

THE ASIA PACIFIC AFFAIRS JOURNAL

2019

ASIAN AMERICA

Mapping the Past, Present, and Future of
Asian American Identity

 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
Weatherhead East Asian Institute

 70
YEARS

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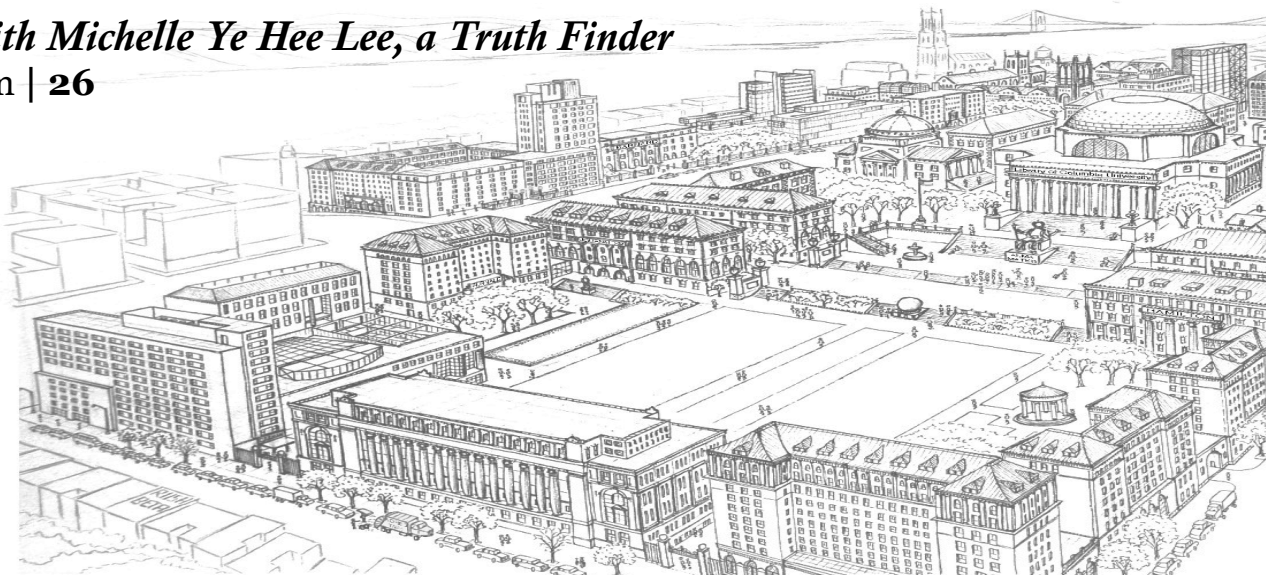
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*"We are tremendously grateful to **residents at Heiwa Terrace** in Chicago, **Ms. Michelle Ye Hee Lee** at the Washington Post, **Ms. Lucy March** at the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, our **APAC board members**, and finally our **family and friends** for their warm support for navigating the identity of Asian Americans through this journal. Thank you."*



***In Lumine Tuo
Videbimus Lumen***

"In thy light we shall see light"

**Columbia University in the City of
New York**

Sketch by Myles Zhang
(Class of 2019)

WHY ASIAN AMERICA?

Seeun Yim

Editor-in-Chief of APAC Journal

As the editor-in-chief of APAC Journal, our editorial team has been thinking what topic we should cover in 2019. Among many possibilities, we discussed cyber conflict between China and the United States, the future of relations between North and South Korea, cultural identity in South East Asian countries, and other issues that cover the Asia Pacific region in general.

A main role of the Asia Pacific Affairs Council and the Weatherhead East Asian Institute is to help readers understand key vital issues that manifest in the Asia Pacific region. Despite our original mission to cover issues relevant to the Asia Pacific at the core, the most important reason why we decided to dedicate ourselves in looking at the identity of Asian Americans was that indeed we realized that **the role and idea of America contributes greatly to shaping how countries in the Asia Pacific region also form themselves**. After realizing this crucial fact, our editorial team asked another question: who builds America? How are these roles and ideas established? Out of many determinants, we learned another salient fact: that it is people who live in our society.

Several other questions arose from this inquiry. **Why migrants from Asia decide to come to America? How are members of these communities doing today? What do they expect for the future?** In an effort to come up with a creative answer, we decided to navigate Asian American identity from the past, present, and future perspectives.

