitution, to symbolize the mass incarceration of women of color and people of color in America. Hammad ends the poem with a catalog of various stereotypes often surrounding women of color, even more specifically, Caribbean women, South Asian women, East Asian women, Middle Eastern, Muslim women, indentured and enslaved women, and Black women. The terms "harem" (line 27), "geisha"(line 27), "belly dancer" (line 29), and "Hottentot venus" (line 30), are all references to stereotypes depicted about women of color over the course of history that reflect Orientalism. For instance, Hottentot Venus or Sara "Saarttjie" Baartman was a woman from Africa who was presented on stage and in cages in London and in France as a "freak show attraction." Her body, namely her buttocks were of particular interest. She was objectified, dehumanized, raped, dissected among other things and when she died, vestiges of her body including her genitalia and labia were put on display for the next 100 years. Only in 1976, was it removed and sent back to her birthplace in South Africa. This antiquated term "Hottentot", Baartman's name and her history alone, recognizes and compels the reader to confront the malignant effects of Orientalism and of the systematic act of *othering*. Women of color have always been treated as lesser or as an object of fetishized desire or an artificial oddity of some sort. Hammad revisits these sets of particular stereotypes to say, *I am not yours and I am not your Other.* Suheir Hammad's work navigates Orientalist notions, detailing ways that the brown body, experience, and identity has been appropriated, commodified, and relegated to that of subhuman. With this, Hammad provides her own inter-webbing parallels of race, ethnicity, politics, and sex.

All in all, Orientalism seems to be a surface perception. How can one write truthfully and without bias, about a world, a culture, and a group of people that one may know nothing about? And if Orientalism is a Western invention, why has the idea persisted and permeated almost all areas of culture, academics, language, and society? This ubiquity, I reckon is a verifiable testament to the distribution of power of the West and doubly indicative of the repercussions of national colonialism. Stereotypes and unfounded notions are only upheld by active consciousness, ignorance, and lack of awareness. As long as people continue to believe in them, they will naturally grow with forcefulness and pervasiveness. Effectively, Orientalism still exists in nuanced forms. It's in the everyday language we use, the stereotypes we give validity to, the biases we unconsciously and consciously feed, and in the way we view cultures and people different from us. Furthermore, stereotyping, fetishization, and eroticization of brown and Asian bodies, is unacceptable.

If Orientalism was created as a result of exaggerated or perceived differences between Eastern and Western cultures and peoples then perhaps we should highlight our similarities, our shared traumas, and overlapping histories instead. In a way, a sense of togetherness and active cultural awareness will erode away the systematic ideology and Orientalist notions that still permeate American and Western culture today.

Works Cited

Hammad, Suheir. "Not Your Erotic, Not Your Exotic." *Born Palestinian, Born Black: & The Gaza Suite.* UpSet Press, 2010.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism.* New York: Pantheon Books. 1978. Print.

Schlund-Vials, Cathy J., et al., editors. *Keywords for Asian American Studies.* New York University Press, 2015.

13.

“Illegal Immigrants”: The Rhetoric and Politics

Pema Dolkar

Immigration has been a part of political policies, media coverage, and public debates for centuries. Recently, in the United States specifically, the political and public discourse on immigration is fixated on the term “illegal immigrants.” Researchers often study the effects of policies that have paved the way for the construction of terms such as “illegal,” “undocumented,” or “unauthorized” rather than the *effects* of these terms in shaping public opinion and rhetoric on immigration. Instead of a policy prescriptive argument, which is undoubtedly an important one, this paper explores the uncritical use of the term “illegal immigrants” and its impact on the lives and the personhood of immigrant communities. Using personal narratives of people who identify with an immigrant background as the guiding framework for this exploration, this paper argues that the uncritical usage of terms such as “illegal” masks the complex realities experienced by immigrants and denies them the right to create and tell their own stories.

Words matter! Language matters! The effect of language is often very subtle on the human mind and yet can be very powerful. Many studies suggest that the language we speak “shapes the way we think and act” (Cottier). Because our words form the thoughts, the language that we use to describe someone has a profound effect on not only how we see them but how we project our perceptions onto them. “What’s in the name?” is one of the attitudes in the never-ending debates on the usage of terminologies when referring to unauthorized immigrants. The labels such as “illegal” immigrants, “illegal” aliens, or “undocumented immigrants” are used interchangeably in US media (Pearson, 2010) and most often uncritically in current political discourse and public discussions. Although these labels may or may not have the same denotation in a legal or formal sense, they can also have various connotations, especially for the individuals who identify and experience these labels in their socio-economic and political life. Some of the linguistic ways in which immigrants are portrayed are very typical, dehumanizing, and most often in divisive and exclusionary rhetoric.

Why do people migrate? One of the most typical and often very deceptive portrayals of the immigrants is how coming to a new country has changed their lives for the good. Several myths such as “The walls are covered with gold” or that a new land provides “better life,” “better opportunity” is a typical trope which is often misused by anti-immigrant sentiments to justify their arguments that “illegal immigrants” are taking away the American jobs or British jobs, etc. There are indeed many economic pull factors that make some of the richer countries more attractive to immigrants, but for many, the decision to migrate is a choice between life and death. From her poem “Home,” spoken word poet Warsan Shire recites, “no one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark......no one puts their children on boat unless the sea is safer than the land.” When the choice is between life and death, does one really have a choice? In her short story “Lost in Translation,” acclaimed Polish

writer Eva Hoffman narrates the journey of a thirteen-year-old Jewish girl fleeing Poland with her family to Canada in a ship crossing the ocean. Even as a kid, she understands the pain of having no choice but to leave her home. At thirteen, she describes the emigration as "a crushing, definitive finality that to [her] might as well mean the end of the world" (Ahmad 40). Millions migrate to a new country, but the promise of a better life is hardly kept. *The Penguin Book of Migration Literature*, a compilation of short stories and poems by immigrant authors, challenges some of these conventional wisdom and plots. For instance, in David Dabydeen's set of poems "Coolie Mother" and "Coolie Son," written in creole in the aforementioned book, tells the story of the coolie mother's hopes, dreams, and expectations of her Guyanese son's new life in England while Harilal, the coolie son, continues his life as a sanitary worker in England with a dream of becoming a lawyer or a doctor someday. While he puts a positive spin when writing to his family back home about his life and work in England, there is a visible sense of detachment when he says "dey say" (205) when describing England. It was almost as if he doesn't agree with how glamorous England is, because it is a place far and unlike what he identifies as home. Mexican writer Francisco Jimenez in his short story "Under the Wire" portrays the decision of a family to leave everything behind believing that by crossing the *la frontera* of Mexico they can "make a good living in California" only to find themselves living in makeshift camps with a promise of work being delayed. For many immigrants the harsh journeys to a new country and their arriving there means living even more precarious and uncertain lives.

How can a human's existence be "illegal"? In recent US political debates, the term "illegal" immigrant is used uncritically to create a rhetoric of dehumanization and exclusion of immigrants. Some of the words that circulated in the media and public discussions are "infest," "bad hombre," "Mexicans are rapists," and "English only" sentiments, among many others. Such rhetoric results in the constant "othering" of the immigrant and marginalization of an already vulnerable group of people. Such discourses have an immense psychological impact on immigrants, especially, the teenagers and young adults who are at a stage where they internally negotiate their identity and start seeing how they are represented within the larger socio-economic, political, and psychological aspects of the societies they live in. In Algerian writer Mehdi Charef's "Tea in Harem" (Ahmad 200), Malika and her son Majid, an Algerian immigrant family living in France, beautifully portrays the tensions of personal and sociological negotiation that immigrants are compelled to make when living in a country far away from home. Majid feels like he is stuck between two cultures and two languages, of which he is both a part of but can't belong wholly. Majid precisely captures the double consciousness of immigrants and people with a hyphenated identity. Coming in a new country, the identity negotiation is a central issue for immigrants not only because they are faced with conflicting moral, cultural, and language distinctions but also because of the denigrating linguistic representation of immigrants as a whole that often amplifies the microaggression, racism, and anti-immigrant sentiments.

Where do they belong? The current narrative of immigration is undoubtedly an adverse one but also a very simplistic and linear story; a very impoverished family from a conflict-torn area come to a new country in search of a better life. Immigration to a new country is looked at as a finality, if not a happily-ever-after ending. But migration is also an ongoing decision-making process, as well as a journey to return home, even in concept. No matter how abstract it may be, people often have an idea of home they have left behind and live with a hope to return someday. "A Conversation" by Egyptian writer Pauline Kaldas, tells the story of a couple who have lived in the US for forty years and are having a conversation about returning to Egypt. While the wife is rejecting the idea, the husband has a very idealist plan for his retirement. He tells his wife that in Egypt he will be respected unlike in America where he was looked down as "cockroaches walking in their land" (255). On the other hand, his wife argues that forty years is a lifetime and that they have built a family and life together in America so returning is not an option for her. The argument continues and the story beautifully captures the pain of leaving and the hope of returning and everything in between. Both the characters share the sentiment that they don't belong in America. For the husband, at least, his heart lies in

Egypt. When the public opinions and political debates depict unauthorized immigrants as "illegal," the label becomes this overarching image of the migrants which in turn shadows the complexity and diversity of their stories.

