



ASIAN AMERICAN VOICES



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LaGuardia Community College

Asian American Voices

Magazine of the Students

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Asian American Voices Committee

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NOTE FROM THE EDITORS
Asian American Voices
No.2, 2020

Last year in 2019, in its 28th annual celebration of Asian and Asian American culture and heritage at LaGuardia, the Asian Heritage Committee launched its first issue of the *Asian American Voices* journal. *Asian American Voices* is a showcase of essays, creative writing, recipes, and art by LaGuardia students that engage with Asian and Asian American narratives and experiences. It aims to document the diversity of LaGuardia's Asian and Asian American students, who make up 22% of the student body, by giving visibility to their identities, cultures, histories, and heritages.

Due to the current global health crisis, the Asian Heritage Celebration committee had to cancel both its mini-conference and celebration scheduled for May 2020. However, in spite of the challenges, the editorial committee of *Asian American Voices* journal decided to share some of our student work that reflects the above aim of the journal. Given the current wave of anti-Asian and anti-Asian-American bigotry resulting from the coronavirus pandemic, we believe it is crucial to share the efforts, stories, and talents of our students, and to celebrate inclusivity at LaGuardia.

This issue highlights voices of students with origins in *eight* different countries in Asia as well as students whose work critically engages with literature, histories, and experiences of and about Asia and its diaspora. While we recognize the talent of our students, we also take this opportunity to extend our solidarity with our students and colleagues who have personally experienced the impact of hate crimes. The "Responses to Anti-Asian/Asian-American Bigotry during COVID-19" section of the journal documents the verbal and non-verbal attack experienced by our colleague, Dr. Ting Man Tsao, and our student Yejin Lee. While both individually display courage to condemn these xenophobic attitudes, their experiences also stand as a testimony to the need for a more unified community where irrespective of our differences we could all come together to create a more tolerant world. As these pieces illustrate, it is highly important that we stand together to resist any references to COVID-19 that promote racism and microaggressions.

Finally, *Asian American Voices* would not have been possible without the support of students and faculty who submitted their work. It is a pleasure to present their accomplishments and we hope they inspire future engagements with work by and about Asians and Asian Americans. A very special thank you to our students Angrej Singh (LaGuardia alum) and Swekchha Luitel for the cover design and photo. We begin this issue by recognizing Joyce Moy, Executive Director of the Asian American and Asian Research Institute (AAARI) for her contributions to LaGuardia and to CUNY.

The Editors

Long Island City, New York
May, 2020

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1.

A Special Thank You to Joyce Moy and the Asian American/Asian Research Institute of the City University of New York (AAARI)

Ann Matsuuchi and Kyoko Toyama

This issue of *Asian American Voices* is dedicated to the one person whose years of work has made her the centerpoint of Asian American endeavors at CUNY, Joyce O. Moy. Joyce's continuing efforts have done more than hold together the disparate threads of our communities, enabling the much needed work necessary for keeping Asian and Asian American studies alive at CUNY. As an alternative to thanking her with a lucite trophy, we at LaGuardia Community College would like to thank Joyce Moy by connecting her name with this special journal issue as a material example of how student and scholarly work materializes at CUNY.

Projects like this journal issue would not have happened without the support of Joyce and AAARI from its inception as an idea to its final production in print and online. Joyce has maintained a close and supportive relationship with LaGuardia Community College, never failing to come to our aid when we need help making sure our planned conferences and panels come together. To Joyce, no request is impossible, or too trivial. Her gift of connecting people, from politicians to local business owners to first time college students, is an exceptional one. We deeply appreciate how Joyce has given her time and served as a mentor to all students, faculty, and administrators that cross her path.

Joyce Moy is the Executive Director of the Asian American and Asian Research Institute (AAARI), of the City University of New York (CUNY). Her field of focus is economic and community development, and entrepreneurship. She was the first Asian American director of a New York State Small Business Development Center (SBDC) funded by the US Small Business Administration. Joyce has been involved in numerous research projects, with a focus on education and outreach to immigrant communities. She developed a unique curriculum for financial counselors embedded in community based organizations serving New York City's poor, working poor and immigrants. The training was adopted by the non-profit, Cities for Financial Empowerment, and replicated nationally by over a dozen US cities, including Philadelphia, Miami, Honolulu, New Haven, San Francisco and Austin, becoming a national model in the field of financial empowerment.

She has served on the Governor's New York State Task Force on Small Business, was co-chair of the past NYC Comptroller's Task Force on Public Benefit Agreements, the board of Asian Women in Business, and as Vice-Chair of the board of the North East Regional US Pan Asian American Chamber of Commerce. A former practicing attorney, she has also taught Asian Americans and Law at Cornell Law School, and at the CUNY School of Law. At LaGuardia Community College, she served as executive director of business and community development and was one of the founders of



Joyce Moy, J.D.

the Asian Heritage Celebration committee. She currently serves on the advisory board of the Queens Borough President's General Assembly, and the NYC Comptroller's Advisory Council on MWBEs. She received her B.A. from Stony Brook University, and J.D. from Hofstra University School of Law.

Joyce received numerous awards and here are a few examples of the awards given to her for her community and advocacy services;

- 2017 Chinese-American Planning Council, Community Leadership Award
- 2013 CUNY Women's Leadership Conference, Women's Leadership Award
- 2013 Coalition for Asian American Children & Families, Caring for Children Award
- 2013 FDA NorthEast Regional Office Asian Pacific Islander American Heritage Program, Certificate of Recognition
- 2013 Asian Pacific American Advocates (previously known as the Organization of Chinese Americans) OCA Long Island Chapter, Asian Pacific American Advocate Award
- 2005 Rising Stars, Star Mentor of the Year
- 2003 New York Women's Chamber of Commerce, Excellence in Business Development

Diversity and inclusiveness have continually been key priorities in Joyce's approach to all endeavors. While consistently mindful of the need for data and material evidence in order to accomplish needed goals, Joyce always makes sure that the needs of immigrants, social justice, and activism are not neglected in important conversations. In 2018, Joyce called on our College to address a dark moment in history regarding our namesake Mayor Fiorello La Guardia and his response to Japanese American internment. This resulted in the start of an important conversation involving archivists and historians that helped guide us through.

When asked about Joyce's work with our College, Claudia Chan from External Affairs, shared these thoughts: "Joyce Moy works incessantly towards bridging the gaps between people and making sure that the Asian American voice is heard. Recently, I had the opportunity to participate in a Chinese American genealogy conference she organized. The aim was to help individuals trace their family histories, share their stories and how our stories are also part of the history of this city and country. Joyce made sure to enable these important conversations and allowed each of us to hear unheard family stories, appreciating their parallels and how intertwined our lives are."

Kyoko Toyama who has known Joyce over 20 years as a former board member of AAARI and has served on the college's Internationalizing Committee as well as Asian Heritage Committee which Joyce chaired, says, "Joyce is a champion of the rights and advocate for all people whether or not they are students, staff and faculty. Her ability to work with all types of people by respecting each one of them and uplifting the gifts of all is something I attempted to model in my professional and personal life. Joyce has a way to be inclusive by bringing people to the table regardless of their ranks and positions because she believes in all people." Joyce's leadership followed that of Dr. Thomas Tam, the first Asian American board of trustees in the City University of New York. Dr. Tam and Joyce always looked out for all Asians and Asian Americans in a personal way. Joyce's style of working has been not only collegial but more collective and interdependent, which is very much embedded in the Asian culture.

Joyce headed a special project to analyze the hiring and retention practice of Asian American faculty, staff and administrators of CUNY and through Joyce's skillful strategy to have important people in decision making, she was able to bring the issue of lack of leadership by Asian Americans to light by completing the report based on the analyses and coordinating a CUNY wide conference on this same issue at CUNY Graduate Center. After this tedious work and networking with scholars and administrators, CUNY named two Asian American presidents. This is nothing but the inspiring effort of Joyce. Kyoko remembers, "No nonsense work style but Joyce's passion to increase Asian American

A Special Thank You to Joyce Moy (Matsuuchi & Toyama)

administrators was so determined and all of us on the task force felt her energy and the commitment. I admire her unrelenting commitment to this issue because she cares about the students after all.”

Joyce has always given special care and attention to LaGuardia, always making sure that our faculty were included in AAARI’s board. She continued to stay in touch with the LaGuardia community by speaking at our annual Asian Heritage Month celebration, giving Asians and Asian American students opportunities to be exposed to professional events, and providing scholarships to all students who won the essay contest during the Asian Heritage Month programs.

We at LaGuardia Community College have felt that we can always count on Joyce Moy’s support. For Joyce, no request is ever deemed impossible, and every challenge is met with creative ideas.



**Responses to Anti-Asian/Asian-American Bigotry during
COVID-19**

2.

Student and Faculty's Responses to Anti-Asian/Asian-American Bigotry during COVID-19

Editors

In light of a rapid increase in anti-Asian/Asian American incidents during this COVID-19 global health crisis, the University Advisory Council on Diversity issued a statement harshly criticizing the anti-Asian and anti-Asian American bigotry both in New York City and on CUNY campuses (See the full statement at <https://j.mp/2RED3UD>). Many CUNY faculty and staff members have supported this statement, including our own president, Dr. Paul Arcario, who has publicly endorsed the statement in his e-mail.

In this special issue of *Asian American Voices*, we have invited Asian/Asian American faculty, staff, and students at LaGuardia Community College to share their thoughts about the current situations surrounding the Asian and Asian-American community during the COVID-19 crisis.

Editors of Asian American Voices

3.