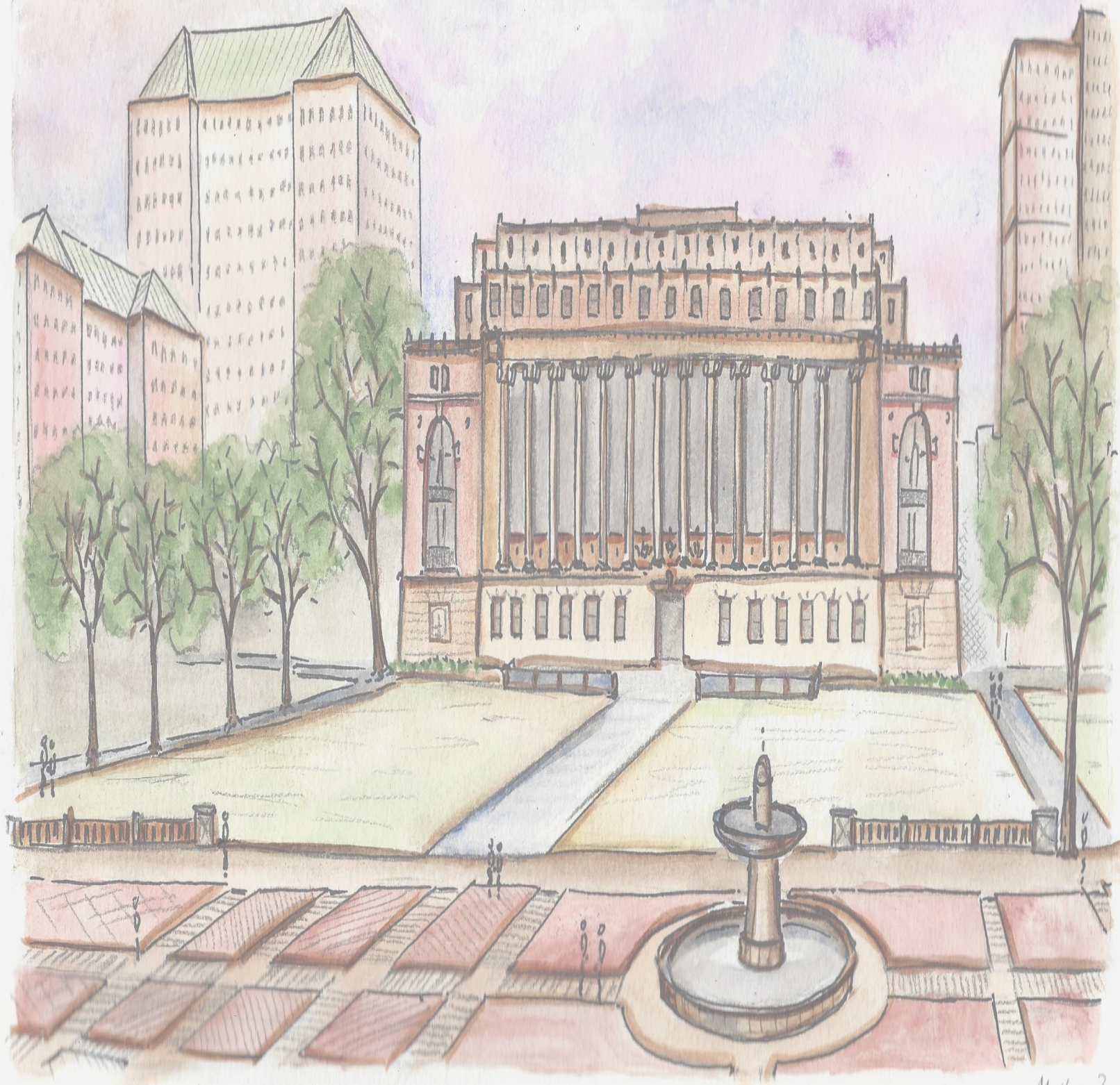
For this journal, our editorial team has been investing more than eight months in asking the right questions, listening to the opinions of a diverse group, planning a structure for the journal that would engage readers' attention, and reflecting the authors' voice as purely as possible so that readers can absorb all the meaningful insights they provide.

This is the 21st Century, where one region cannot limit itself to analysis in a vacuum. It is a global era where everything is interconnected. After reading this journal, I hope you can think about the following questions: **What does it mean to be Asian American in a context of linking their identity to the Asia Pacific? And, why is it important?** I hope you enjoy reading.



Seeun Yim
Editor-in-Chief of APAC Journal
April, 2019

THE PAST PARADIGM



EXPERIENCING AMERICA: CONVERSATIONS WITH RESIDENTS AT THE HEIWA TERRACE RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

By Alex N. Carlson

Assistant Editor of APAC Journal

Introduction

It's a bright, chilly weekday in the Uptown neighborhood on Chicago's North Side. I'm on my way to Heiwa Terrace, an unassuming retirement community located near the corner of Sheridan and Lawrence, about a 25-minute ride on the Red Line "L" train from the city's bustling downtown. Located as it is between the storied Aragon Ballroom and a clear, open expanse of Lake Michigan, Heiwa Terrace is likely overlooked as a particular place of interest.

Yet, the community's presence here speaks to a larger history, not only of Chicago, but of America. It's a history that is characterized by persecution and perseverance, striving and success. This is because Heiwa Terrace was conceived in the late 1970's first and foremost as a home for aging *Issei*, first-generation Japanese immigrants, many of whom arrived in Chicago by way of concentration camps.