Immigration has been a part of human history for centuries and therefore, it is neither a precedent set by the "caravan" nor a new issue that is being looked at as "controversial." How we perceive a migrant depends on what and how we describe them in the language we speak. Therefore, it is evident that language reinforces the status quo. Unless we decline to use terms such as "illegal" immigrants or find new ways to see immigrants more consciously and critically, the status will remain the same. The language in which the politicians, media and public discourses describe the immigrants have to be more conscious and more analytical. A criminal apprehension of immigrants on America's Southern border and putting kids in cages have played out as debates of policies between two political parties. But would it have happened if we had perceived them as human beings and not "illegals"?

As a Tibetan refugee, I have lived as a migrant in India, Nepal, and the United States after being forced to migrate from my home in Tibet. As my journey as a stateless person traverses through the variant culture and languages of the three countries, as well their complex citizenship routes, the search for a home has been perpetual. It is often found in a food, sometimes in a song, and mostly in my memories of my home in Tibet. Like many Tibetan refugees in America, we see our lives in a new country as a temporary stop before we go back to our homeland. Taking a refuge in American society is appealing to Tibetans for reasons other than better economic opportunities. America's characterization of cultural diversity and ethnic multiplicity is held as ideal for our effort of preserving our unique and ancient cultural traditions and language. Identity is a constant negotiation internally, within oneself, as well as socially. Therefore, conceptualizing migration in today's day and age, needs to be extended outside of the current narratives of immigration-citizenship nexus and the expectation of cultural integration, within the mainstream cultural society. It is to say that for an immigrant, there are many ways of being in American society as well as many ways of belonging. Therefore, instead of an argument about legality or the policy surrounding immigration, we have to look at the humane aspect of the immigration. Only then, we can understand that the immigration experiences are complex and multiple with commonalities as well as diversity. There is so much more to the immigrant story than the label "illegal" would ever allow.

Work Cited

Ahmad, Dohra and Danticat, Edwidge. *The Penguin Book of Migration Literature: Departures, Arrivals, Generations, Returns.* Penguin UP, 2019.

Cottier, Cody. "From Mouth to Mind: How Language Governs Our Perception of Gender," *Discover Magazine,*June 1, 2018. https://www.discovermagazine.com/mind/from-mouth-to-mind-how-language-governs-our-perceptions-of-gender

Dixon, Elle Graham. "Gendered Linguistics: Why Words Matter," *3percent Conference, YouTube,* November 26, 2018 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awvWRm-f87w

Fermoso, Jose. "Why speaking Spanish is becoming dangerous in America." *The Guardian*, May 22, 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/may/22/speaking-spanish-dangerous-america-aaron-schlossberg-ice

Mogge, Garret. ""Home" by Warsan Shire," *YouTube,* March 13, 2017 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nI9D92Xiygo

Pearson M. R. (2010) How "undocumented workers" and "illegal aliens" affect prejudice toward Mexican immigrants. *Social Influence*, 5(2), 118-132.

Rubio, Angelica. "Undocumented, Not Illegal: beyond the Rhetoric of Immigration Coverage. (MALA)." *NACLA Report on the Americas*, vol. 44, no. 6, 2011, p. 50

Sloan, Jennifer C. *Undocumented: Living in the Shadows.* CUNY Academic Works, 2019.

14.

How COVID-19 Has Affected The Indian Migrant Crisis*

Maaz Dorria

**Editor's Note: This piece reflects a political viewpoint that may not be shared by all.*

Every time I visit India, I encounter groups of people along the journey from the airport to my village in Ummarwada, Gujarat. I observe their faces, belongings, and sometimes question their destination. These people are Indian migrant workers who travel across hundreds of kilometers in order to support their families and lend their labor to build India's booming economy. They make up a large portion of the population in the country and form an integral part of its labor force. However, this workforce is the most ignored group of people in India, and their cries are muffled by the many factors that hold them down. Poverty and a social caste system are the main reasons why their struggles are not taken into account. This essay will examine how the migrant workforce in India was affected during the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020.

In her *National Geographic* article, "They Treat Us Like Stray Dogs: Migrant Workers Flee India's Cities" (2020), Nilanjana Bhowmick follows journeys of Indian migrant workers from cities to their homes in more rural villages in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, and explores the decisions they make to survive during a nationwide lockdown imposed by the Indian government. Bhowmick describes migrant workers as primarily farmers who become daily wage workers in order to pay off debts or earn money to maintain their land. As a part of the informal economy, they are unprotected by politicians and unions. This results in their wages being determined at the employer's discretion, and incurs a lack of job security. As a workforce entirely dependent on the economy, "when the lockdown went into effect, millions were left stranded and jobless" (Bhowmick). The coronavirus lockdown intensely affected the laborers depriving them of employment opportunities necessary for them to survive. With a sudden nationwide lockdown in place, this workforce lost their jobs instantly, with no timeline of re-employment or alternative opportunity to earn money.

However, as Bhowmick notes, in the midst of a deadly pandemic with limited aid from the Indian government, the migrants defied the challenges and walked:

> When the government closed borders and halted public transportation, hundreds of thousands of migrant workers... despite fears that they'd encounter the police, run out of food or water, or succumb to the searing heat... walked, cycled, and hitchhiked, often along the only route they knew: train tracks. Fathers carried children on their shoulders, women balanced belongings

on their heads, people squatted atop crowded trucks—all determined to find a way home. (Bhowmick Lines 35-41)

This reflects how migrant workers in India responded to the lack of resources from the nation's leaders in the midst of a lethal virus that threatened their lives. They decided to travel back home in order to secure their safety regardless of the lack of transportation. The absence of employment, transportation, aid and assurance caused millions to be forced to migrate home the only way they knew: on foot.

Though the causes of these two events were different, the 2020 migrant crisis due to COVID-19 lockdown and the 1947 Partition of India might evoke similar scenes and images such as families with bloody feet from walking hundreds of miles in the heat, people clamoring for food, and migrants fearing the police meant to protect them. Though the partition was fueled by religious and political conflict and the present migration was influenced by an unplanned nationwide lockdown that created havoc on lower class laborers, one could still draw parallels between the two events. Both events resulted in forced displacement where identity was used as a tool to discriminate and penalize. Bhoumick documents the experiences of a migrant named Mohan who states how during the journey, when the authorities dumped the water and food packets everyone fell over each other to grab their share: "When we ran out of water, we got down and collected water from nearby water bodies...In the cities they treat us like stray dogs, why would they treat us any better now?" (Bhowmick Lines 44-50). This describes the treatment of migrant workers, and how the pandemic has caused it to become even more conspicuous and serious. It also shows how the migrants have stopped expecting the nation's leaders to treat them properly.

Acclaimed Indian journalist Barkha Dutt further highlights the discriminatory attitude of the government by filming and documenting the experiences of the migrant workers' during lockdown through interviews that she kept posting on her Twitter handle. In an interview posted on May 6th to her official Twitter account, she follows and interviews a group of migrants travelling over 1300 Kilometers from the northern city of Udaipur to their villages. When asked why they chose to walk when there are alternatives, they responded by saying: "We didn't even know that they were open, and when we checked we were told they were closed." These people felt like walking was their only choice because they have given up on other modes of transportation. They believed they will die if they still kept waiting for the government to come to their rescue. Dutt notes: "If this human rights issue does not take a toll on your conscience, think about it from an economic perspective" (Twitter Barkha Dutt May 6 2020). I argue that if migrant workers are essential to India's economy, and make up a majority of the informal sector, their vow to never return to the cities that need them will greatly affect the rising economy that India prides itself in. Without them, the country might not remain stable.

Undeniably, the pandemic further exposed the intersection between caste and labor. Shruti Srivastava, in her article titled "How Coronavirus Has Brought Caste Discrimination Back for India's Migrant Workers" (featured in *ThePrint*), explores the effects of caste discrimination before, and during, the coronavirus pandemic. She documents the experience of a migrant named Raju Banskar, a 33-year-old man from the village of Aston, Madhya Pradesh, who believes the double stigma of coming from a lower caste and having traveled from New Delhi where the coronavirus is spreading has made it impossible to find a job. Before the nationwide lockdown when the government shut down India's informal labor sector, Raju was able to earn \$3-\$4 a day. Now, he is forced to travel back to his village to face caste discrimination. Banskar reflects: "Work created through government job programs are mostly allocated by the village headman to upper caste workers" (Srivastava Line

13). Forced to travel back home with the expectation of government support, he is left to deal with harassment and discrimination due to his caste.