Between Strong Feelings and Bigotry in the Time of COVID-19*Ting Man Tsao*

Waiting in line with several other customers to enter a small Chinese-American supermarket at the corner of 18th Avenue and 68th Street in Brooklyn, I heard a passerby shout, “Chinese virus. You should go back to your country.”

The man continued to walk north, heading toward many by then closed small businesses including bakeries, cafes, restaurants, take-outs, pizzerias, clinics, and chain stores such as Citibank, C-Town, Starbuck, Target, and Walgreen. Some of the stores there are owned and staffed by Chinese/Asian-Americans, but all of them serve a diverse population in the neighborhood that is Bensonhurst, composed of Asians, Blacks, Hispanics, Whites, and other ethnic groups. Further north if that man continued to walk, he would find himself in another neighborhood Borough Park, home to many Jewish families and Kosher grocery stores. Despite the long history of racism in our country, this complex ethnic mosaic is the essence of Brooklyn; this cultural diversity is the essence of America.

To scapegoat Chinese/Asian Americans for the COVID-19 pandemic is to attack the culturally diverse heritage of America. The unprecedented coronavirus outbreak has undoubtedly caused anger, anxiety, fear, grief, indignation, suspicion, and trauma at an unprecedented scale among all of us; and we all have questions and strong opinions about why and how New York City and America got hit so hard. Having strong emotions is natural, and voicing our opinions and asking questions should be encouraged as the impact of the pandemic on each of us has been different. In doing so, however, we must remind ourselves that there is a line between all our strong feelings on the one hand and racial harassment and hate crimes, be they verbal or physical, on the other.

It was to uphold this line, the correct line, that I reported the passerby’s act of bigotry to governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations. I went public and stood up against this sort of scapegoating of Chinese/Asian Americans for one simple reason. If all of us global citizens, regardless of our race and ethnicity, are united, rather than divided, we can better fight the COVID-19 pandemic and rebuild communities, the country, and the world into a place that is more livable and more beautiful.

4.

COVID-19 and the Disease of Xenophobia

Yejin Lee

COVID19 first started in Wuhan, China. The news spread throughout the world along with the story of Chinese eating bats. Although the virus quickly spread to South Korea, the U.S. initially seemed reluctant to respond to the rapidly increasing death, arguing that because it was happening in Asia, a long distance away, it will not reach the United States. However, it started to show real-life implications in the U.S. with the sudden rise of infected people in New York and in other states. It became more and more pronounced as the news started to announce the serious spread of infection all across the nation. Schools shifted to online teaching, stores were shut down, and many people were advised to stay home under the new rule of social distancing. Consequently, many people lost their jobs, the economy began to fall into recession, and the world seemed to come to a sudden stop. Along with social and economic issues, this epidemic also exposed xenophobic and racist attitudes with several attacks against the Asian community. Since late February the association between China and the coronavirus has led to many anti-Chinese and racist incidents. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that Asians are now called the virus and blamed for the spread of COVID19.

The situation became so worse that Asians and Asian Americans in the U.S. not only started to worry about the coronavirus, but also became scared about their own safety as horrible and heart-breaking news on social media about Asian hate crimes went viral. Quiet naturally my Korean friends expressed concerns about our safety, thereby suggesting we should wear sunglasses and masks to hide our appearances. Last month, when I saw the news that a Korean girl of my age was punched on her chin in Ktown, Manhattan, for not wearing a mask and accused by a woman of color for spreading the virus, I realized how systemic racism spares no one and that people of color too can join hands in such situations to blame the Asian community for spreading the virus. I also got scared imagining what happened to the Korean girl might happen to me as well. Unsurprisingly, it did not take long for me to have an expected unpleasant experience. It was on the street near my house in Astoria in full daylight around mid-March when I encountered a frowned face of a man staring at me intently. Although he didn't say anything, his facial expression delivered an implied message that I am the Chinese virus. Not knowing what to do, I ignored him and went my way. Since then these glances have become normal. Although I am fortunate to not have encountered any physical or verbal attacks so far, I always have to worry about a possible threat—verbal or non-verbal—each time I go out.

The above incident encouraged me to inquire if my fellow Asian peers too have started experiencing the same. On that note, I interviewed **Leah Leem** and **Grace Cho** from Liberal Arts and Sciences Program at LaGuardia Community College. I emailed them the following questions and they sent me their answers. The below excerpts are their words from the interview:

Me: Have you encountered any physical attack or mild discomfort during this pandemic situation either on Zoom or when outside or in your own social media platform?

Leah: Fortunately, I haven't experienced any intense hate crimes myself, however, I have been asked questions such as "do you eat bats?" or "ching chong" online, specifically on Omegle. Another hurtful feeling that I have experienced recently is people turning their backs on me or covering their faces thinking that all the Asian population has this virus. I don't really mind since it's their problem to be acting this way, in fact I kind of like the fact that people don't want to be around me. The less the merrier. However, to those stereotypical remarks I do get kind of offended due to the fact that they obviously have some bias against Asians.

Me: How did you feel at the moment?

Leah: At the moment I felt disappointment, that people would really think this way about Asians. Even if it's just a "joke" it is a HARMFUL joke. The fact that these same people might want to have kids one day is scary because they can teach this mindset to their children, continuing a pattern of ignorance.

Me: How has coronavirus racism affected your life?

Leah: Coronavirus racism hasn't really affected my life, I am privileged to be living in a country where there is diversity. If I lived somewhere in Europe the case might be different...

Me: What is your opinion as Asian about this attack?

Leah: My opinion as an Asian on these minor things that have happened to me along with the major hate crimes that have happened to Asians is I'm sick of race always coming into the picture. Like literally, WHO CARES. Humans are so divided on this earth it is so sad. From a universal perspective we are simply the human race with beating hearts & functioning brains. I'm sick of the hatred and the ignorance and the anger that comes with being from a certain race, it's absolutely ridiculous. I hope one day the human race can be united, though it was never united in the first place.

Me: What do you think is the best way to stop this attack or bigotry?

Leah: To be honest, I don't know if there's any way to stop this bigotry. Racism has occurred for hundreds of years, and it may take longer to fully get rid of that. All we can do is keep an open mind and not be so hateful.

Me: Have you encountered any physical attack or mild discomfort during this pandemic situation either on Zoom or when outside or in your own social media platform?

Grace Cho: While I haven't experienced any direct incidents of racism, I have seen multiple videos of race-based attacks against Asians happening online since the pandemic started.

Me: How did you feel at the moment?

Grace Cho: Watching these videos caused me to be very distressed, as I started to see that these hate crimes can very easily happen to me as well. I'm starting to read less news and decrease my time on social media so that I'm not so preoccupied with these negative events.

Me: How has coronavirus racism affected your life?

Grace Cho: I am more aware of my presence in public during the few times I go out for necessary errands, as I don't want to attract too much negative attention to myself as an Asian person. My concern for my family's well-being in public has also increased, since I am worried for their safety as well.

Me: What is your opinion as Asian about this attack?

Grace Cho: I hope that these attacks and hate crimes against Asians come to a stop, as it shows one's ignorance to believe that Asian people are perpetuating COVID-19. I'm also upset by the racial divisions that these instances of hate have created. Reading opinions on the Internet, I've noticed that many people are placing the blame for these racist assaults on other races, which is problematic because this is a time to develop strength through solidarity, rather than assigning race to criminal misbehavior.

Me: What do you think is the best way to stop this attack or bigotry?

Grace Cho: I'm not sure that there is one best way to stop these bigoted attitudes. However, I believe that there are a variety of approaches that can be used to draw attention to this issue, and address the gaps in knowledge for those who are misinformed about the way COVID-19 is spreading and not singularly associate Asians with the disease. For one, New York City has set up a hotline for New Yorkers to report hate crimes and discrimination related to the coronavirus outbreak. Additionally, I've seen people on social media using their platforms and exposure to bring awareness to these problems and encourage the public to support Chinatown/Asian businesses. In terms of what more can be accomplished, I view the news as an important outlet to combat racist misinformation and deter these problematic mindsets. I also think and hope that as new scientific research regarding the cause and spread of COVID-19 continues to be published, these reports will dispel more fears and bring greater clarity to us all.

At this time of a global pandemic, the above incident and the interviews taught me how hate crimes and microaggressions are deeply entrenched in the United States. People are demanding that China should apologize to the world and compensate for all the damage that resulted from COVID19. In this situation it is extremely easy to attack me and other Asians not only because we are the colored minority immigrants but also because much of these attitudes stem from politically motivated wide spreading of unsupported opinions that we Asians are the cause of this crisis. Consequently, whether we directly encounter hate crime or not, the fear that it may happen to me or my family or my friends haunts all Asians.

I am also aware that people across the world are now living in sorrow, anger, and pain these days. People might need a scapegoat to express their anger. However, it is important to become mindful of others' emotions and sentiments and come together to collaboratively combat racism during COVID19. Recently, I attended the Bystander Intervention training hosted by Hollaback on April 21st, where I learned 5 different methods called The Five D's (Distract, Delegate, Document, Direct, Delay) to support someone who's being harassed, emphasizing that harassment is not okay and we have the power to make the community safer. During these times of crisis, instead of blaming innocent people, one should focus on how to resolve this crisis and eventually return to a normal world.

(A version of this article has also been published in the Spring 2020 issue of *The e-Fiorello*)

Creative Writing/Poems

5.

Flashback

Somi Ahmed

[Manjulika and Monju are crossing the road]

Manjulika: Monju, look look, the famous singer Rafiq is sitting over there!

Monju: Where? Where?