It is important to note, however, that Heiwa Terrace has always been open to anyone with an interest in living there. These days a visitor is more likely to hear Chinese or Korean being spoken in the halls than they are English or Japanese. These changes are suggestive. While Heiwa Terrace continues to speak to the history of a particular community, it also suggests how the path forged by that community can benefit subsequent generations of minority groups regardless of their origins.

I've come here to speak with some of the residents about how they view themselves as Americans, Japanese, Koreans, and Chinese living in Chicago. I am deeply grateful to those who shared their stories with me, as well as to those translators, administrators, and community members who made the realization of this project possible.

Community in Context

In a sense, the history of the Japanese community in Chicago is completely unlike that of any other ethnic group which settled in the city.

Beginning in late 1942, the War Relocation Authority (WRA) – the federal organization tasked with carrying out the forcible relocation of individuals with Japanese ancestry from the West Coast and their subsequent incarceration – began planning for the so-called resettlement of the camp populations throughout the American interior.

To facilitate this process, the WRA established numerous field offices in cities across the U.S. In 1943, a regional field office was established in Chicago.

As a precondition of participation in the resettlement program, Japanese and Japanese Americans alike were forced to answer a questionnaire, the content of which was meant to evaluate their allegiance to the U.S. For those deemed "loyal" and thus allowed to leave, a number of options existed.

Among potential resettlement locations, Chicago was notable for its wealth of employment opportunities in the manufacturing and service sectors – the midwestern metropolis beckoned. As a result, what had amounted to no more than 400 Chicagoans of Japanese ancestry in 1941 swelled to some 20,000 in the years following the war.

Of course, as a living city, Chicago is characterized by constant compositional upheaval which pushes and pulls its constituent communities about. It is for this reason that the experience of Japanese Americans in Chicago is also representative of larger trends – both historical and current – in the city’s development. From their initial points of arrival in the Hyde Park-Kenwood and Near North areas, Japanese communities began to move further north in the 1950s and 60s.

This movement was a response to, on one hand, large-scale urban renewal projects which effectively displaced poorer communities and, on the other, the shifting demographics of the South and Near North Sides, two areas of the city which were home to increasing large black populations.

Although the WRA had advised against congregating, a new concentration of Japanese Americans was emerging on the North Side in neighborhoods such as Lakeview. Of course, this period was characterized by more than geographic shifts – the community was undergoing internal changes as well.

While younger generations no longer needed organizational support finding work or housing, it had become clear to community leaders that an active effort would need to be made to support aging *Issei*. It was at this point that the Japan American Service Committee (JASC), originally founded as an organization to facilitate the resettlement process, refocused its efforts on, amongst other things, providing programs and resources for the elderly.

Beginning in the mid-1970s, JASC began in earnest an effort to realize a retirement community equipped to serve the specific needs of elderly Japanese Americans. Individual donations and a loan from the Department of Housing and Urban Development made it possible for construction to begin in 1978. Heiwa Terrace, a 12-story building comprised of 200 units, opened its doors to the community in 1981.

“We Don’t Have to Explain a Thing”: The Importance of Community

During my visit to Heiwa Terrace, conversations with residents took place in a group setting. Groups were organized by language – English, Japanese, Korean, and Chinese (Mandarin) – with the latter two groups being accompanied by translators.

While the Japanese, Korean, and Chinese-speaking groups were made up of first-generation immigrants, the English-speaking group was comprised of *Nisei* and *Sansei* – that is, second and third-generation Japanese Americans.

One of the residents I spoke, Chicago native Emiko, 64, recalls her youth in the Lakeview area, what she calls Chicago’s “Little Japan”:

Belmont was one of our areas because we had friends that lived over there and there were Asian stores at the time. Toguri’s Mercantile was the major one over there. I’m from the area of Clark and Diversey, which was like Little Japan right there. We used to have bon-odori around the corner, we had a Japanese restaurant next to the Chinese restaurant, we had a Japanese grocery across the street, we had Toguri’s Mercantile a couple blocks down where we all went to get our rice.

“Chicago is very church based,” adds Donna, 75. Donna herself was born in a concentration camp and moved to Chicago with her family upon their release.

“So, you defined your community by that connection to a religious institution?” I ask.

I say something like you wear your gang colors. You say where are you from? BTC [Buddhist Temple of Chicago]? MBT [Midwest Buddhist Temple]? Ravenswood? And then you have a picture of who these people’s friends are. They usually identify themselves by church. My parents were very strong BTC members. They had these families that kind of anchored the community because, you know, they intermarried. They were 6 or 7 families that married.

"And we still say," Donna says glancing at Emiko, "let's do Chicago Geography." Emiko smiles and nods in agreement: "Yeah, that is her letting me know she wants to know where I'm from, what I did, so on and so forth. So, you want to talk about geography? Ok, what do you want to know about me?"