Srivastava's research un-silences the pathetic conditions of the migrant workers; it throws light on how the government's response in declaring a sudden nationwide lockdown in March 2020 did not adequately support its millions of low-caste migrant workers. Before COVID-19, the separation among Indians was mostly governed by financial and social status. Now, because of the coronavirus, a new separation emerged; the Dalits (lowest caste) started to be perceived as "infected," thereby giving rise to a new form of ignorance. However, it is important to note that millions of commoners across the nation came to the rescue of these workers, providing them with food and clothing, as well as raising funds to aid their safe and quick return home. Humanity, I argue, prevails in the midst of all forms of crisis.

Works Cited

Ayuso, Tomas. *These Migrant Families Walked North for Safety. Now They Face Coronavirus.* 28 Apr. 2020, www.nationalgeographic.com/history/2020/04/these-migrant-families-walked-north-safety-now-they-face-coronavirus/.

Bhowmick, Nilanjana, and Photographs by Saumya Khandelwal. "'They Treat Us like Stray Dogs': Migrant Workers Flee India's Cities." *National Geographic*, 28 May 2020, www.nationalgeographic.com/history/2020/05/they-treat-us-like-stray-dogs-migrant-workers-flee-india-cities/.

Chatterjee, Patralekha. "The Pandemic Exposes India's Apathy Toward Migrant Workers." *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 27 May 2020, www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/04/the-pandemic-exposes-indias-two-worlds/609838/.

Srivastava, Shruti, et al. "How Coronavirus Has Brought Caste Discrimination Back for India's Migrant Workers." *ThePrint*, 21 Aug. 2020, theprint.in/india/how-coronavirus-has-brought-caste-discrimination-back-for-indias-migrant-workers/486261/.

Unnikrishnan, Deepak. *Temporary People.* UWA Publishing, 2019. pp 31-118.

Dutt, Barkha. "If the Despair of Migrant Workers Does Not Hit Your Conscience, How about It Speak to Your Worries for the Economy? 100 Kms Short of Udaipur I Walk with Cement Workers from Bihar. They All Say: 'Factory Owners Treated Us so Badly, We Will NEVER Come Back." Twitter, 6 May 2020, twitter.com/BDUTT/status/1258059581550444546?s=20.

Martin, Phillip. "Even with a Harvard Pedigree, Caste Follows 'like a Shadow'." *The World from PRX*, 2019, www.pri.org/stories/2019-03-05/even-harvard-pedigree-caste-follows-shadow.

15.

A New Invisible Language

Xiaolin Tan

Language is the foundation of human communication. Nevertheless, different countries have different languages, and different individuals will also be impacted by different circumstances such as different slang and styles of speaking. According to the article "Mother Tongue" written by Amy Tan, Tan's mother is a Chinese immigrant, and her English is influenced by Chinese which, as her mother's language, also affects how Tan expresses herself and her way of thinking. Although Tan's mother's English cannot be understood by most people in society, and it also makes Tan feel less confident in her English because of that influence, Tan is familiar with this unique family language, and which created a path for Tan's writing. I empathize with her experience because I was also born and raised in a Chinese family. As far as I am concerned, the mother tongue can be regarded as a new invisible language, which can build a more connected bridge between the two formal languages. It also gives us a more unique perspective to show our inner culture and understanding from a different way. This is an attractive language.

It's obvious that different cultures influence our use of language, and our comprehension. As Amy Tan said, "I do think that the language spoken in the family, especially in immigrant families which are more insular, plays a large role in shaping the language of the child." I totally agree with her. From my viewpoint, the establishment of values is generally under the long-term influence of the family, and different values will lead people to have different comprehension and expression. For instance, if someone comes from a different country or belongs to another community, it's hard to know about the origin of their perspective, which makes us unable to empathize with the content of their speech, and even affects our ability to move the communication forward. This language barrier also makes me and other people confused in my daily life. Once I was in class and we discussed about our views and feelings of a story. I described a character as "wearing a green hat", which means being cheated in Chinese. However, except for some classmates from China who did know the meaning, none of them could understand. There are some slang terms and jokes that we use unconsciously, and we naturally haven't explained them too much, which makes our means of expression stranger. Another example is from my classmate who is from China as well. She explained in class that she had been to the hospital the day before, and that was the reason why she missed the class. Then, our classmates asked if she had a bad feeling or illness. Actually, she just sprained her ankle and went to the clinic to see a doctor. In China, we used to say "go to the hospital" to ask for help with our health issues because we usually go to the hospital no matter how hurt we are. Such deviations in our expression and comprehension are caused by differences in culture, which happen in our life often. But I think it's a good thing to discover our different cultures from pure conversations, and gain a deeper understanding through explanations.

On the other hand, "mother tongue" can be explained as an original language, which we are first in contact with. Tan's mother was not good at speaking fluent English. Grammatically, her language could be described as "broken", but from Tan's perspective, it's the familiar and comfortable language. In addition, her mother's "intent, passion, imagery, rhythms of speech and the nature of her through" also affected Tan's understanding and feelings of language invisibly. I have a similar feeling and situation with Tan's family. My father is a non-native speaker also. Although he has poor English, I can understand him well because we have lived together for a long time. Not only his way of thinking, but also his tone and behaviour can be understood without being a clear expression. For example, his classmates once asked him if he was available to participate in the workshop the next day. He said: "I think I can't because I tomorrow work." The sentence was organized in a Chinese way which made his classmate confused. Therefore, I reorganized the sentence in the correct English word order for his classmates. Sometimes, my father articulates each word in slow rhythms in order to emphasize the importance of this sentence. This habit also affects my life. When someone else suddenly slows down his pace of speech, I will feel unconsciously that he is going to say something important. Those invisible influences also made me become more inclusive and empathetic with the speaking habits of others from different countries.

In conclusion, cultural differences, some habits of language expression and so on between close individuals such as parents will affect our comprehension and expression of new languages. They are unavoidable because these influences have been embedded in our minds for a long time. No matter how high your English level is, your expression is always different from other individuals. And this might be considered as a new invisible language for every family. This invisible language is powerful which can bring us lots of benefits. It not only allows us to understand things from different perspectives to create something special for the society, but also makes us become more inclusive and unite because of differences.

16.

My Mixed Language Plays a Role in My English Writing

Liting Tang

As a member of an immigrant family, I often switch my language systems between Chinese and English. Before I moved to America, all my education was finished in China. Writing is a subject that runs across all the fields of my study. Clearly, English is not my first language, so I am on my way to overcoming the obstacles of English writing. In Amy Tan's essay "Mother Tongue," Tan describes her experience growing with her mother, who speaks English that is mixed with Chinese. Tan also demonstrates how her language habits were influenced by her mother. Tan felt restrained in her early life by her mother's imperfect English. However, her mixed language circumstances didn't hinder her from pursuing a career as an English writer because she realized that she could write in her own English, which she felt more comfortable and natural. It makes me wonder if my mixed English, which is deeply affected by my Chinese and based on the Chinese way of thinking, can also be an advantage in my writing. In my opinion, when I am able to switch fluently between English and Chinese systems, my mixed English may be helpful to my writing because writing is a process that allows me to take more time to improve, and my non-professional English leads me to express myself in a readable and understandable way.

My mixed English does not impair my reading ability even if it may take me longer than most professional English readers, and we know that reading and writing complement each other. According to Tan's article, her mother's true understanding, as a non-native English reader, was belied by her "limited" English. I have a similar feeling that verbally paraphrasing what I understand from English articles is difficult. When I try to explain something to my family, I can use English mixed with Chinese words, but if I speak in class, I can only use English, and speaking does not allow me to spend much time searching my mind for specific words. However, writing is a good way for me to express myself because it allows me to spend time organizing what I'm trying to say and fine-tuning my language. From my perspective, writing is different from speaking that needs speakers to receive information and react simultaneously. Writing is a process in which I deal with information, generate my own thoughts, and organize my words and sentences. Moreover, when I have trouble reading some English papers, the voice in my mind spontaneously converts to Chinese, which aids my comprehension. When I need to express myself in English, writing helps me to transfer my thoughts into English. My ability to switch between two language systems has improved as a result of further writing practice. Similarly, when I am able to transfer my two language systems fluently, my writing capability gets improved as well.

My mixed English improves the readability and understandability of my English writing. I am not a professional writer, and most of my writing is for school. When I started learning writing, including English writing, I was taught that the center of writing is my thoughts instead of other

elements such as structure or grammar. Even though structure and grammar are also important in writing, I think the main idea of writing takes precedence over other elements. According to Tan, "Language is the tool of my trade. And I use them all - all the Englishes I grew up with." I agree that language is a medium for communication. The thoughts expressed by language are what touch readers most, which is why many classic literature works can be translated into different languages and still have a wide impact. My English may not be technical, but my ideas are unique and independent. My writing capacity is limited by my first language, and I am far behind native English writers, but I think I am successful to express my thoughts by writing. Moreover, because of my mixed English, much of what I write is generally basic, which broadens the reach of my readers. In a word, plain language can also express various ideas.