Manjulika: Uff. Do you see the small food truck?

Monju: Yes, I see that, but there are two food trucks. Which one are you talking about?

You know what, let's walk to get closer. I forgot to bring my glasses today, so everything is blurry.

Manjulika: Oh my God, do you see the green truck named "Food Buzz"? In the left corner of that truck, Rafiq is sitting on the bench. He is wearing a blue and white striped color short sleeved shirt. Look at where my finger is pointing. Now he is sipping on the cup. I am so excited! He is one of my favorite singers! Should I go over? What should I say? Monju, do you have pen and paper? I do not want to miss this opportunity.

[Monju replies slowly.]

Monju: Yes [pause] I do have...

[Manjulika grabs Monju's hand and walks as fast as possible. Finally, they make it.]

Manjulika: Are you the singer Mohamed Rafiq?

[Rafiq looks up when he hears his name.]

Rafiq: Yes, I am Rafiq? But.. I am sorry, do I know you?

[Monju and Manjulika smile.]

Monju and Manjulika: No, this is the first time I am meeting you. We are both big fans. We always attend your stage shows and concerts. We always buy the albums that you release. If you don't mind, can we get your autograph? Please.

Rafiq: Ooh sure. Where should I sign? Where?

[Monju points out the top of the paper.]

Here, okay. What's your name?

Manjulika okay, and you sir, Monju.

[Rafiq looks at his watch. It's 5 o'clock. The sun goes down, the temperature is decreasing. Several people start to crowd the Food Buzz food truck, because the food is very famous.]

Rafiq: I am sorry buddy. I have to leave right now. I have a family party at 6:00 o'clock sharp. If I am not there by that time, my better half will be angry with me. But it is my pleasure to meet with you guys. Hopefully, see you soon!

[As Rafiq leaves, he shakes hands with both of them. But Manjulika looks at him, her eyes are stuck on him. She is amazed to see his humbleness.]

Monju: Thank you, sir.

[Rafiq walks toward his car. But after fifteen minutes, suddenly the car stops with a loud sound. Rafiq is listening to a song with his earphones.]

Rafiq: What happened? Why has the car stopped?

Driver: The petrol has finished.

Rafiq: What? Petrol finished? I told you many times that when I go for a long trip, the driver should keep everything in the car that is necessary! But you [pause]; (he feels frustrated). Ask someone how far the petrol station is. And if you see a motorcycle, ask for a lift.

Driver: Don't worry sir, I will manage that. Give me ten to fifteen minutes.

[When he starts to walk, Rafiq calls to him and asks:]

Rafiq: Do you have the money or not?

Driver: Yes. I have money.

[Rafiq looks around. The place is full of people. Little boys are playing cricket; farmers are in the field. As Rafiq's eyes look around, he sees the well-organized bamboo houses and people. Because of the nice, warm, weather, his eyes become sleepy. In the meantime, he dreams.

Everything that he was thinking about has been wiped off, and new images appear. He touches a butterfly and it vanishes. He sees that a kakatarua (wooden doll) is moving from one side to the other without anyone's help. Rafiq looks around. The place is peaceful. There are no homes and no people. But he feels scared because he is alone. He comes out from his car and he rubs his eyes. He notices that everything is cloudy, and dark, his body becomes cold and he is thirsty. There is no air, no people but the wooden doll is moving fast. As he tries to see closely, he sees the wooden doll come close to him and he cannot run. He starts sweating, as he turns to his left and sees his old servant, Karim. Karim looks very old, bald, and in his face only bones were present, like a skeleton.]

Karim: Sir, do you remember me?

Rafiq: Yes [pause] I do.

[Rafiq is shocked to see him because there are no people in that area. Karim's behavior makes it seem as if he felt uneasy being around Rafiq. He is here to tell his untold tale.]

Karim: Sir, I was one of your honest servants. I worked at your home since my childhood. Your grandfather hired me. When you were a child, your father gave me the responsibility to raise you. But you made me leave your house because you thought I stole your golden watch. Your current servant

Flashback (Somi Ahmed)

Salam does not clean your house properly, so this is why he can't find your watch. In the corner of your almera you will find your watch. Sir, I didn't steal your watch! I am innocent!

[Rafiq is a little surprised, because Karim sees everything.]

Rafiq: I... I forgave you. And you also should forget that old stuff.

Karim: I want to be released from this accusation. You forgive me! Now I am free!

[Karim Vanishes]

[The driver arrives, and he sees Rafiq sweating and throbbing. So, he shakes his hand and calls, "Sir! Sir!" As Rafiq sees the driver's face in front of him, he is horrified. For a little moment Rafiq is voiceless. Then, Rafiq acts like he is all right and that nothing has happened. He looks around and cleans his sweat with the tissue.]

Rafiq: "Did you purchase the petrol?" He asked the driver gruffly, "Why are you late?! There are only 20 minutes left to the party."

[The driver does not reply.]

[Rafiq is really horrified by his dream. He questions why he saw this type of dream. How does Karim know, his gold watch is in the corner of his almera? Immediately, he calls his wife.]

Wife: Hello, where are you? Why haven't you arrived yet?!

Rafiq: I am nearby the house. Dear, can you please check in the corner of the almera for me?

[His wife is confused.]

Rafiq: You will know why, if you go and check immediately.

Wife: It's too dark. I cannot see anything. Uff, this Salam! Number one he is lazy; he did not clean the room properly! Dust and dust everywhere! [sneezing] Is it important?

Rafiq: Yes, more than that. Did you find something? I am on the line. Do not disconnect; I am waiting for your reply.

[As she is searching, she sees the golden watch. The bright, shining watch, the one that Rafiq accused Karim of stealing. And because of that, he fired Karim.]

Wife: Your golden watch! [surprised]

[Rafiq does not ask anything and disconnects the phone. Now he understands why Karim told him all of those details. His spirit wanted to be released from the accusation. Rafiq felt guilty because Karim had nobody. He did not marry because Rafiq's family was everything to him.]

6.

The Lost Face & SPRING

Popy Chowdhury

The Lost Face

It was a bright cold day,
My memories slip quickly
Through the glass doors of Victorian mansions,
Though not quickly enough to prevent him.
On the cracked marble wall arose a familiar face,
The face of a man of forty-five,
With a heavy black Mustache
And rugged handsome features.
The familiar face gazed
With an expression so contrived
This memory could be dimmed,
But there was no way of shutting it off completely.
He had a smallish, frail figure
Merely emphasized by blue overalls
His hair was very fair,
His face naturally sanguine.

The chill of the winter had just ended
Yet, outside the world still looked cold.
Down in the street little eddies of wind screamed,
The sun was shining and the sky- a harsh blue
But these seemed to be no color in anything else
Except the black-Mustached face.
There were the dark eyes
Those eyes, where I lost myself once.

SPRING

It was a beautiful spring
Everything was bright and full of joy
The trees were covered with cherry blossoms
And the air smelled of the freshly cut grass
I was lying upon
Nature was colorful- a pastel pink
Everything was dreamy and inviting
There was a melodious song in my heart
Singing in a silent voice
I was feeling inspired
And ready for a new beginning
I waited eagerly for you
In the heart of the park
Where we met every time
After a long time waiting you came
I wanted to tell you something
But, I couldn't
My cheeks became the pastel pink of spring

"I am in love; I am going to marry her"
Suddenly escaped from your mouth like a cold chill
Your face was shining, but I was fading!

It was a beautiful spring but suddenly
It became a colorless winter.

7.

To My Ancestors

Jesmin Ara

(Speaker is a person from the future, fifty or a hundred years from now, expressing concern upon seeing the destructive acts on the environment by the people of our generation.)

You are having a good time,
Enjoying the pure and abundant nature.
However, I am frightened about me and us,
Seeing your destructive and irresponsible behaviors.
When you destroy forests, burn fossil fuel,
I cry for us, how will we breathe in all those CO₂!
It makes me sad when I see you dumping wastes into water,
It goes from lakes to rivers, rivers to seas, and seas to oceans.
Have you ever thought about how we will get clean water!
I feel helpless when I think of your plastic wastes,
Those plastics might stay there for another millennium.
You created industries to make things to satisfy you,
I think you already know how hot fumes and gases have
Polluted the environment!
If all the ice of Antarctica and the glaciers would melt,
Where will we go!
Rich or poor whether living by Hudson or Ganges,
No one will survive, we all will perish.

Text below is the translation of the same poem in Bengali.