Unlike Emiko and Donna, Kimiko, 93, was born in Japan. She came to America in 1952 and moved into Heiwa Terrace in October 1995.

I spoke to Kimiko along with a group of other *Issei* residents. In particular, I was interested in how time has changed their perceptions of themselves. "After all these years, does your Japanese identity still take precedence?" I asked. "We are 100% Japanese!" was the unanimous response. Still, Kimiko acknowledges that she does perceive certain things differently:

[In America] your business is your business - this is made clear. I like that. That's why I'm here - 66 years I'm here. But it's not just words. In Japan, gift giving customs are different. You have to give money to this person, money to that person, so much money. For Shichi-go-san [a Japanese festival held for boys and girls aged three, boys aged five, and girls aged seven], for weddings, for funerals... where does it end? I went over there in 19... it was Heisei 6, so 1994, and I came straight back here in 1995. It was because I couldn't stand it. It was just too much. In America, you know, nobody bothers me. In Japan, gosh, everything you do, you have to treat someone like a customer. No thank you.

Kimiko's response exuded a particular kind of confidence. She has found in her adopted home a kind of comfort she no longer feels in Japan. Yet, even as Kimiko criticized certain customs of her home country, there was no question in her mind that "Japanese" was the adjective that best described her identity.

For Emiko, however, a connection to her ancestry required proactive engagement. Though she cannot speak Japanese, she made a point to involve her daughter in activities that strongly asserted that part of her family's roots:

When my daughter was little, I started her young. I took her to MBT. I said to her, "I got to comb your hair into a pony tail," she goes "why?" I said "don't ask why." I was taking her to O-bon [annual Japanese festival for commemoration of the dead] one night. And I said, "if somebody grabs you, don't worry. They're just going to take you with them to dance. It'll be a friend of mine. Somebody from my group..." So, we're sitting there, and one of the dancers came, and she goes, "Emiko-san... [is she] yours?" I say, "Yes, she's mine" [My daughter] says "what do I do?" I said, "just watch what she does and follow her." My daughter stayed up for the whole evening dancing. She goes, "Mom! Can we do this next year?" I said, "you want to do it?" She goes, "Yeah!" So, I said okay, I'll call MBT, find out when the classes are, and I will bring you here [for dancing lessons] every time until it's over. And we went [to O-bon] the following year in full dress apparel. Kimono, tabi, geta, obi, even brought little combs. And she had a blast. She loved it.

However, throughout the 1980s and 90s the Japanese American community in Chicago was undergoing another shift. A second movement, this time toward suburbs such as Evanston, was made possible by the increasing prosperity found by *Nisei* and *Sansei*.

As Emiko sees it, dispersion and assimilation meant that younger generations lost interest in their roots. This didn't mean, of course, that there weren't opportunities to reconnect.

But the problem is younger people just don't want to do it anymore. They don't believe in tradition. [Attending O-bon] was fun, it was entertaining, it was getting to know people, learning new stuff... I couldn't tie an obi [a traditional sash] for the life of me, but thank goodness for the grandmas. They were in the restaurant getting kids all set up and everything. I said, I'm glad you guys are here, because I sure as heck didn't know how to do this. I still go to Ginza [an annual festival held at MBT in August]. I mean I love going to Ginza. It's the tradition, it's the fun, it's the food, and also the crafts. Unfortunately, I wasn't living close at the time, but now that I'm back, my brother goes, "we can go more often." Because I was out in the suburbs for a while there. It's more like family when you're with them. Its old friends, it's like being around your own kind, it's more comfortable. It's a warmer atmosphere, not so cold.

In its own way Chicago, too, is a living organism undergoing constant change. Communities form and fade away, only to be replaced by new arrivals. The Chinese and Korean residents of Heiwa Terrace are by and large first-generation immigrants to the city.

Still, larger demographic trends have meant that these two communities have not developed in the same way. Grace, 93, is of the early generation of Korean immigrants. She came to Chicago in 1966, much earlier than many of the other Korean residents. She was employed in education, and eventually found herself living in a diverse area of the city that, for her, epitomized America:

My case is like this. I got my own house. So, all around me, my neighbors you know, were all people from different countries. I couldn't see any Koreans. So, I was like, I myself have become an American – I thought like that. Anyhow, this country has been very kind.

Grace's experience is representative of a general progression which has come to sound quite familiar.

Yuzin, 75, who arrived in Chicago 15 years ago, notes how she has seen Koreatown disappear. "Now it's mostly Mexican, there are new immigrants coming in," she says. "The stores and restaurants, almost all of them have moved to the suburbs." This movement outward has occurred alongside a decrease in the numbers of Koreans immigrating to the U.S. In short, without an influx of new members, communities are gradually replaced.

Chinese immigration, on the other hand, has remained relatively constant. This continued flow of new residents has played a part in maintaining Chicago's Chinatown. It has also meant that diaspora communities feel the reverberations of cultural shifts in their home country more strongly.