All in all, I can express my thoughts in these different languages. I used to be concerned that my Chinese was getting in the way of my English writing, but now I realize that my mixed language has little bearing on the depth and breadth of my thoughts. Language is our tool which depends on how to use it. My English writing is my way to express myself in English, and it is gradually becoming "my tongue".

17.

Women Need to Be Seen and Helped

Huiling Liang

When you hear a woman from a specific country, do you imagine what she is like? Reading an essay called "An Identity Reduced to a Burka" written by Issa and Malrayat and a poem called "Breaking Tradition" written by Mirikitani made me realize the position of women in the world and how urgent it is to remind people to change traditional impressions about women.

Women in every country and region are making progress. Yet the world's perception of women from different places is still limited to how they used to be, and they are treated with serious prejudices based on their country's traditions and cultures. For instance, an essay called "An Identity Reduced to a Burka" written by Issa and Malrayat mainly talks about how Muslim women's dress is treated as a constraint when they try to present their personal image. For those who are not familiar with Muslim women and their culture, the authors say, "Stereotypical assumptions about Muslim women are as inaccurate as the assumption that all American women are personified by the bikini-clad cast of 'Baywatch"' (Marayati and Issa 1). Not all Muslim women wear their traditional dress like Burka and Chador and wearing these doesn't mean their thoughts are outdated and confined. On the contrary, the essay mentions, "As an expression of their opposition to his repressive regime, women who supported the 1979 Islamic Revolution marched in the street clothed in chadors" (Marayati and Issa 1). A woman's externalized dress or any of her expressions should not be a representation of her inner self. During this time, misunderstandings of simplifying female values by their looks keep happening in the whole world and being neglected by the public. Women's basic rights of getting an education and pursuing careers are not protected and influenced by many outdated thoughts and typical bias.

The growth of women is specially revealed over time. The poem "Breaking Tradition" written by Janice Mirikitan, tells the story about the changes in the three generations' women from a perspective of a woman. Each of the three generations of women is constantly overturning and correcting the ideas and behaviors of their previous generation. In the author's mother's generation, she depicts "we confine ourselves to jealousies, / bedridden by menstruation. / This waiting room where we feel our hands / are useless, dead speechless clamps, / that need hospitals and forceps and kitchens" (10-15 Mirikitani). Mirikitan said, "I deny I am like my mother" (17). In her generation, she "filled with tears of shakuhatchi, / the light in my hands, / poems about madness, /the music of yellow guitars, / sounds shaken from barbed wire and goodbyes and miracles of survival" (43-48 Mirikitani). When she mentions her daughter, she depicts, "her pouting ruby lips, her skirts / swaying to salsa, / teena marie and the stones, / her thighs displayed in carnivals of color. / I do not know the contents of her room" (53-59 Mirikitani). Time has witnessed that the expression of women's consciousness

has progressed tremendously. Women's self-reflection and self-redemption are the processes of their constant behaviors of "breaking with tradition."

However, as the UN News reported, "The progress on gender equality remains slow. The review of "women's rights shows that despite some progress, no country has achieved gender equality" ("International"). Protecting women's basic rights is still a serious issue in many countries. Even in highly developed countries, women have many difficulties to overcome in order to achieve success in their career and education. For example, nearly one-in-five women have faced violence from an intimate partner in the past year. And because of the high level of social development of the Internet, this problem is more serious than what we think in our lives. Childcare, reducing domestic violence, and increasing women's participation in politics are important tasks to overcome.

When women gain their freedom, they can develop their talents and charisma to the fullest. People should view them in a new light. Likewise, people need to constantly update their knowledge to overcome sexism and stereotypes about women. Women have also been an outstanding force in society. It is undeniable that their roles in various fields are becoming more and more important. Overall, women worldwide are improving, but many issues remain unresolved and keep threatening them. Women's freedom is gained by breaking traditional sexism and stereotypes, including safeguarding their rights and interests. These are not only women's problems but also everyone's duty and responsibility to stand on the correct side of justice and equality.

Work Cited

Al-Marayati, Laila, and Semeen Issa. *An Identity Reduced to a Burka.* 20 Jan. 2002, www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2002-jan-20-op-almarayatiissa-story.html.

Mirikitani, Janice. "Breaking Tradition." *Without Ceremony Asian Women United (IKON Second Series, Series #9)*, edited by Kimiko Hahn, 1988, p. 9-10.

"International Women's Day: Progress on Gender Equality Remains Slow UN News." *United Nations*, United Nations, 28 Mar. 2020AD, news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1058811.

18.

Immigrant Identity in Purvi Shah's "Made In India"

Ashly Chacon

The poem "Made in India" by Purvi Shah depicts immigrant identity and having to adapt to a new lifestyle in New York City from the point of view of a streetwalker. Shah herself is an immigrant from Ahmadabad, India, and lives in New York City. The poem is part of her book, *Terrain Tracks*, which won the Many Voice Project Prize and was nominated for the Asian Americans Writers Workshop Members Choice Award in 2007. It begins by describing workers in New York City that are from places in India, such as Madras, Kashmir, and Ahmadabad. As the streetwalker describes these workers, she also describes how New York City is. The poet conveys the struggles that many immigrants in New York City face as they adapt to a new way of living or culture.

Shah writes, "Some worker in the sweat of Madras, some former weaver from Kashmir, some hand in Ahmadabad's dust, has been pounding iron again." She identifies names of places in India: Kashmir, Ahmadabad and Madras. When Shah writes "sweat of Madras," it may mean Madras the place and/or the fabric madras cloth that the worker might wear. Sweat from working is absorbed by the cloth. Pounding iron refers to a common scene in New York City sidewalks such as a jackhammer used by construction workers to pound sidewalks. These construction workers are specifically working-class immigrants that are unnamed. Their labor seems to be more important than their identities in the New York City scenery. She then employs imagery to describe how the city's streets "mask a labyrinth of tunnels in a city where origin and destination are confused." In other words, she's describes the confusing subways in New York City and compares it to how immigrants start to lose their origin to adapt to a new lifestyle in the city. The labyrinth suggests feelings of being confused and lost. The speaker of the poem acknowledges that sometimes she wears the stamp (made in India) on herself and "feel[s] the wear of a surrounding world erase the fine etchings." That is to say, she has also found herself losing her origin as she adapts to a new lifestyle. Shah plays with the idea of the label sewn into clothing when items are "made in India" and uses it as a metaphor for identity.

Shah concludes "the body's chamber is made hole". In other words, there's an emptiness. It is very difficult for immigrants to feel whole or complete but instead feel a "hole" when having to adapt to a different environment and culture. I can personally relate to this because my husband and other family members are immigrants and have found themselves in this similar situation of feeling empty and losing their identity while adapting to a new lifestyle in New York City. This poem vividly captures the realities and difficulties that immigrants face.

Works Cited

Shah, Purvi. “Made in India, Immigrant Song #3.” Fishouse, 16 Oct. 2010, www.fishousepoems.org/made-in-india-immigrant-song-3/.

Part IV

Interviews

19.

Gender, Health, and Trans Activism in Bangladesh: An Interview with Dr. Riffat Lucy

Kashfia Mahmud

"The trans community is here. They are present. They exist. They exist and they need our help."

- Dr. Riffat Lucy

In this piece, Kashfia interviews her mother, Dr. Riffat Lucy, a well-known public health specialist and a television personality in Bangladesh. She was the country coordinator for the donor agency, GFATM (Global Fund for tuberculosis, aids and malaria), from 2005-2010. She works with NGOs and institutions against domestic violence, economic development for women below the poverty line, and various other gender issues. By 2015, she had significantly contributed to the control of tuberculosis and eradication of polio in Bangladesh. This interview details her work regarding disease control and her work with the transgender community in South Asia.

This interview was conducted on April 11, 2021 in person in English at their home in Bangladesh.

Kashfia: What were the specific steps you had to take - from realizing there's an epidemic that needs attention- to actually organizing?