হে আমার পূর্বপুরুষ
জেসমিন আরা

(পঁচাত্তর কিংবা একশ' বছর পর আমাদের ভবিষ্যত প্রজন্মের কেউ আমাদের বর্তমান প্রজন্মের পরিবেশ বিনাসকারি কার্যকলাপ দেখে নিজেরদেরভাগ্য নিয়ে উঁকঠা প্রকাশ করছে।)

হে আমার পূর্বপুরুষ,
তোমাদের দিনগুলো নিশ্চয়ই খুব আনন্দে কাটছে,
তোমরা উপভোগ করছ বিশুদ্ধ বায়ু, আর জল।
তবে আমি কিছু শঙ্কিত আমার ও আমাদের কথা ভেবে
যখন দেখি তোমাদের ধংশাত্মক ও হঠকারি ব্যবহার।

To My Ancestors (Jesmin Ara)

যখন তোমায় দেখি বন উজার করতে, আলানি তেল পুড়তে
আমি কাঁদি, আর ভাবি, কি করে আমরা দম নেবো
বৃক্ষহীন কার্বন-ডাই-অক্সাইড যুক্ত সেই বাতাসে!
যখন তোমরা বর্জগুলো সব পানিতে ফেল,
আমি কষ্ট পাই এই ভেবে যে
সেই বর্জ খাল থেকে বিলে, বিল থেকে হাওরে, হাওর থেকে নদীতে,
নদী থেকে সাগরে, সাগর থেকে মহাসাগরে মিশে যাচ্ছে।
একবারও কি ভাবছ, কোথায় পাবে বিশুদ্ধ জল
তোমার পরবর্তী প্রজন্মরা!
আমি অসহায় বোধ করি, যখন ভাবি
তোমাদের প্লাস্টিক বর্জের কথা,
ওগুলোতো হাজার বছর ধরে অক্ষত পড়ে রইবে পৃথিবীতে।
তোমাদের ইচ্ছে পূরণের জন্য কল কারখানা, যানবাহন
কত কি ই যে বানালে তোমরা,
হয়ত ইতোমধ্যে জেনে গেছ,
কারখানার ধোঁয়া, আর গরম বাতাসের ভয়ঙ্কর পরিণতি!
যদি এন্টিকটিকার সব বরফ,
আর পৃথিবীর সব হিমবাহ গলে জল হয়ে যায়,
তবে আমরা কোথায় গিয়ে দাড়াব?
ধনী-গরীব, গঙ্গা কিংবা হাডসন নদীর পাড়ের
যে ই হোকনা কেন,
কেউ আর বাঁচবেনা, সবাই নিশ্চিত হয়ে যাবো!!!

8.

You're a mess worth having... & A Thirsty Soul

Swekchha Luitel

You're a mess worth having...

I am no longer a child,
No longer a naive,
No longer an innocent,
And definitely no longer adorable.

I am an adult
With many of to-do-lists to take care of
But even more than that bills to pay off ...

I try playing hide-and-seek
like for the old times sake
But it ain't fun anymore
They look for me no more ...

I used to run to my mom
If I get hurt,
But now I run but I run
To hide it from her

Wish I could erase all my to-do-lists
Wish I could erase all my wannabes ...
Wish I could be a little selfish,
Where I could wish to have happy endings.
And there is where it would end
When I hear someone saying
Darling, you're a mess worth having...

You're a mess worth having...& A Thirsty Soul (Swekchha Luitel)

A Thirsty Soul

If I were your mom,
I would never be disappointed in you.
You're a thirsty soul for love,
And I understand it
But even with the hunger
I admire how you've always succeeded
To share little love to other
That you've saved for yourself.

9.

Papaya Tree

Amourelle Barnese

*Once upon a time,
A kindhearted dark Fae lived by herself, in Palawan's forest.
Becoming friends with human beings was a constant desire.*

*But...
They were afraid of the dark Fae and stayed faraway.
The dark Fae's friend, the light Fae, came to her and said,
"How about I go start a fight in the village? You can defeat me. Then everyone will realize you aren't
so bad after all. Then you finally can be friends!"*

The dark Fae smiled and agreed.

End of Prologue

Here I was again.

The same place at the same time.

I wonder why I always end up coming back.

"Hi, Lola."

"I came back to give you some water."

"School was ok. Mom said she can't work anymore because of her arms."

"..."

The wind blew as my hair flowed with it like waves.

I was talking to myself again.

In the same place at the same time.

"I will see you tomorrow."

I turned away from Lola and started walking away from the field full of grass.

Sometimes I wished she could talk back, but then again how would I react?

I looked up at the sky. It was always cloudy in Manila for some reason ever since Lola died.

"Are you sad that you died?" I said to myself as I sighed and walked again.

“Keala!” Someone shouted my name behind me.

I turned to see a familiar girl with coffee eyes running towards me.

“I was looking for you everywhere! I asked your mom where you were so we can walk together to school.” Lei breathed heavily.

“Oh, I’m sorry I forgot...”

“Well, it’s okay! I accept why you left without me anyways.” Lei looked upon the field of grass and in the center was a small tree.

Lei patted my head as she smiled gently, “Off we go!”

We headed to school and several minutes later, we reached Victorino Mapa. Everyone around us was talking, laughing and huddled into groups like animals.

“Hello, Lei!” One person said as they waved passed us. Lei smiled as she looked at me.

“Come on, let’s get to class,” Lei said.

Inside of our school was so big that it was easy to get lost if you were new. “Did you bring lunch today Keala?” Lei asked as we walked to class.

I shook my head.

“Ha-ha like always, it’s okay I made a lot of food this morning, we can share.”

I nodded as we entered the classroom.

I sat where I always did, in the back near the window and heater. Lei sat next to me as I placed my head onto my desk.

“Hi Lei!” Someone said.

“Hey, Lei, let’s hang out after school later ok?” Someone else said.

Lei was popular in school.

She was also very pretty and had snowy skin. Everyone loved her for some reason. [0.04in] Perhaps her beauty?

But for me...

I didn’t like myself nor others, but I accepted Lei as a friend.

Everyone ignored me because I was quiet. I liked it that way anyway.

Making friends wasn’t on my mind anyway.

“...She’s her best friend? Look at her.” I heard a burst of laughter that was distant but a voice so close it was clear. “She’s weird.”

“She isn’t that cute at all like Lei. Hmm, maybe she uses her to look better!”

I put my head up and saw two boys staring at me in disgust.

My pupils widened as my heart thumped feeling anxious. They were speaking about me like always. Though I didn’t care for others, their words went right through me like thorns on a wilting rose. It has always been this way since when I was little, I closed my eyes as the memory began to swim through my mind.

“Hey Anak, let’s play fruit basket!” said a girl

“Ok everyone, pick fruit to throw into a basket! Douala you’ll be the picker!” [0.04in] said the teacher.

“I pick grapes!” she shouted as some children began standing holding a card saying grape. I looked down on mine and it said papaya. I know everyone likes papaya. [0.04in] I see them eat it in school every day, so I’m going to get called.

“Grapefruit!”

“Apple!”

“Mango!”

Everyone’s was in the basket except for me, everyone’s fruit was called except mine. “Maybe she’ll finally pick me!” I smiled gently waving my hand at Douala.

“Teacher! There are no more fruits that can fit in the basket!” she said.

“Huh, what about the papaya?”

“Ha-ha, the papaya stinks!” she said as the class began to laugh.

“Papaya is also very dark like a shadow,” said another kid.

I was trembling, and I remember I ran away from class. I was outside the school’s doors and felt a raindrop rolling down my face only to realize they were my tears. [0.04in] The papaya did stink at first, but when you ate it, it was sweet. The papaya wasn’t dark like a shadow, it was colorful like a sunset on a summer day. The only thing that was dark like a shadow was me... I looked down at my skin. I hated my brown skin! Everyone else was lighter than me, and nobody wanted to ever speak to me.

I started walking home, as there was no point in returning inside in a classroom filled with laughter.

The trail towards my house was filled with grassy fields, and among it were many homes filled with families.

“Whose kid is that?” an old Lolo began to stare at me with many others. I felt the lingering presence of ghost’s eyes looking at me.

“Oh, she’s a Bonifacio member, that’s her granddaughter.” A lady replied.

“Is she a mutt?”

“Half-blood? She isn’t Filipino, she’s just a disgrace.”

“Why is she so much darker than us?”

“Maybe she’s a burden to the Bonifacio family.”

People began to ask. I tuned them out and started walking faster. All I could remember is getting home where I was safe. When I arrived home, it was empty. I felt alone in a world that didn’t know I existed.

I opened my eyes and saw Lei hovering over me with a concerned expression. She wiped the gentle tears off my face with her hands. Lei was a warm person—I am thankful that I have her for the very least.

“Keala... You missed the whole lecture while you were asleep, everyone went to lunch already.” I looked around and everyone was gone.

“Oh, I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay, I understand.” She gently smiled and gave me an ube pudding cup.

“Let’s eat together, ok Anak?” As I looked at Lei, I regret sometimes that I felt like a burden to her. Maybe if I had ignored her, we wouldn’t be friends. [0.04in] But, I’m grateful I didn’t.

We ate in class, and after we were done, we went into the hallways. Lei had put her arm around mine as everyone stared, the look in their eyes reminded me of when I first arrived at Manila. It was a look of shame of being a mestiza. I looked down towards the floor to avoid the constant eye contact. Then Lei had stopped suddenly, I looked up to see a guy standing in front of us.

“Hey, Lei and Keala.” My name was called by a stranger I never met.

“Are you guys heading home now?” he asked, smiling gently.

“We are, why do you ask, Rowland?” she replied with no expression.

Rowland asked if he could walk with us, I was confident he was going to ask Lei out, so I nodded at Lei as she said ok. We all walked out of the school, and as I looked up, I saw the cloudy skies from

before starting to disappear.

“So Keala, where do you live?” Rowland walked right next to me.

I hesitated to say anything but then...

“Makati.” The words flew out my mouth with ease.

“That’s where I am heading!” he replied happily.

“Do you live near us?” Lei had asked.

“Hm, I think I live up the block from your home, Keala,” Rowland replied.

“Oh, I live down from her so we’re all so close!” Lei smiled a bit.

Through the streets of Manila, there were vendors everywhere selling things from Halo-Halo or Taho. The sweet smell lingered through the air and into everyone’s nose. Families walked past with their children and others were working construction on new homes.

“Oh, this is me.” Lei pointed to her home and looked back at me and Rowland.

“I can walk with you guys,” she said as Rowland shook his head.

“It’s okay, I will protect her all the way home.” he smiled at me. Why was this person being nice to me? Or maybe it was just to impress Lei.