For example, I learned from Wenzhu, 90, a Chicagoan who came to the city from Shanghai 35 years ago, that linguistic trends in China exert a strong influence on overseas communities. She told me that even though she lives in America, there are certain adjustments she's had to make:

Shanghainese is my mother tongue. Actually, it wasn't until I came to Chicago that I had to start speaking Mandarin. When my grandson was born, my son and daughter-in-law wanted their boy to learn Mandarin. So, I started to speak to him in Mandarin. Mandarin is more popular, it's better for education. I'd like my grandson to learn Shanghainese, but it's not so popular. Even though my son can speak Shanghainese, my grandson cannot understand.

More often than not, Korean and Chinese residents expressed views in line with Kun Ming, 76, who came to Chicago 30 years ago from Kunming, China:

I chose this apartment because I knew there were a lot of Japanese and Korean people living here. Japan and Korea are all in Asia so they share a lot of cultural similarities. Everyone is very friendly and it's very easy for us to communicate with each other. The cultural environment makes this place feel safe.

This is not to say there isn't tension. It goes without saying that culture – always problematic, never easy to define – often forms the basis of an assertion of irreconcilable difference. In truth, I did hear grumbles that attributed certain problems within the community to the ethnicity of the perceived perpetrator. Such complaints, however, were uncommon.

Here, in this peculiarly American context, what is elsewhere providing rhetoric for the maintenance of distance seems to have become representative of the potential for cohesion. In culture, a kind of commonality is found, a commonality embodied for many of the residents in the adjective "Asian."

Reflections

Oddly enough, a day spent talking about the past created in my mind a number of questions about the future. What does it mean for an institution such as Heiwa Terrace, founded as it was to serve Chicago's Japanese American community, when well over half of its population is no longer of Japanese ancestry?

Are the ties between "Asian" cultures really so close that Chinese and Korean residents would find transitioning to life at Heiwa Terrace easier than at other retirement communities? (And is historical memory brought over from "the old country" that quickly disposed of?) More broadly speaking, how do cultural institutions change as new members come to represent different generations and ethno-cultural backgrounds?



Unfortunately, I'm unable to sufficiently address all of these questions here. However, what has become clear from my conversations with residents of Heiwa Terrace and members of the broader Japanese American community in Chicago is that Heiwa Terrace's mandate to provide culturally sensitive care to aging Chicagoans is as relevant and vital now as it was in 1981. Change and challenge – two perennial features of American life – define in their own particular way the experiences of recent arrivals, just as they did the lives of Japanese resettlers in the late 1940s.

Rather than assuming a one-to-one equivalence between all “Asian” cultures, however, Heiwa Terrace has actively sought to adapt to changing demographics. The monthly newsletter is published in five languages (now including Russian); activities and classes are conducted with the aid of translators.

As members of disparate minority groups engage with the American Experience, what tends to result is a shared identification with one another based on their trials and tribulations. In other words, there is a similarity of experience (even for all the differences) rather than a great shared “Asian” culture (though to say Japanese, Korean, and Chinese culture share no connections is incorrect, too) which forms the basis of the community at Heiwa Terrace. Considered in this way, it becomes possible to see how, in a sense, America produces the “Asian” by instigating encounters which produce similar struggles.

Heiwa Terrace is in its own way, then, a kind of concrete culmination of Japanese American striving for stability and ownership over their own corner of America. And it is part of the legacy that they bequeath to future minorities aspiring to do the same. The JASC's efforts to establish a community for aging *Issei* made an imprint on the Chicago landscape such that the journeys of subsequent transplants, regardless of their origin, may be made relatively smoother.

*“Peace – that was the
other name for
home.”*

By Kathleen Norris

平和

Columbia University Campus
Drawn by Myles Zahng (Class of 2019)



THE PRESENT PARADIGM

NOTE FROM THE ASSISTANT EDITOR

By Miranda Li

Assistant Editor of APAC Journal

How do Contemporary Generations Define Asian American Identity?

The Pew Research Center predicted that the U.S. Asian population, with the fastest growth rate of 72% from 2000 - 2016, will be the nation's largest immigrant group in 50 years (Pew). Regardless of origin (immigrant, descendent, mixed), the rise in population of Asian Americans in the current day brings issues central to the Asian American experience into national prominence. Mainly, what does it even mean to be an Asian American?

With Asia the continent being home to a wide span of cultures and identities, the term "Asian American" is a quite broad umbrella. In fact, according to research organization Asian American & Pacific Islanders (AAPI) Data, about -thirds of Asian Americans identify first with their specific ethnicity, then Asian American (AAPI Data).