Dr. Lucy: I guess the first thing we had to do was let the government know - like hey there's really an issue here. Government officials mostly have administrative jobs not medical backgrounds; they have management skills but they won't know what to prioritize, you know what I mean? So that's where we come in. There's always so much going on but public health specialists tell you what needs immediate attention. The second task was to destigmatize. This was the most exhausting part because people just didn't want to come get diagnosed, come get treatment. We had to make all the awareness posters and banners in Bangla to target the general population. We came up with catchy phrases that sticks and can be easily understood. The most popular one that was all over the commercials at the time was যক্ষ্মা হলেও রক্ষা আছে (Pronunciation : Jokkha hole rokkha achey ; roughly translates to there's hope if you have TB). TB mostly affects people below the poverty line, people who live in overcrowded, slums etc. When we went into the neighbourhoods we noticed that most households have no clean water, no sewage system but they all had a television that they were streaming illegally by pulling wires from the city. There was also a television in every corner store, tea

stalls etc. so we allocated a huge proportion of the funding into television commercials. For the most part though, it is a very intricate process so everyone has a role. Policy makers had to make decisions, community leaders helped with implementation along with NGOs and UN agencies. Different people have different strengths: some were in the fields, others helped with budget so it was definitely a collective effort.

Kashfia: You mentioned stigma around tuberculosis. Can you talk more about that because I'm genuinely surprised?

Dr. Lucy: It's because you're young haha. You're Gen Z and I get why it's so hard to wrap your head around that but yeah... there was definitely a whole lot of stigma. There was a very popular phrase : যক্ষ্মা হলে রক্ষা নাই: which basically means if you have TB you're gonna die. Like it's a wrap for you dude and that's just not true but when there's a lack of education in a community, people just hear things and they run with it. Also, socialization is a huge aspect of Bangladeshi culture. We can't go a day without visiting somebody's house, so you know this covid thing is hitting us hard too. Because TB meant no socialization for the individual, it meant no marriage, no bonding. People would just hide. They'd rather die than get treatment because they just didn't want other people to know.

Kashfia: Wow

Dr. Lucy: Also epidemics and disease in Bangladesh is mostly a gendered issue. The sufferers are typically [women] because 1) they have to wait on the man to even go to a facility and get diagnosed because of current social systems; [and] 2) there's a cost and women don't have money. Of course that's changing now but ten years ago although the treatment was free, there was a journey cost and there was a waiting cost. Like the cost of household work not getting done and who's gonna take care of her child while she's out living her best life in a treatment center? Like that was the thought process of many folks but the third reason, the most important one in my opinion, is that women in Bangladesh have a tendency of hiding their illness because [the belief is] "girls should be more patient before they declare that they are sick."

Kashfia: So I remember growing up and watching all these TB commercials on TV. They would come on so much and I remember a lot of them had famous celebrities. Like if you were in Bangladesh at the time then you really know how big this TB thing was. My question is how did you guys convince so many famous people to do a song/commercial on such a stigmatized disease?

Dr. Lucy: Money

Kashfia: Oh, (HAHA) I guess that was a stupid question.

Dr Lucy: I mean, don't get me wrong, there were many who volunteered and truly wanted to help.

Kashfia: Yeah

Dr. Riffat: And also celebrities here are very idolized. Words from celebrities are very acceptable and when Momtaz sings about TB or Mr. Abul Hayat, Mr. Momtazuddin Ahmed (I can't remember everyone right now) but, yeah, when they speak people listen. Intently.

Kashfia: I don't want to take too much of your time. So lastly, I do have to ask you about your work with the transgender community. Let's just start with Bangladesh, the stigma here is horrendous. How did you even get started?

Dr. Lucy: So this one was not easy. My job as the country coordinator was to bring in the funds to Bangladesh. I brought in millions of dollars, which itself was difficult. But when it comes to allocation, it was not a single decision, so I really had to convince a lot of other folks.

The trans community here is very united and I had done a lot of work with them when I was in CARE so when I joined *Global Fund* they already knew me. They came to my office very happy, as if I will single handedly dismantle their oppression. It was a surreal moment and I did not have the heart to break it down to them [...] how things really go. They had mentioned that they submitted a proposal four years ago - and for me to look into it because they never heard anything about it again. And that's another great thing about GFATM - it's a community based organization so you submit the issue you think is present in YOUR community. So a man would not be submitting a project proposal for women's issues. It really gives a platform to marginalized folks and I love that. Trans people are widely known to have no rights here. They are practically banned from society - no jobs, no safety, too many of them are HIV positive, and there's of course lack of education, but they still managed to put together a case.

When I told the health minister at that time that I would like to proceed with this particular project he got so angry . He's a great man and we're definitely on good terms now, but at the time, I just couldn't get through to him. I was trying to explain to him that the trans community is here. They are present. They exist. They exist and they need our help but he was offended. Offended and in denial. He thought I was crazy. After two months of pleading, we started moving ahead with the project. We visited the communities in Tongi and used- what are those called - banners?

Kashfia: Yeah

Dr. Lucy: There's usually dates on banners and after an event is done with, there's no use for that banner right? So they had gathered several of those and made tents to stay in them. That's how they were living. Straight broke my heart.

Kashfia: Oh wow-

Dr. Lucy : So we provided them with skills instead of handing them the money: taught them how to work with jute, make pottery, but the sector that they did best in was salon work. It was like it came natural to them. And all the salons we talked to mostly declined or never got back to us but *Women's World* and *Persona* hired quite a few trans folks. It was definitely a radical act - even in Dhaka. Few weeks later at the GFATM Bangladesh event, the health minister and a trans person were sitting in the front row, side by side at the launch event. The same man who had so much to say not too long ago was now smiling and nodding and shaking hands with everyone from the community. For Bangladesh? THAT'S HISTORIC.

20.

Case Study: Interview With An Urban Bilingual

Victoria Lutzky

Living in America as a bilingual can be a long and strenuous experience for some, but easier for others. Not only does one have to know how to speak a basic level of the English language, but they must also be able to understand it when said. Also, writing abilities in the English language are not usually as important as speaking or listening in English, but it is a big plus. On the other hand, being bilingual in America is a large part of U.S. culture as a whole. The same way that New York City is known as a "melting pot" of languages and culture, the same can be said for other parts of the U.S.A. My own language background is made up of Spanish and English. I was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina and moved to the United States when I was 7 years old. Being raised in the U.S. helped me to flourish as a bilingual. There is diversity throughout which is shown in forms such as small communities made up of people from different parts of the world, or when public community services for civilians which are designed to be understood by other bilinguals or language speakers at all times.

Participant Information

The participant is Sam; she was born in India, but was raised in Indian and American culture, by alternating between both countries. Although the interview participant does not live in New York City, she still lives in the United States of America. I met Sam on a Discord community group, where we became friends due to both loving the ocean and its aquatic animals; Sam loves whales, and I am particularly fond of jellyfish. We have been friends for about a year now, so I asked for her to help me with this assignment and she had no problem helping me out, especially since I had no one else in mind. Also, She has been exposed to several languages in her childhood due to her parents being religious missionaries. Sam and her family lived in each of these countries for years at a time, and she learned Hindi and Marathi simultaneously. Sam began to pick up on how Marathi and Hindi were spoken by listening to her parents talk to the people in India; including making various attempts at learning the basic alphabet, and consonants and vowels that manipulate default sounds. Additionally, Sam has been able to successfully speak in Hindi since she has often practised speaking to people online and in person. On the other hand, her parents talk to her in Marathi, but seldom responds in the language, preferring to use English instead. However, it seems that she can understand Marathi when spoken.

The participant's native language is English, and she is somewhere between fluency and a moderate degree of experience in regards to Marathi and Hindi. Not only did the participant acquire these three languages in her early childhood stages, but she can also speak and write in both English and Hindi as well. Although, except for Marathi, it seems like she can only understand it when it is spoken. The participant of the interview is an Early, Receptive, Additive, and Horizontal bilingual

(Wei, 2007). First of all, for her timing of the acquisition, she is an Early bilingual who was able to acquire two languages early in childhood (Wei, 2007). Second, her proficiency & fluency are those of a Receptive bilingual: someone who can understand a second language in either its spoken or written form (English and Hindi) (Wei, 2007). Third, Sam's process of acquisition is that of an Additive bilingual. Additive bilinguals can combine their languages to complement their everyday lives and enrich the way they communicate with others (Wei, 2007). Finally, the participants' relationship between the two languages is that of a Horizontal bilingual. A Horizontal bilingual is someone whose two distinct languages have a similar status (Marathi and Hindi) (Wei, 2007).

Interview Instrument

The interview was conducted on Discord with a friend, an online messaging system comparable to Skype via private messages, on October 27th, 2020, at 8 pm EST. The interview for this case-study consisted of seven questions and lasted 20 minutes. There was a period of follow-up on October 31st, 2020, regarding additional improvised questions to gather more detail on the participant's background and their answers that lasted an additional 5 minutes. The written transcript of the interview is attached after the conclusion of this case study.

Interview Findings:

Finding 1: Advantages & Disadvantages of a Bilingual

"...being able to speak other languages can provide amazing access to the culture and diversity that different human societies possess."