“Is that ok, Keala?” I nodded my head at Lei as she waved and hugged me goodbye.

“I’ll meet you where we always meet.” She waved again at us and walked inside her house.

Rowland and I began walking up the hill.

“Lei is a kind person, isn’t she?” Rowland said.

“Yes, she’s very sweet,” I replied not making eye contact.

There was an awkward silence. I stopped walking and turned my head and looked at the small tree in the grassy field.

“Hm? Are you okay?” Rowland asked with a concerning expression.

“I have to water the tree, and I forgot to bring water...” I felt a bit upset. [0.04in] I usually never forget to refill my water bottle at school, but I guess that memory made me forget everything.

Rowland began rumbling through his backpack, and he pulled out a bottle of water and handed it over to me.

“Here you go.” Rowland smiled

“I’m sorry, but this is yours.”

“Ah, it’s alright—besides I can see the tree means a lot to you. So, let’s go water it together! ”He grabbed my hand gently. Rowland’s hand felt almost the same warmth as Lei’s. We walked towards the tree, I bent down and said, “Hello Lola, it’s me again.”

I felt Rowland looking at me as I spoke to my grandmother. I watered the tree, [0.04in] and shortly after, it began to sink into the ground.

“This tree...Do you know what it is?” Rowland asked.

“I don’t know, me and Lola planted it when I was a little girl. She said grow it with care, and you’ll see a big surprise.” I smiled at Rowland, and his face was filled with shock.

“I’m sorry if I did any—”

Rowland stopped me and said, “It’s okay—I was surprised you smiled that’s all, [0.04in] because you seem to never smile.” Rowland was right. I barely smiled.

“You smile when we speak about your Lola, right? Let’s talk about her, only if you want, of course.” Rowland was blushing, and in his eyes, I saw a starry sky.

I nodded my head and began speaking about grandma and how she protected me from the hateful comments I received. Rowland understood everything I said, I even spoke about the game of fruit

baskets out of nowhere as if I knew Rowland for years.

At the end of it all, I felt upset yet relieved that I could share this with someone else instead of Lei. Rowland patted my head and spoke about how he was a burden since his mother left him alone in the streets, but now lives a happy life with his new family.

“Ha-ha, you should’ve seen my hair back then, it was pathetic.” We both laughed only to realize the sun was setting soon.

What turned out to be for a few minutes had turned into hours.

“Oh, look!” Rowland pointed at the sky.

The sunset moved slowly down as the moon rose from its deep slumber.

“Hey, Keala?” Rowland said, looking at me.

“Hmm?”

“Everyone judges you, yet they don’t know you. But I like you, I do.” He smiled.

My face felt warm, and I was blushing.

“Oh, I’m sorry. It’s ok if you don’t feel the same,” he said.

“I like you too,” I replied.

“I guess it’s time to head home now huh?” Rowland smiled at me. I nodded as we grabbed our bags and waved goodbye to Lola. As we both reached my stop, I said thank you to Rowland.

“Meet near the tree tomorrow morning?” he asked, and I nodded.

“Okay goodnight, Keala!” He smiled and waved, and I waved back with no restraint.

Shortly after, the figure in the distance was gone and I went inside my home.

“Keala, you’re home now? What took you so long, Anak?” my mother asked.

“I was with Lola today,” I replied, she looked at me concerned but then smiled a bit and gestured me to eat before I head to bed. As I finished, I took a bath and headed to my room. I opened the windows to see a starry sky that resembled Rowland’s and felt the warmth of Lei.

“I’ll be okay for now Lola.” I closed the window and slept.

In my dreams, I saw Lola hugging me as her warmth spread throughout my body. I felt safe and protected from a world that didn’t see me. “Love who you are, you are God-made, and you know what? So what if you’re different, that’s what makes it unique in the fruit basket.” She smiled. A dream that felt so real had led me into tears when I awoke the very next day. I yawned and brushed my short hair into a bun. I got dressed and grabbed water for the tree. My mom was still asleep.

I left her some coffee so she wouldn’t have to use her arms so much.

When I walked outside there was a bright sky. I have never seen something so bright ever since my Lola died a year ago. I walked down the steps and I headed towards the tree; in the distance, I saw two figures waving at me.

“Hey, Keala!” They both exclaimed.

They both pointed upon the grassy field where the tree was. My eyes widened as I saw the tree that looked so small yesterday had turned into a beautiful big tree.

**Here I was again,
The same place at the same time,
This time not alone.
I walked up to the tree and hugged it.**

Papaya Tree (Amourelle Barnese)

**Rowland and Lei embrace the tree as well, for it wasn't just a tree.
It was Lola in her greatest form.
Her peace to finally sleep.
A papaya tree.**

Reflective Essays

10.

My Journey Towards A Foreign Land

Kana Gurung

It's amazing what time can bring to your life! At the end of 2013, I was thrilled when I landed in Japan as an international student from Nepal. Freshly off the boat from home, I was a girl with a desire to do something with my life. Yet, it is safe to say, I was too young to even realize what I wanted. All I knew was that I wanted to have a very successful career. Well, it wasn't an easy start. Forget the cake that I'd dreamt of, there wasn't even a cherry! Let me go back and start from my home country. Being from a lower-class family, we never had a television or a washing machine at home.

After finishing high school, I applied to travel to Japan because I have a huge interest in learning cultures and languages. Luckily, I got the visa and landed in Fukuoka. Honestly speaking, the people were nice. They always gave me a feeling of being in a safe place. Staying in a dormitory with other students from Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Mongolia gave me a chance to connect with people from other parts of the world. However, I still missed my friends from back home.

After having three and half years of cheerful memories in Japan, I left to explore the land of opportunities, the United States of America. I landed at a university in Tennessee where I could see only trees and tons of parked cars. I was placed in a dormitory alone. From eating straight sushi in Japan, I had to spend my nights and days eating pizza and burgers. I still experience the pain when I remember being homesick and crying for my parents. However, I had to comfort and assure myself of how far I had come in life and hope that everything would be fine one day.

Eventually, I managed to move to New York City where again I had to worry about where to live and what to do. First thing I needed to do was to get into a college, and I am glad I did it. I chose LaGuardia Community College to study Liberal Arts, Social Sciences, Humanities, and Japanese. Since I have been here, I have learned that it is harder than I have ever thought it would be. The system is totally different from what I have grown up with. We did not use computers as much in Nepal. We did not have tutors. We did not have late night classes. We also did not have tons of lab sheets or research papers to hand in every semester. The language is also very challenging. However, working and studying has made life more interesting. I have learned how to utilize time. I love that I speak four languages and that has helped me to connect with four different kinds of music. It has also helped me to meet different people from different corners of the world.

I am grateful to my parents who helped me to be who I am today. Even though they are not educated, they see the effects of education on me. When I think of them, it makes me cry. I am happy standing on my own feet and doing something that is going to make them proud of me one day. I will never forget how hard my parents have struggled to make me capable of all that I do today. No matter where I go or what I do, I know that my feet will always be on the ground and my heart will be in a happy place.

11.

My Language, My Identity

Malayphet Vongxay

Do you ever wonder how English became the world language? It started with the British colonization of different countries around the world. Thomas Babington Macaulay was a British politician, who in his famous “Minutes on Indian Education” (1835) argued that the English language is superior and the most valuable among all other languages. Macaulay believed that native languages, especially spoken by the Indians, were inferior, poor, and rude. To come to that conclusion, he relied on the perception of orientalists who viewed European literature as far more worthy than the whole native literature of India and Arabia.

In order to support his stand on the superiority of the English language, Macaulay’s proposition to the British parliament stemmed from his opinion that the entire native literature of India has nothing worthy to contribute. He offered two reasons to support his argument. First, Macaulay stated that the English language had more words that any other language can translate. Second, he claimed that western literature is intrinsically superior as it had more resources than others. In addition, he asserted that the natives in India cannot attain higher education in their own language; only English has the power to educate them in literature and Science. He strongly believed that one’s mother tongue cannot capture the greatness of the English works when translated and therefore it is necessary to educate Indians in a language in which they could read great works of English literature in addition to serving the British Empire. His plan was to establish an education system in India that would eventually replace the Arabic and Sanskrit languages that were in practice for thousands of years. However, as it was not easy to teach a new language to millions of people across the country, he put forth the plan to train a class who would act as interpreters between them and other millions that they were colonizing. This strategy would then bring European taste to the people of India, introduce them to English books, and English habits and manners. Macaulay’s vision was to internally transform brown Indian people into being westerners, resulting in a massive shift in the entire cultural behavior of the society.

I argue that this non-violent approach towards colonization destroyed and severely impacted one of the oldest civilizations of the world, resulting in the production of a social and education system that was not representative of the lived-in experiences of the people of India. Reading Macaulay’s “Minutes” compelled me to reflect on its deep rooted global impact in today’s times. The education policy defined by Macaulay still exists overtly and covertly in our education system today. Besides English becoming the world language, it has also gained a sense of privilege against which knowledge and class is measured.

My native language is Lao, and English is my third language. It took me several years to learn English because in my country we do not use English, except in school or when conversing with foreigners. After I read Macaulay’s essay, I realized the importance of having a world language for the

only purpose of communicating with people from different places. However, I assert that its position as a world language did not qualify English as superior to other languages and as the only valuable language in the world. I believe that every language in the world has its own charm and reflects the identity, culture, and history of that country in which English cannot do on their behalf.

Below is a translation of the above paragraph in my mother tongue, Lao.