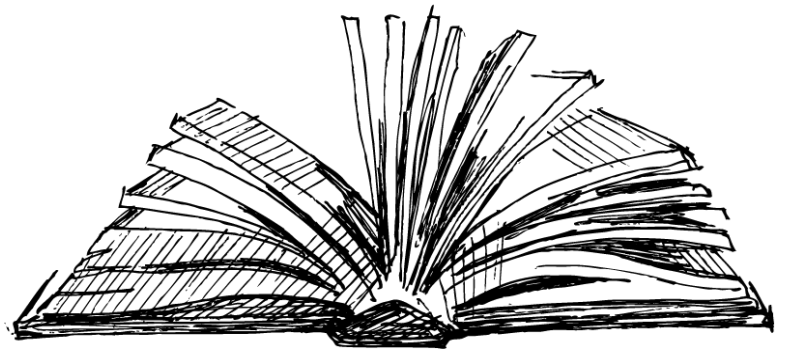
This may have to do with the term's origins. The term "Asian American" was coined by activist and historian Yuji Ichioka in 1968 to unify and empower communities with shared Asian roots that suffered unified societal and political discrimination in America (Washington Post).

We see the activist roots of the term "Asian American" alive in the present day, with the success of Sandra Oh at the Golden Globes and the rallying cry of 2020 presidential candidate Andrew Yang transcending ethnic boundaries to be triumphs for the entire Asian American community.

We see that the label "Asian American" gives a name to the experience that twenty-plus ethnic groups have faced and will continue to face in America: a struggle against discrimination, for representation, and for reclamation of cultural identity.

Thus, when the Asian American experience is defined by how one balances their heritage with their nationality and their stereotypes with their realities, it becomes inherently impossible for a statement that neatly encapsulates the nuances of what it means to be an Asian American.

In this section, the present paradigm, contributors offer their own experiences as Asian Americans. Their diverse viewpoints challenge even this introduction's attempt at defining the Asian American identity, and highlight dissonances in the Asian American community that calls for our attention. To be responsible members of a democratic society, we Asian Americans have the obligation to be fully cognizant of our history and future aspirations. Only then can we reach compromise, the crux of a functional democracy.



A BRIEF GLIMPSE INTO BIRACIAL ASIAN AMERICAN IDENTITY

By Neil Pedreira
School of Social Work

"I notice you're always with an Asian girl - do you have some kind of fetish?" a colleague here at Columbia University casually quipped.

"Well, I'm Filipino."

"You're half Filipino. What about your poor white other half?"

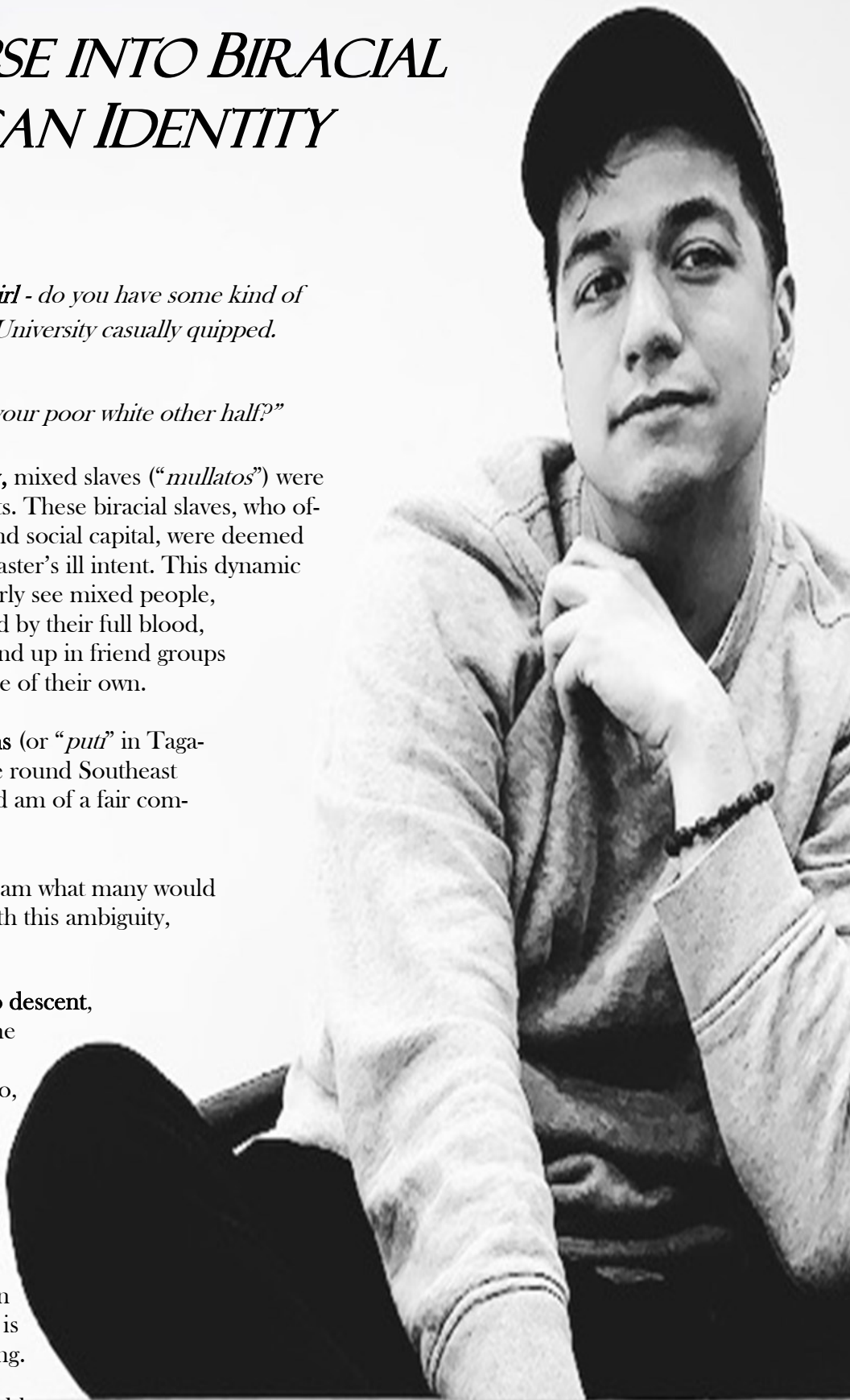
Back in the United States' early history, mixed slaves (*"mullatos"*) were shunned by their full black counterparts. These biracial slaves, who often had more indoor responsibilities and social capital, were deemed traitors and a direct product of their master's ill intent. This dynamic appears to play out to this day: I regularly see mixed people, regardless of their ethnicities, ostracized by their full blood, minority peers. Many mixed persons end up in friend groups that are comprised of ethnicities outside of their own.