The participant has stated that she has experienced both disadvantages and advantages with the languages of Hindi and Marathi. Sam notes that because she has lived in another country, her pronunciation and accent of some words in the English language is vastly different from her fellow Americans. It seems that because the participant travels back and forth between countries often, she tends to have issues with the way she speaks English sometimes. There is even one instance where she felt like her childhood languages (Marathi and Hindi) were causing her English pronunciation to plummet in quality. However, the advantage of Sam knowing two more languages other than English is that it has provided her with access to a variety of cultures and diversity features that each language possesses; therefore, helping her to explore and learn more about her birth country. Since Sam was born in India and has travelled to and from the U.S. back and forth, she is full of information regarding Indian culture, their attitudes, and public knowledge regarding food and street names.

Finding 2: Code-switching

"...my parents tend to speak to me in Marathi, leading me to respond in English."

Code-switching occurs when a person who speaks more than one language moves back and forth between two languages or two dialects of the same language at the same time. This practice is more likely to happen during conversations rather than writing. The participant stated in the interview that switching between English and Hindi is not difficult for her; however, she has also added that she is not fluent in Hindi or Marathi. Although the participant may not be perfectly fluent in Hindi or Marathi, she is able to hold a conversation in Hindi with a certain degree of congruency. Alternatively, when the participant has conversations with her parents, they often use Hindi, and Sam will usually

reply in English or Hindi. Moreover, she may not be a native speaker of Hindi or Marathi, she is still able to use certain words and phrases during a conversation. As mentioned before, Sam's parents tend to speak to her in either Marathi or Hindi, so she replies in English, but sometimes switches to using Hindi.

Finding 3: Maintaining Bilingualism

"I speak English by far the most. It is the language I've communicated and consumed content by far with the most."

Even though the participant can speak and understand Hindi to a certain extent, and use it when code-switching, she is still prone to her bilingualism becoming dominated by the English language. Through consuming a mass amount of American media every day, if she did not continue to use Marathi and Hindi to speak with her parents, people online, or when she visits India, it becomes a high possibility that she will lose her birth language altogether. Sam consumes English media by way of reading books, television shows, and social activities. Her life's main centre point is the English language, and even though she English may be her dependent language, she also talks in other languages from time to time via the code-switching skill, using Hindi and/or Marathi to speak with her parents.

Conclusion:

The bilingual experience of the participant is fluid. Sam was born in India, but because she moved back and forth between the U.S and India, she was able to pick up on Hindi and Marathi in addition to her dominant language, English. In her everyday life, Sam consumes a mass amount of English media; although, she can garner information with regards to her other two languages. Additionally, my experience when conducting this case study gave me a new and different point of view. Usually, someone who has immigrated from their birth country to a new place where they are raised and live out the rest of their life is often known to lose their native language.

Furthermore, as the person assimilates into their primary spoken language, it dominates the native language. Nevertheless, Sam was able to retain not only one other language but two. Since India has a wide variety of cultures and people within it, it is bound to have a high number of dominant languages that are spoken by its citizens. There are currently more than 1,000 languages spoken in India. Some examples are Bengali, Hindi, Nepali, Punjabi, Sanskrit, etc. It is an eye-opening experience to have the privilege to interview not only a bilingual but a trilingual as well.

References:

Wei, L. (2007). Dimensions of bilingualism. In L. Wei (Ed.), The Bilingualism Reader. New York, NY: Routledge.

The Interview Transcript

1. How many languages do you speak or understand?
I understand three. English, Hindi, And Marathi. English is my native language, while I would say I am somewhere between fluency and a moderate degree of experience with Marathi and Hindi.

2. Where and how did you learn these languages?
I learnt these languages in the US and India both. My parents are religious missionaries, but also fluent speakers of all three languages. Having lived in both countries for several years at a time, I started to pick up on how Marathi and Hindi was spoken, whenever my parents communicated with Indian people when we lived in India. I distinctly remember attempting to learn the basic alphabet and consonants that manipulate the default sounds, when I was around 11 for Hindi. Additionally, even if I myself rarely speak in those languages, my parents tend to speak to me in Marathi, leading me to respond in English. I have also practised speaking in Hindi (even though I'm not a great speaker of it) to many people on the internet and sometimes in person with success.

3. Which language do you speak more often?
I speak English by far the most. It is the language I've communicated and consumed content by far with the most.

4. In your country/community which language(s) are dominant?
In the US, of course, which I am a citizen of, it's English. In the Indian-American community (which I feel sort of part of to a degree, but not entirely always), there are many languages that are dominant due to sheer diversity in Indian cultures. Depending on the geographic location, one can find numerous languages and even more dialects. Over the top of my head, Kannada, Odiya, Bengali, Marathi, Hindi, and many more languages are dominant and common languages. Of these, Marathi (the language common in the state of Maharashtra where I commonly resided when living in India) and Hindi (the national language) are the ones I understand and speak to varying degrees.

5. What language(s) do you speak at home in comparison to at work or school?
I speak English commonly as it is my native language, but I do speak in Hindi especially once in a with other people, especially when in India. I'd say I use English more often, but have definitely found myself in numerous situations where speaking in Hindi was necessary, and caused me to practice it.

6. Have you ever felt that you were at an advantage or disadvantage by speaking multiple languages?
Yes, I've definitely felt it was both a disadvantage and an advantage to know Hindi and Marathi. Partly due to living in another country, my pronunciation and accent of many English words was different from my American peers, whenever I returned to the US. Over time it's gotten better and I no longer feel it as a concern, but for the longest while, I did feel like knowing two other languages since childhood was causing my pronunciation of English to be different than I wanted to be. On the flip side, being able to speak other languages can provide amazing access to the culture and diversity that different human societies possess. I know a lot about Indian culture, attitudes, names of foods and things partly thanks to the fact that I'm able to understand and comprehend those names and labels.

7. How difficult is it to switch between languages?
It's not too difficult for switching between English and Hindi. I wouldn't say I'm fluent at either

Hindi or Marathi, but I can say a lot in Hindi if in a conversation with a speaker of that language. For Marathi, I'd say it does take a bit longer for me to think of sentences and sentence structure.

Part V

Art and Photos

21.

7am in Singapore, Chinatown Hawker, & Little India

Jeremy Orozco

7am in Singapore

This was the first time I ever visited my grandfather's native country. Also, the first time I ever got to travel with him. Ever since I was younger, I was always around my grandparents, although my mother resides on the same block as them I was always there and even moved to stay with them when I was sixteen or so. I remember being young and my grandfather would always give me different foods to try, dimsum on Sunday was something I would always look forward to. I think it's safe to say my palate comes from the various foods I was exposed to as a child. The Kopitiam (coffee shop) in this image is close to where my uncle lives in Singapore. Every morning when my grandpa is there, he, his brother and friends eat breakfast, drink coffee and chit chat - it's almost like tradition! It might be surprising to some but I was very ecstatic to be hanging out with a group of senior citizens at seven in the morning eating Kaya Toast. Iced Lemon Tea and Har Gow.

Chinatown Hawker

Every place I visit, I always try to spend some time in Chinatown. Might even say that I spend a little too much time in Chinatown here at home in New York. I can't help it, it's a food paradise for me. I love photographing in markets and when in Singapore, there are an abundance of them. Chinatown in Singapore is home to one of the largest Hawker Centers, it's composed of more than 200 cooked food stalls. It can be overwhelming if you're not sure what you want but a long queue of locals usually signifies what my next meal is. I've done all the usual things tourists do in Singapore but I'll gladly take the 19 hour flight solely for the food, it's really that good.

Little India

Little India is a beautiful neighborhood with an overload of colors. It's home to different shops that cater to the large Indian community that resides in Singapore. I was inspired to visit after seeing one of my favorite Photographers capture beautiful images here - he's a well known Singaporean native. Prior to visiting the country, I had no idea what to expect, but something that I was made aware of was how diverse it is - cultural heritage is an important part of Singapore's identity.

22.

Maruchan Ramen & Soup Dumplings

Gabrielle Lin

Maruchan Ramen

This is a photograph of Maruchan Ramen crushed and falling through the midst. I was inspired to take this photograph in Introduction to Art with Professor Rosemary Taylor. During the pandemic, most, if not all of the Chinese supermarkets were closed. This was difficult as I constantly searched for new recipes to make with the ingredients from my local American supermarket. The closest taste to home I was able to find was Maruchan Ramen.

Soup Dumplings

This is an acrylic painting of soup dumplings. As I recently heard from another student, food is the Asian 6th love language. A lot of Asian restaurants have shut down due to Covid-19 but still seeing some of my favorite spots still standing strong is truly heartwarming. I was inspired by the idea of soup dumplings as it is often shared amongst friends and families during dim sum.

23.

Photos

Amal Toaimah

These drawings are about the American Sign Language project assigned to me in the HUA103 course. My drawings were a way to tell my professor, Michael Rodriguez, thank you, using sign language.