ພາສາກຳເນີດຂອງຂ້ອຍແມ່ນພາສາລາວ ແລະ ພາສາອັງກິດແມ່ນພາສາທີ່ສາມຂອງຂ້ອຍ.
ມັນຕ້ອງໃຊ້ເວລາຫຼາຍປີ ສຳ ລັບຂ້ອຍທີ່ຈະຮຽນພາສາອັງກິດເພາະວ່າໃນປະເທດຂ້ອຍບໍ່ໃຊ້ພາສາອັງກິດ,
ພວກເຮົາໃຊ້ພຽງແຕ່ຢູ່ໃນໂຮງຮຽນຫລືກັບຄົນຕ່າງປະເທດເທົ່ານັ້ນ.
ຫລັງຈາກຂ້ອຍໄດ້ອ່ານປຶດປະພັນຂອງ Macaulay, ຂ້ອຍຮູ້ສຶກວ່າພວກເຮົາຕ້ອງມີພາສາໂລກ.
ສະນັ້ນ, ມັນຈະສະດວກສະບາຍຫຼາຍ ສຳ ລັບພວກເຮົາທີ່ຈະສື່ສານກັບຄົນອື່ນຈາກບ່ອນຕ່າງໆແລະພາສາອັງກິດໄດ້ຖືກເລືອກໄວ້.
ເຖິງແມ່ນວ່າ, ມັນບໍ່ໄດ້ ໝາຍ ຄວາມວ່າພາສາອັງກິດແມ່ນພາສາດຽວທີ່ມີຄຸນຄ່າແລະດີກ່ວາພາສາອື່ນໆ.
ຂ້ອຍເຊື່ອວ່າທຸກໆພາສາໃນໂລກທີ່ບໍ່ແມ່ນພາສາອັງກິດກໍ່ມີສະ ເໝ່ ຂອງຕົວເອງແລະມັນກໍ່ສະທ້ອນໃຫ້ເຫັນເຖິງຕົວຕົນຂອງປະເທດຂອງພວກເຂົາເຊັ່ນກັນ

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12.

Collaborative Online International Learning with India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh

Sabrina Tamba

In Fall 2019, LaGuardia Writing and Literature Major Capstone students joined students from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh to collaboratively discuss and read literary texts on the theme of Partition of India. For the first time in my life, I was introduced to the history that defines the identity of my peers from the region. Below is my reflection from the experience:

The cross cultural communications we exchanged via Facebook, WhatsApp, and Google documents really helped me to get a true understanding of the seriousness behind this historical religious genocide that ripped apart the Indian sub-continent in 1947. It helped me to bring the entire situation to life. The ethical implications involved in studying Partition of India are enormous. From my viewpoint as a student, I learned that it is imperative to make an effort in understanding who I am interacting with rather than reducing the person into a broad category, based on country or region. For instance, in a WhatsApp conversation from early in the semester, I remember mentioning my fondness for Indian food when my Pakistani peer mentioned that I ought to give Pakistani food a try. By that time, it didn't really register in my mind that India and Pakistan were not the same place. I can connect this instance to several past encounters I have had about my nationality being Liberian. Oftentimes, I would get mistaken for Nigerian or Ghanaian even after saying that my parents are Liberian. With Nigeria and Ghana being two better known West African countries than Liberia on a global standpoint, I would usually have to reassure the person that I actually did mean to say Liberia and not Ghana or Nigeria, which in turn made them understand that Liberia was in fact its own country and not a part of the denoted pair. There were also times when I would mention that I am Liberian by nationality and someone would name a Ghanaian dish, when trying to show their affiliation or knowledge of my cultural background. However, the fact that I resided both in Ghana and Liberia, I can assure you that Ghanaian food is not the same as Liberian food. Now with that being said, I feel it is important for people to realize that knowledge about the cuisine of a specific country does not assure knowledge about the culture or people of that country or the region. In other words, enjoying Ghanaian food does not quite guarantee an affiliation with either Ghana or Liberia. It only leads to a lack of awareness about cultural differences as it happened with me when interacting with my peers from the Indian subcontinent. I am thankful to have received the opportunity to engage in this four-nation collaboration as it helped me to address my ignorance and enlighten my knowledge on the dangers of reducing people under one umbrella.

Critical Essays

13.

The Partition of India: How Trauma and Fear Led to Destructive Behavior

Kathryn Berlin

The devastating and complex reality surrounding the Partition of India left a catastrophic impact throughout South Asia and in the lives of the South Asians throughout the diaspora. During August of 1947, India won its independence from British rule. However, due to prior political interference from Britain, religious tension between Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims was at an all-time high. The internal conflict between leaders of the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League escalated hatred between these religious groups. It led to the formation of mob mentality, mass violence against one another, and religious cleansing, which resulted in the genocide of two million people. Subsequently, the Partition of India was established to put an end to the violence and segregate each religion into separate nations. These nations are known as India and Pakistan. A lawyer sent from England, Cyril Radcliffe, split the provinces of West Punjab and East Bengal resulting in the forced displacement of fifteen million people. A refugee crisis began from which the continent has yet to recover. The lack of accountability from the British government had a significant impact on the violence and deaths that occurred due to the last Viceroy of British India, Lord Louis Mountbatten's decision to wait fifteen days to announce the Partition. During the interim, citizens of India were left in a state of limbo and fear. This commenced an increase in brutality, especially among women and children who were raped and mutilated. The British government left these districts unprotected as they gave orders to the military stationed in various cities around India to stay inside their barracks while villages burned, and people cried out for help. Likewise, when the displacement of refugees took place, the British military was scarcely seen, leaving people to fend for themselves in terms of transportation, food, and freshwater. Strategically, the British Parliament wanted to get most of their armies out of India when the Partition was announced, so no one could blame them for the ensuing chaos.

Leaders of the India National Congress, such as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, were met with contempt by those in the community who felt they failed to protect their citizens. Since the Partition took place, there have been three wars between India and Pakistan spanning across sixty years and keeping the animosity between them alive. Besides the Partition between India and Pakistan, there was a secondary separation that took place in Pakistan, known as The Liberation War. Pakistan was made up of a Muslim majority population in the West province of the Punjab region and the East province of Bengal. Due to differences in culture and language, another Partition took place liberating East Pakistan in 1971. East Pakistan formed a new nation called Bangladesh in which they were free to speak their native language, Bengali. Kaiser Haq, a famous poet from Bangladesh and soldier who fought in the Liberation War, questions if citizens of Bangladesh received complete democracy after the war as violence is still a part of modern-day existence. In poem A to Z, Azad, he writes, "but it's only getting worse/ looks like we've been had/ True, we won a war/ or at least a Victory Day/ but more than what we won's/ at stake in battles that rage/ around us every day" (Lines 6-12). The history of these three nations has been silenced throughout the Western culture and academia. The lack of understanding has led to a rise in xenophobic judgments about

their citizens and the religions they practice. By analyzing canonical Partition narratives such as *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh and “The Dog of Titwal” by Saadat Hasan Manto, I maintain that the influence of external government authority created division and disharmony among citizens and normalized violence and corruption throughout the subcontinent.

First, in Khushwant Singh’s canonical Indian novel *Train to Pakistan* (1956), we observe how immoral government officials lack impartiality when officially conducting themselves. The character, District Magistrate, Hukum Chand, is depicted as a flawed and corrupt government official who brings his own set of prejudices to the town of Mano Majra. An influx of Sikh and Hindu refugees leads Chand to visit the village and set a plan in motion to peacefully evacuate all Muslims from the community. Upon arrival, he is shocked to hear there is a community existing that the Partition has not touched. Chand takes issue with the fact that people of all faiths are living together harmoniously and introduces Islamophobic rhetoric through an exchange with the sub-inspector. When informed that Pakistan police took part in a mob that killed Sikh and Hindu women, Chand’s reaction exhibits supremacist religious beliefs: “Our Hindu women are like that: so pure that they would rather commit suicide than let a stranger touch them. We Hindus never raise our hands to strike women, but these Muslims have no respect for the weaker sex” (21). Chand further displays Islamophobia when talking about his plan to evacuate Muslims out of Mano Majra. Although Chand plans to complete the task so that he is not responsible for potential rioting or killing, he indicates that were he not a government official, he would take part in the violent anarchy surrounding Mano Majra. Later in the novel, when investigating Ram Lal’s murder, Chand is disappointed that he cannot pin it on two innocent Muslim men. Chand is responsible for arresting both Juggut and Iqbal without cause and only fills out an arrest warrant falsifying information after they are in custody. Chand does not recognize their rights as citizens and has Iqbal humiliated and stripped to confirm his Muslim identity by checking to see if he is circumcised. He believes that if they were Muslim, it would be easier to charge them with a crime they did not commit. Chand’s actions exercised throughout the novel, directly contribute to the mayhem that overtakes the remaining Sikhs in Mano Majra after their Muslim friends are pushed out of the community.

Likewise, Saadat Hasan Manto’s short story “The Dog of Titwal,” examines how the trauma of the Partition affected people, including soldiers in combat. When a stray dog wanders between two encampments (Indian and Pakistani), the soldiers try to figure out if the dog is a Hindu or Muslim. Manto demonstrates how one’s identity is so tied up in religious labels that the other parts of a person become inconsequential. The need to know what neighborhood this dog has come from overtakes the soldiers’ regular sensibilities. When the dog wanders over to the opposing encampment and tries to return to the former, the soldiers from each side start to shoot at the dog. It becomes a game for each camp to engage in as they take pleasure from scaring the dog, making it run around in circles, and dodging bullets until they finally kill it. This helpless dog symbolizes the millions of people caught between two opposing sides of hate based on religious beliefs. Manto shows how the soldiers have lost their sense of humanity and can no longer see a person or, in this case, an animal for what it is. Everything except religious affiliation is stripped away, so all that is left is hate, which has distorted the soldiers’ way of thinking. The soldiers, like everyday citizens, cannot fight the resentment that has been instilled into them by government officials or other political leaders. The dog is helpless and at the mercy of those in power. Like the dog, everyday men, women, and children were at the mercy of those who decided to rip the nation apart. Manto’s story shows the loss of sympathy, tolerance, and unity as effects of the Partition.