I'm often categorized as white by Asians (or *"puti"* in Tagalog), and it can be guilt-inducing. I have round Southeast Asian eyes, Western facial features, and am of a fair complexion.

I, with my Filipino/Argentine heritage, am what many would be labeled as "racially ambiguous". With this ambiguity, comes misunderstanding.

As my appearance can suggest an Anglo descent, my Asian American colleague treated me as if I'm a white male rather than a mixed Asian. She's not alone in doing so, and not alone in making incorrect assumptions about my identity. In dismissing our common Asian heritage in the presence of another (in my case, Argentine), she and, many other monoethnic Asians, exclude biracial Asians from the Asian-American experience, leaving us to wonder who it is that we are, and where it is that we belong.

Although our mixed upbringing undeniably removes us from the many media-driven stereotypes that continue to plague Asian Americans, our daily lives still consist of a struggle to balance the different and often times opposing cultural values that make up our heritage. I personally share a special affinity for my Asian background, but to be biracial or multiethnic often means being on an island unto oneself - an outsider, an other. Though I am not desolate, many a time I feel adrift from my Asian identity.



When I told my Filipino relatives, who follow the customary career paths of nurses and doctors, that I intended to pursue social work professionally, one mockingly remarked that maybe I “*could marry a doctor*” for the sake of financial gain. Such remarks are described by Filipinos as part of the Utak Talangka, or Eastern “crab mentality”. This mindset consists of envy, infighting, and a never-ending pursuit of a status acquisition that discourages both individualism and deviant opinion. Due to a natural tendency to reject dissent, mixed Asians are oftentimes labeled as “other” by both Asians and non-Asians. For this reason, my Filipino half goes to great lengths to lobby their Filipino values. 14

This mixed heritage isolates us both from the Asian American experience and is often used as a deterrent by Asian Americans to closely adhere to their cultural practices. It is already an inconvenience that we, biracials, do not always fit the typical *Asian* appearance, so deviation in our life ambitions and emotional values is dangerous as well.

Hence, individuality is a thematic issue in the lives of mixed Asians, and we often have to choose between collectivism and the pursuit of oneself. Many choose to individuate and follow their own paths in spite of the common Asian values of saving face and maintaining social standing. Thus, biracial persons are regularly met with skepticism, as being not Asian enough, or being too white, and having their opinions about the Asian community invariably invalidated. I myself find it rather difficult to openly speak about the Asian American community as I’m persistently viewed as an outsider on both sides.