I created my sculptures out of foil which represent a happy family hanging out due to the pandemic to get some fresh air. It includes the father, his son, and his little dancer daughter.

Amal Toaimah
7/20/20

24.

Girl with Short Hair

Rongxin Xu

The little girl in the picture has a classic Chinese face. She was cutting her hair with a gloomy mood because she didn't like short hair. Many years later, she went to the United States and studied at LaGuardia College, majoring in Fine Arts. She is still a girl with short hair. Yes, it's me. Maybe it's the impact of my life, or the professional field, sometimes I think about problems and look at problems like a child. In other words, when I start a work, I will try to start it as a child. Sometimes it's like cutting hair, at first it was unwilling, and then it was willing. At first I might not be able to accept a certain form or style, but then I accepted. Perhaps sometimes a person looks at life in a child's way, and there is not so much hatred.

25.

Ms. Manon

Yingchao Wang

This is a self-portrait. In the painting, the flower on the right shoulder represents romance. The little bear on the heart part represents innocence, childhood, and hope for the world. The color of the background is very passionate. Even though the world and society did some bad things to you, you still need to carry the romance, innocence, and passion that are inside of you. For example, recently "Asian hate" affected the Asian community a lot. Many tragedies happened. We do really feel sad and disappointed. The only thing that we can do is to shout to the world "We are not viruses!!" "Stop Asian hate!!" Also, love the world continually.

26.

Home: Photos of my Family and Family Gatherings

Annie Wu

My grandparent's home is very simple. They have the typical chairs, foldable table, metal plates, teapot, vases with fake flowers likely purchased from a Chinese store or marketplace. This is what they know and are comfortable with. It's interesting to see my daughter interact with what feels like the things a typical Asian household would have, especially if you just immigrated to America with a hope of a better future.

That year my grandma didn't want to go out to celebrate her birthday. If I could recall correctly she didn't feel like doing anything. We couldn't allow her not to celebrate since we didn't see her often. The family convinced her to have a simple gathering at home. My mom and aunts got there early to help cook fish and vegetables. They picked up duck, see yao gai, and sui yuk.

Spring 2020 when Covid was at it's high. My daughter was used to seeing her grandma. Unfortunately, during this time we limited their interactions. I couldn't keep them apart. Her grandma missed her and met her at the stairs. A gate was in-between them enforcing 6 feet social distancing.

This cake symbolizes so much of our culture. This is what they sell at a typically Chinese bakery. This is how we celebrate birthdays. This is how we celebrate holidays. This cake symbolizes gathering. How I miss “this” cake.

27.

Life

Ayako Moriyama

Living during this pandemic leads us to think about how to protect our loved ones and ourselves. We know social distancing is one way to be safe but we realize how much we miss being near each other and experiencing the company of others.

A date / Social life

When I started photographing in the Lower East Side Manhattan, I started following a couple walking close together. Suddenly they walked in a tattoo parlor. After a few minutes, they seemed to give up getting a tattoo and walked away. The relationship looked sweet like the spring air.

Being there

All shutters must have been unlocked as a part of their daily lives. But then the pandemic began and the shutters were closed. At Ludlow St in the Lower East Side, the sunlight pouring into the street played with shade and created for me and my camera a melodic rhythm. This gives me some optimism for the near future.

Being mobile

At times, the activity on the streets feels like we are getting back to a little more “normal” since the pandemic. Someday I see so much motion in my camera and it makes me happy.

Part VI

Recipe

28.

Hot and Sour Soup

Andrew Chen

Hot and Sour Soup

Ingredients: (6 to 8 bowls serving size)

- 5 oz (2/3 cup) boneless pork loin, cut into ¼ inch thick strips
- 2 tsp dark soy sauce
- 4 small Chinese dried black mushrooms
- 12 small dried tree ear mushrooms
- 3 cups boiling water
- 1 ½ tbsp cornstarch
- 12 dried lily buds (golden needles)
- ½ cup sliced bamboo shoots, cut into 1/8th inch-wide strips
- 4 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 1 tbsp light soy sauce
- 2 tbsp peanut oil
- 4 cups chicken broth (reduced sodium)
- 3 - 4 oz firm tofu, cut into 1/4th inch-thick strips
- 2 large eggs
- 2 tsp Asian sesame oil
- 1 ½ tsp ground white pepper
- 2 tbsp thinly sliced scallion greens
- 2 tbsp fresh cilantro leaves (optional)

Directions:

1. Toss pork with dark soy sauce until well coated.
2. Soak black and tree ear mushrooms in boiling water in a bowl, stir occasionally until softened (30 minutes). Cut out and discard mushroom stems. Squeeze excess liquid from mushrooms into a separate bowl with cornstarch and mix. Thinly slice both mushrooms into bite-sized pieces.
3. Soak lily buds in about 1 cup of warm water until softened (20 minutes) then drain. Trim off the tough tips. Cut the rest in half crosswise then tear each lengthwise into 2 or 3 pieces.
4. Cover bamboo shoots with cold water in a small saucepan and bring it to boil to remove bitterness and drain.

5. Stir together the vinegars and light soy sauce in a separate bowl
6. Heat wok over high heat until beads of water vaporize in 1 to 2 seconds of contact. Pour peanut oil in the wok and swirl to coat. Add pork and stir fry for 1 minute. Add mushrooms, lily buds, and bamboo shoots to stir fry for 1 minute.
7. Add chicken broth to wok and bring to a boil then add tofu. Return to a boil then add vinegar/soy sauce mixture and cornstarch mixture to soup while stirring (soup will thicken). Reduce heat to medium and simmer for 1 minute.
8. Beat eggs with a few drops of sesame oil. Add beaten eggs to soup in a thin stream while stirring the soup slowly in one direction. Mix with white pepper and sesame oil. Season with sugar, white pepper, and/or salt to taste then serve. Top soup bowls with scallions and cilantro.

Part VII

Authors

29.

Authors' Bios

Mrhaba Ahmad (first name is pronounced as mer-haa-ba) is currently a Liberal Arts: Social Science and Humanities major at LaGuardia and part of the College Discovery program. Mrhaba plans on transferring to Queens College to study Political Science. Her aim in life is to become an academician or serve in the government sector. Mrhaba was born and raised in Queens, New York City, to parents who emigrated from Afghanistan. She identifies herself as an ethnic Pashtun.

Olga Aksakalova is Associate Professor of English and COIL Coordinator at LaGuardia Community College. She received her PhD in English from the CUNY Graduate Center with the focus on 20thcentury American literature, autobiography, and film studies. She founded and directed the first in Russia bilingual writing center at the New Economic School where she led faculty development in using writing across disciplines, designed English Language Curriculum for MA and BA students, and fully developed a comprehensive tutoring program. At LaGuardia's English Department, Dr. Aksakalova teaches composition and literature courses.

Anastasia Aponte describes herself as a yogi engineer who wants to apply prosthetics holistically to help international orphanages. As an aspiring mechanical engineer, she intends to apply science in improving the quality of life through mediums such as prostheses. At LaGuardia, Anastasia serves as the Ambassador to the President's Society, a CUNY Service Corps Member, President of the Women in Tech club and of the Alpha Theta Phi, PTK Honor Society. She also teaches classes in the recreation department, leads a team in the Model Senate, and is involved in the NIH Bridges Program.

Anita Baksh is Associate Professor of English and current Program Director for the Liberal Arts Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Option. She received her B.A. from St. John's University and her Ph.D. from the University of Maryland, College Park. She teaches composition, Liberal Arts courses, and literature electives including Asian American Literature. Her research interests include gender and Caribbean Studies, particularly Indian Caribbean literature, culture, and activism.

Amourelle Barnese grew up in an Asian community where her multiracial identity—Filipino, Dominican and Sicilian—inspired her to write about her lived experiences in forms of poetry. Amourelle's poems "The Foolish Man", "Lola & Me", and "Rose Grape" are semi-autobiographical and are based on her time spent in Philippines. Currently she is an English major at LaGuardia.

Ashley Chacon was born and raised in Queens, New York. Her mother is from Guatemala and her father from Ecuador. Ashley is currently a student at the Occupational Therapy Assistant Program at LaGuardia. She enjoys swimming and listening to devotional music.

Tuli Chatterji is an Associate Professor in the English Department at LaGuardia Community College. She started *Asian American Voices* in 2019 and is the founder-coordinator of LaGuardia Humanitarian Initiative (LHI). She serves as the current co-Director of the Urban Studies Program. Dr. Chatterji received her Masters and M.Phil.(English literature) from India, before moving to the United States and pursuing her doctorate from St. John's University, New York. She teaches composition and electives in the English department. Her research includes culturally responsive pedagogy, Global Anglophone studies, South Asian queer theory, and Indo-Caribbean literature.

Andrew Chen is a Health Science student at LaGuardia Community College. He was born in Rochester, NY. His parents emigrated from Taiwan. Andrew grew up in Peoria, IL, and enjoys different cuisines. He serves as the Vice President of the Anime Club.