Reading, discussing, and writing about these texts with a transnational, cross-cultural audience, i.e., with students from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, helped me to understand how the effects of the Partition of India are still felt today between those regions. During my conversations with various international peers from St. Mira’s College, India, I discussed the current political climate within the country to see how that impacts their daily lives and how it relates to a possible reconciliation

with Pakistan. Many of them felt the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) initiative humanizes people individually, but the contentious political climate, difference in beliefs, and fraught history between nations make reconciliation a pipe dream.

Ultimately, I believe that the ethical implications of excluding Partition history and literature from Western education are dangerous. As a society, we are becoming more divisive and xenophobic without really understanding where these toxic, hateful feelings come from and why. By learning about the Partition of India, we are allowing people to become more informed about past histories that directly relate to current global matters, such as the wars in the East and the rise of Islamophobia. Students who study the Partition of India can better identify trends that create division such as political interference, fake or incorrectly presented news by the media and corruption. This is relevant when thinking about the United States and Russia, Brexit, and the current unrest in India. Additionally, by learning about the wars that took place throughout the subcontinent, students were able to create an atmosphere promoting tolerance, inclusion, and peace. I believe that reading the works of Khushwant Singh and Saadat Hasan Manto has allowed me to see how people are only engaged in prejudiced behavior when pushed by outside forces such as corrupt or opposing political leaders to divide a population. Influential figures such as Nehru, Gandhi, Mohammed Jinnah, and Lord Mountbatten allowed personal conflicts to become conflated with governmental politics leading to one of the worst genocides in history. People throughout the subcontinent are still paying the consequences of their actions over seventy years later.

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14.

Orientalism, White Feminism, and *Sex and The City 2*

Hannah Cook

When I was around thirteen, there was an hour on school days, where I was the only person at home. The hour before my parents and sibling would crowd the house with their personalities. I used this hour to watch tv shows that were not necessarily forbidden, but most definitely uncomfortable to watch with one's family. During this hour, I would watch *Sex and The City*. The show became important to my teenage self, a dream of my future adulthood and the opportunities that would come to me. As a fan of the show, I also watched the movies. My adult self sees the show as even more of a fantasy, but particularly for white, straight women. The show and movies are filled to the brim with white feminism. The concept of the show was solely focused on four women who were white, straight, and professionally successful. *Sex and The City* was about the white straight woman embracing her sexuality, her best gay guy friend, and the problems of being a single woman. At the core of these ideas, lie problems within our society like homophobia and misogyny, yet these issues were very rarely mentioned. My assumption is that my initial feeling of the show is correct: it is a fantasy, so these issues were put on the sidelines. I could write a whole book about the societal issues within this one show, but for this article, I will focus on the negative images of the Middle East landscape and its people that I see present in the movie, *Sex and The City 2*.

Postcolonial theorist Edward Said's concept *orientalism* can be used to help see how the representation of the people in this film can be viewed as negative. Said writes that "Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (25). He goes on, "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (24). According to Said, American media has perpetuated *orientalism* through movies. I draw on his argument in my discussion of *Sex and The City 2*.

Sex and The City 2 is set not in New York City, but in Abu Dhabi, although all the scenes that are set in Abu Dhabi were actually filmed in Morocco. The characters visit the capital of the United Arab Emirates for a vacation, not of their own choosing, but in response to an invitation from a rich prince. The prince only appears once in the movie which is odd in the world of the characters as he could play a potential love interest. The women arrive in Abu Dhabi, waving and smiling in their cars on a dirt road. From some internet sleuthing, I found Abu Dhabi has no dirt roads connecting to its international airport. The film presents a rather odd portrayal of a major city since developed areas do not usually have dirt roads to their airports. In doing this, the film presents a fantastical depiction that further creates Arabian Nights dreamscape, an image sometimes present in tourist advertisements and imaginations. This is just one of many examples of *orientalism* shown in this film.

In the film, the people of Abu Dhabi remain at the margins of the plot and are limited characters. The main characters, Carrie, Miranda, Samantha, and Charlotte, all have their own personal

manservant who assists them with their camel rides and outdoor picnic befitting royalty. The images of the people in Abu Dhabi are either subservient or aggressive. These types of representations are elsewhere in movies like *Aladdin* or terroristic depictions like in *Back to the Future*; films that Said identifies as perpetuating stereotypes of Arab people. These images reflect *orientalism* and can contribute to Islamophobia, since the people of the Middle East are not being depicted as complex human beings. The emotional separation in media is incredibly dangerous as many people, watching from across the world, never will have the chance to travel to Abu Dhabi and their only interactions with these places and cultures will be with the media. The fantasy of the show reveals its hope for a white feminist dreamland and the movie prolongs this dream by exoticizing Arab people and landscapes.

Throughout the film, the characters are offended by the conservative nature of the people in Abu Dhabi, openly criticizing and laughing at the culture. In other words, being incredibly rude to the native society. For example, towards the end of the movie, the women are kicked out by their rich unknown benefactor for their lewd sexual behavior in public. When the women are eventually kicked out of the hotel and trying to return home, they go back to the market to find Carrie's passport. In the public setting, the character Samantha takes off her shirt because of the heat, and the men around her begin to yell and scream. She yells and screams back at them with obscene hand gestures. While a woman's body is constantly controlled by patriarchy throughout the world, in this scenario, Samantha's exposed skin is an act of white privilege. She ignores the cultural rules of the space and tries to create her own, an act similar to colonialism.

Orientalism is defined as a European invention, a definition of the other, and a place full of romance, exoticism, and violence. The portrayal of the Abu Dhabi setting and Arab people in the *Sex and The City 2* film becomes the definition of *orientalism*. As I watched the show in its television format, the ideas and hopes for the show were to explore straight sexuality and professional success for white women. The ideas change slightly in the film versions of the show, and yet issues that would be more prevalent to the women and the gay men friends in their lives are largely ignored. The wonderland of "Sex and The City" is incredibly surreal and, that fantasy would be fine, if it were not potentially harmful to others. The portrayals of Arab people and landscapes in the film are unrealistic and continue *orientalism* throughout film culture. It has been many years since I was thirteen years old, but the stench of *orientalism* lives on in white feminist narratives like *Sex and The City 2*.

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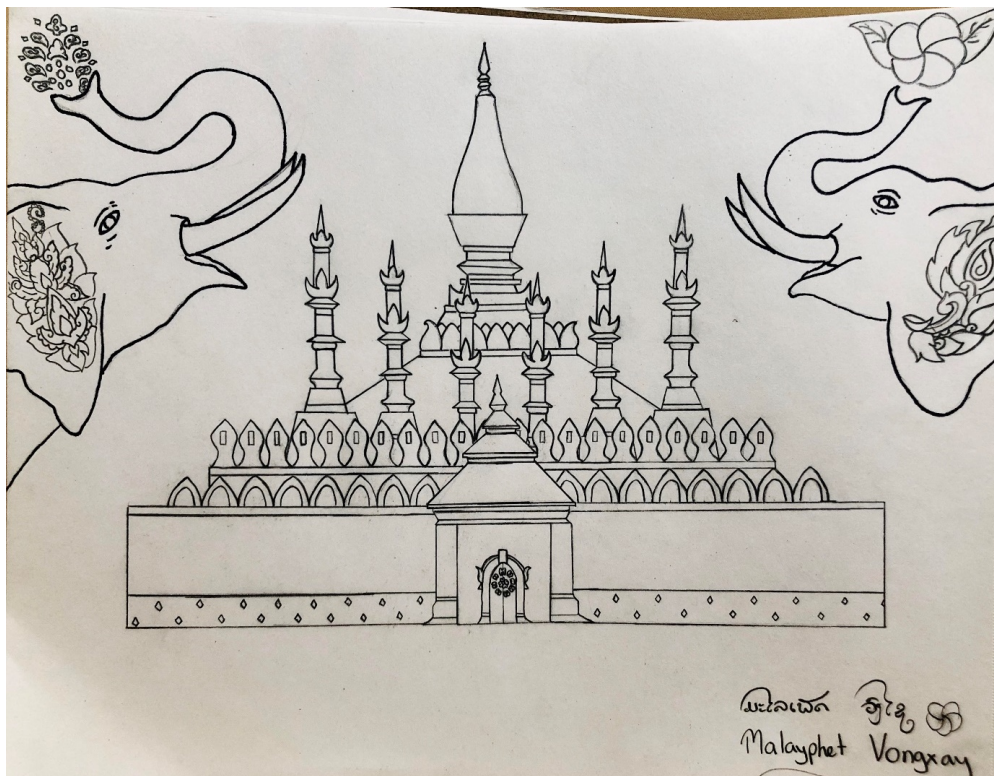
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Photos

15.

Pha That Luang

Malayphet Vongxay



This is Pha That Luang that I have drawn. It is a gold-covered large Buddhist stupa in the centre of the city in Vientiane, Laos. Every time I feel stressed out or angry about something, I find a quiet place to be alone to draw. For me drawing is not only painting something, but it is a way to show our creative thinking and to express feelings through pencil and paper. I like to draw my cultural arts because I feel it has some power inside all that work.

16.

The Nepalese Newari Culture Puppets

Swekchha Luitel



The Puppet is of a man and a woman wearing Nepali Newari dress. Newari is one of the Nepalese communities in Nepal. The people of this community are called Newar. Newari people are a mix of Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman ethnicities. Though they primarily inhabit the valley of Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur, in modern times they are found throughout Nepal. Other large communities outside of Kathmandu include Palpa, Bandipur, and Butwal. Newari women wear a dress called Haku Patasi. It is a blouse fastened with cloth called misālan (मिसालं) and is worn with the sari. A shawl, gā (गा), is wrapped around the upper part of the body. The Newari dress for man is called Tapālan which is a shirt. The tight fitting trouser is known as suruwā (सुरुवाः).

17.

My Community

Fnu (Dolma) Ugyen Norzin



I took this picture in a canteen of Ganesha Temple located in Flushing. Most weekends, my family ends up having South Indian breakfast here. The food here reminds us of the place where we grew up. I feel so welcomed here. The staff is very nice and the best part is that the food is delicious.

Recipes

18.

Asian Style Turkey

Lily Mai

This recipe was passed down from my aunt to me and I tweaked it by adding a brining step. My aunt first immigrated from China to the Bahamas to get married to her husband. Her family came to the U.S. in the 1970's. To keep up with American traditions and to give her children an American Thanksgiving, my aunt and her neighbors created this recipe after many trials and errors using seasonings and methods that they are familiar with.

Ingredients:

Brine:

- 1-Gallon of water (boiled)
- 1 ½ -cup of salt
- ¼ - cup sugar
- ½ lemon (juiced)

Stuffing:

- 1- Medium onion (diced)
- 2-stalks of celery (diced)
- 1- Green bell pepper (diced)
- 2-cloves of garlic (chopped)

Turkey:

- ½ -cup Chee Hou sauce
- ½ - cup Hoisin sauce
- ½ - cup Ketchup
- ½ - cup Korean BBQ sauce
- 2- tbsp dark soy sauce
- Oil spray or veg oil
- Salt and pepper

Procedure:

Brine:

1. Add salt, sugar, and lemon juice into boiled water
2. Let brine cool.
3. Put brine in a large bucket and put the turkey into the brine overnight.
4. Take turkey out of brine and drain excess brine from the inside of the turkey.

5. Pat the exterior of the turkey dry.

Marinate Turkey:

1. Rub the dark soy sauce on the exterior of the turkey and let it dry for 10 minutes.
2. Mix chee hou sauce, hoisin sauce, ketchup, and Korean BBQ sauce.
3. Rub the sauce mixture inside and outside of the turkey.
4. Marinate the turkey overnight.

Cooking the Turkey:

1. Pre-heat oven at 500 degrees Fahrenheit
2. Saute the garlic with the diced onion, green bell pepper, and celery until it is a little soft.
3. Add a little salt and pepper. Let the saute cool.
4. Wipe off sauce from the exterior of the turkey.
5. Stuff the turkey with the vegetable mixture.
6. Put the turkey breast facing up in a roasting pan and spray the breast with the oil spray or rub some vegetable oil on the breast of the turkey.
7. Place the turkey in the oven for 30 minutes.
8. Take out turkey and place a piece of aluminum foil to cover the breast. (Be careful not to cover the entire turkey just the breast.)
9. Reduce heat to 325 degrees Fahrenheit and cook turkey at 15 minutes per pound of turkey.
10. Let turkey rest for approximately 30 mins to an hour before serving.

19.

Rasamalai

Samina Akhter

Rasamalai (Serves 6-10 people)

This is a recipe shared by my mother. My mom was born in a small village in Bangladesh and I was born in New York. Preparing sweets was one way in which she tried to bring me closer to my roots. Although this recipe takes time and patience, it will be all worth making it.

Ingredients:

- 1 or 2 liters -milk
- 8-10 strands -saffron
- 1 cup -sugar
- ½ cups -flour
- ½ tsp -cardamom
- ½ cups - water
- ½ cups -pistachio (optional)
- ½ cups- -almonds (optional)

Procedure:

1. Boil ½ cup water. Then add almonds. Cover and keep aside for 30 to 40 minutes. After that, peel the almonds, slice them and keep them aside.
2. While the almonds are blanching, take 1 liter of full fat whole milk in a thick bottomed pan and bring the milk to a boil on a medium flame.
3. While the milk is coming to a boil, take 2 tbsp milk from the pan in a small bowl. Let this milk become warm and add 8 to 10 saffron strands. Stir and keep that to the side.
4. Once the milk has come to a boil, lower the flame and simmer the milk. Collect the floating cream and with a spoon and discard them. Continue to cook this way till the milk is reduced to half.
5. Keep on stirring the milk so that the milk does not get scorched at the bottom. This process of reducing milk will take about 20 to 25 minutes, after the first boil on a low to medium flame.
6. Once the milk has reduced to half of its original volume, add 1 cup of sugar.
7. Stir well until the sugar dissolves. Scrape the milk solids from the sides and add them to the simmering milk.
8. Then add ½ tsp cardamom powder.
9. Add the sliced almonds, reserving a few sliced almonds for garnish.
10. Keep simmering the reduced milk at a low flame and stir occasionally. Check the taste and add more sugar if required. Form into small spheres (rasgulla).
11. Take each rasgulla and with a spatula apply pressure, so the sugar syrup is removed from it. You can also press the rasgulla in your palms. Be gentle and don't apply too much pressure so that the rasgullas don't break. There should be no sugar syrup in the rasgullas.

12. Now place the rasgullas in the simmering milk and simmer for 3 to 4 minutes.
13. Stir gently. Cover and let the rasmalai come to a room temperature. Then chill and serve rasmalai, garnished with some sliced almonds or pistachios and saffron strands. You can also serve rasmalai warm or at room temperature.

Authors

Authors' Bios

Somi Ahmed is a recent immigrant in the U.S. from a small country named Bangladesh. She is a Liberal Arts Social Science and Humanities major and will be graduating from LaGuardia this year. Somi is part of e-Portfolio scholar program, Phi Theta Kappa, CUNY Service Corps, CUNY Service Corps Puerto Rico, Tech 2.0 scholar, and America Needs You Fellowship Program. She loves listening to music and watching movies.

Samina Akhter is a student at LaGuardia Community College, majoring in Early Childhood Development. She was born in Brooklyn, New York, to parents who migrated to the United States from Bangladesh. Samina loves outdoor adventures with her friends. Her dream is to get a PhD in Early Childhood Education.

Jesmin Ara completed her Masters in English Literature from Bangladesh where she taught in a Government College before moving to New York City in 2005. She graduated from LaGuardia Community College with an Associate in Therapeutic Recreation in Spring, 2018, and joined Lehman College to pursue BS in Therapeutic Recreation. She is a published author in Bengali literature and her hobbies include travelling, cooking, and reading.

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 short stories and poetry. Amourelle's story "The Papaya Tree" is semi-autobiographical and is based on her time spent in the Philippines. Currently she is an English major (Creative Writing) at LaGuardia.

Kathryn Berlin is a passionate animal activist and vegan. Her favorite pastimes are reading, connecting with nature outside New York City, and spending time with her beloved rescue pets, a rabbit, and chinchilla. She graduated from LaGuardia Community College in December 2019 with an Associate Degree in Arts (Writing and Literature).

Popy Chowdhury was born and brought up in Bangladesh before she moved to the United States in 2015. Currently, she is a student at LaGuardia Community College, pursuing her major in New Media Technology and planning to graduate in June 2020. She is the founder of the non-profit organization "South Asian Creative Women" and the Editor of the magazine "Nari" (women). She loves literature, traveling, and music.

Hannah Cook is a writing and literature student at LaGuardia Community College, living in Brooklyn, New York. Her poems can be found in the spring 2018 edition of *The Merrimack Review*. Her work is influenced by her working-class background and feminist ideals. She will be transferring to Hunter College in the spring semester as an English major.

Karhung (Kana) Gurung is a recent immigrant from Nepal. She is currently majoring in Nursing in the Health Sciences Department at LaGuardia Community College. Kana is a recipient of e-portfolio scholarship besides being a Teacher's Assistant for Intermediate Japanese. Her aim is to make her parents happy by becoming a nurse. She enjoys singing and exploring new languages and cultures.

Yejin Lee is a recent immigrant from Korea. Her major is Liberal arts and International Studies. As a member of the Honors Student Advisory Committee (HSAC), Yejin has been actively involved in the publishing of the Honors Students Advisory Committee newsletter *Fiorello*, scholarship guidebook, and the transfer guidebook to support students at LaGuardia Community College. In addition, she works as a linguistics tutor and is a recipient of the Minority Scholarship from Northeast Regional Honors Council. She enjoys cooking and listening to music.

Swekchha Luitel is a Business Administration major at LaGuardia Community College. She is also an Academic Peer Advisor for the Business and Technology Department. Originally from Nepal,

Swekchha moved to New York around two years back. Her hobbies include writing poetry, taking pictures, playing sports like basketball, and ping pong. Currently she is learning to write Haiku. She also enjoys painting and writing poems.

Lily Mai is a first generation Chinese-American. Her major is Occupational Therapy Assistant. Lily's interests include cooking, crocheting, traveling, hiking, and gardening.

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.

Fnu (Dolma) Ugyen Norzin is Tibetan but she was born and grew up in India, which she considers her second home. She is a Nursing major at LaGuardia Community College. Fnu likes to watch Hindi movies and dance to Bollywood songs with her mom.

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