Popy Chowdhury was born and brought up in Bangladesh before she moved to the United States in 2015. A recent graduate from LaGuardia, Popy is currently pursuing her bachelor's degree in Fine Arts from the Queens College. She believes that being a non-traditional college student has been both extremely challenging and rewarding to her. She is the founder of the non-profit organization "South Asian Creative Women" and the Editor of the magazine "Nari" (women). Popy loves literature, traveling, and music. She is a regular contributor to *Newtown Literary*, *Pen and Brush*, and *Asian-American Voices*.

Chethana P. Gallage Dona was born and raised in Sri Lanka. Chethana has also lived in South Korea and India. She graduated from LaGuardia Community College in Fall 2018 and Hunter College in Spring 2020 as a Biology major. Chethana was involved in Phi Theta Kappa, America Needs You, and the President's Society. She conducted research as a part of the CUNY Research Scholars Program and is a recipient of the Women in S.T.E.M scholarship. Chethana is an aspiring physician with a passion for advocating for underrepresented communities.

Latchmie Dookie is an International student from Guyana. She is South Asian by descent but South American by birth. Latchmie has taught and volunteered at various organizations. Latchmie intends to use her Associates Degree from LaGuardia CC as a stepping stone towards her baccalaureate degree in Psychology. She enjoys reading and listening to music.

Maaz Dorria is a New York native who grew up in the cultural hub of Jackson Heights, Queens. Currently he is pursuing his major in Liberal Arts and plans to transfer to Baruch College to pursue a bachelor degree on communication studies. His aim in life is to head the marketing department of a corporate firm. As an American Indian, he is devoted to social issues that affect the people of both his country of origin, India, and his adopted country, the US. He is a strong advocate for human rights and uses writing as his medium to express his ideas.

Richa Gupta is an Associate Professor of Biology and Mentor of the STEM Club at LaGuardia Community College. She is a Molecular Biologist with over 15 years of experience in research on the pathogenesis of Mycobacteria, mechanisms of antibiotic resistance, and strategies of drug development. She routinely mentors students in laboratory research projects. She received her B.S. (Honors) and M.S. in Biochemistry from University of Delhi, and Ph.D. in Biological Sciences from the Indian

Institute of Science, Bangalore. She also conducted her Post-doctoral studies at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York. She serves as the Course Coordinator of Human Biology in Health and Disease, and also teaches General Biology, Human Anatomy and Physiology, and First Year Seminar.

Brianna Jo Hobson is a gothic-fiction writer, blogger, and budding editor from the Bronx. Her poetry and the short story work were previously published in The Lit and she currently runs an online blogzine called The Cobweb Petal. Hobson's interests include taxidermy, entomology, mortuary science, flower pressing, gothic lolita fashion, and cemetery photography. She plans to transfer to Baruch, as an English major upon graduation from LaGuardia in 2021.

Becky Huang is a native New Yorker whose parents are from the Guangdong region of China. She can converse fluently in Cantonese and Mandarin, and can also recognize a limited amount of Chinese characters. Currently she is a Deaf Studies major at LaGuardia.

Chia Ying Kang is a first-year student from Malaysia. She grew up in a multicultural environment with influences of Malay, Indian and Chinese cultures. Currently she is majoring in the Practical Nursing program. Chia can write and converse in multiple languages such as English, Cantonese, Mandarin, Taiwanese, and Malay. She enjoys cooking in her spare time and trying out new restaurants.

Huiling Liang is a new immigrant in the U.S. from China. Her major is Business and Accounting. She enjoys singing, watching movies and the experience of learning two different cultures.

Gabrielle Lin was born in New York City and currently resides in Queens. She is a second generation Chinese-American studying Fine Arts at LaGuardia Community College. Her work can be found on instagram@gabrielle_studionyc.

Victoria Lutzky moved to the US from Buenos Aires, Argentina. She is a bilingual speaker of English and Spanish. She is interested in learning how languages shape our identities. She is graduating from LaGuardia in 2021 and is planning to transfer to a Psychology program at a CUNY senior college.

Kashfia Mahmud is a native New Yorker who works on issues surrounding women of color, both in the Bronx and in Bangladesh. She intends to use her Liberal Arts degree from LaGuardia Community College as a stepping stone towards her baccalaureate degree in Women's Studies. She is the founder of the organization "Girls Support Girls" and uses the business to fund various projects related to gender issues.

Ann Matsuuchi is an instructional technology librarian and professor at LaGuardia Community College, CUNY. Her research interests frequently intersect, and include science fiction, queer theory, comic books, technologies, gender, and Wikipedia Writing projects on Asian American histories and Japanese American internment have been informed by family experience of forced incarceration.

Edward Molina is a member of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society. He participated in a chapter initiative recording a short video singing The Beatle's "Here Comes the Sun." The chapter wanted students to sing the song in their first languages, and Edward took this opportunity to sing in the language he is currently learning—Korean.

Ayako Moriyama was born and raised in Japan and is a documentary photographer. She works in an intuitive way, always open to surprises and the unexpected. She is interested in pursuing photography and photojournalism. She graduated from LaGuardia Community College with an Associate degree in Commercial Photography and currently works as a photographer.

Tomonori Nagano is an Associate Professor of Japanese and Linguistics in the Education and Language Acquisition Department. He received his Ph.D. and M.Phil. in Linguistics from the CUNY Graduate Center and his MA in TESOL from New York University. His research interests are second language acquisition and Japanese as a heritage language.

Jeremy Orozco is a photographer from New York City. Currently he is pursuing his degree in Commercial Photography. He is passionate about Photojournalism as well as cultivating images that speak and give light to subjects that are often overlooked.

Salwa Quhshi is a second year College Discovery student majoring in Psychology. She also serves as a peer advisor for the Social Science department and as a Teaching assistant for FSG 14, an Honors and Leadership seminar for College Discovery Honors students. Salwa plans to graduate from a four-year college as a psychology major with the hope of fulfilling her dreams of becoming a school psychologist in future.

Julianne Salazar has served as Program Director for LaGuardia's College Discovery program since 2019, and is an Adjunct Lecturer and Curriculum Developer for CUNY's Freedom Prep program (https://k16.cuny.edu/freedomprep/). Julianne is a proud CUNY community college alumni and a current doctoral student at New York University where she is studying college transition and community college to senior college transfer pathways.

Pema Dolkar Tamang identifies herself as Tibetan, a woman, and a refugee. She was born in Tibet, finished her schooling in India, and will soon graduate from LaGuardia. Growing up in a boarding school in India with restricted access to technology and social media, books became Pema's best friend. Her love for reading helped her develop a passion for writing. Although today she would choose Korean drama series over books for leisure, books still inspire her to write random poems and split-second thoughts on her iPhone.

Xiaolin Tan was born and raised in China. She moved to the United States in 2019. Xiaolin is a freshman at the Nutrition program at LaGuardia. Her hobbies are traveling, photography, and baking. She hopes for more tolerance towards linguistic diversity in America.

Liting Tang is a recent immigrant from China, majoring in Criminal Justice at LaGuardia Community College. She enjoys reading, watching movies, and spending time with her friends. Her goal is to transfer to John Jay College.

Amal Toaimah is a student at LaGuardia Community College, majoring in Fine Arts Design studio. She was born in Phoenix, Arizona, but raised in Egypt. Amal loves outdoor adventures, kickboxing, and taekwondo. Her dream is to get a Ph.D. in Architecture and establishing a public art school in Egypt for low income families.

Dana Trusso is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy in the Humanities Department at LaGuardia Community College, CUNY, and serves as contact advisor for Alpha Theta Phi (PTK). Dr. Trusso

received her B.A. from Baylor University in Philosophy with minors in History and Religion (2003), and Ph.D. (2015) in Philosophy from Duquesne University. Her area of specialization is ancient Greek philosophy, and her research centers on the intersection of love and learning in Plato. She teaches Ethics, Philosophy of Religion and Philosophy of Love.

Ting Man Tsao is a professor of English at LaGuardia Community College, The City University of New York. Dr. Tsao has published in the fields of postcolonial studies, the medical humanities, creative nonfiction, pedagogy, higher education, and food studies. He enjoys teaching illness narratives and binge watching mystery and other dramas from different cultures.

Yingchao Wang is an international student at LaGuardia Community College. Her major is Fine Arts. She is transferring to Baruch in Fall to study International Business. Her career goal is working in the fashion marketing field and business. Yingchao's interests include painting, cooking, and dancing.

Annie Wu is a mom and children's photographer. She enjoys capturing everyday moments of her family. Aside from photography, she dabbles in thrifting, upcycling, and making an impact in the world.

Rongxin Xu was born in China. She moved to the United States to study. Currently she is majoring in Fine Arts.