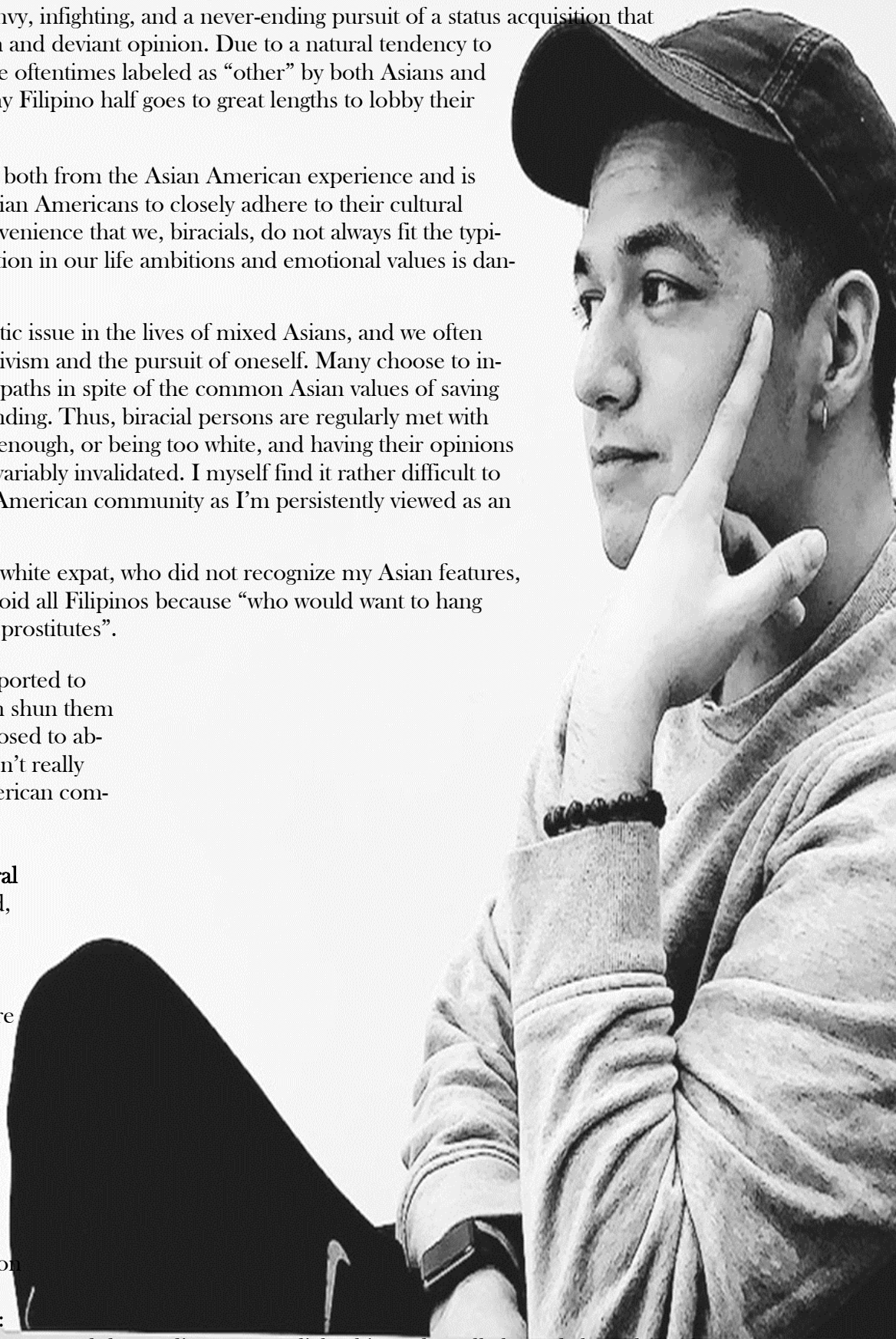
In Hong Kong, for example, a white expat, who did not recognize my Asian features, quipped to me that I should avoid all Filipinos because “who would want to hang with them anyway? They’re *all* prostitutes”.

When such experiences are reported to Asian acquaintances, they often shun them as “misunderstandings” as opposed to abject racism, suggesting that I don’t really know what “*we* (the Asian American community)” go through.

The cumulation of these cultural slights become internalized and, with time, biracials have a tendency to gravitate to other cliques. Nevertheless, Asian American identity is much more than definitional heritage, and physical traits.

Despite contemporary social attempts to compromise on diverse cultural views, the current forms of mass dialogue pertaining to Asian American identity only circulate old-fashioned Asian tropes, which are often degrading and narrow in scope:

Must one always have unaffectionate and demanding parents, light skin and small almond-shaped eyes? Must one always be concerned about their social standing? Must one always have a demeaning lunchbox story?



Due to our distinct upbringing, many biracial Asians do not ascribe to what are so-called common narrative features and character traits of Asians. Yet still, they identify with their Eastern heritage the most. With that said, there's little room for us to live and tell uniquely different Asian *American* stories.

I believe biracial and multiethnic Asians will, in the future, help carry the Asian American community's representation to new heights. However, both halves of our identities and the communities we belong to continue to show a lack of understanding and acceptance for their deviant "others".

As a community, we must reclaim our own agency and push our definition of Asian American identity past such restricting boundaries. We should go beyond these dogmatic racial prejudices which can be self-inflicting and which do not acknowledge mixed Asian identities as Asian American. I, not in spite of but because of my mixed heritage, identify as an Asian American. I celebrate the community's achievements and empathize with our plights on a very personal scale.

For the time being, however, we who are mixed cling to the community that we're all so fond of and owe so much to. **It's just a little lonely.**

NEIL PEDREIRA

is a first-year graduate student at Columbia University's School of Social Work. His method of study is Policy and, having some spent time working abroad in education, his concentration is International Social Welfare. Neil is ethnically half Filipino and half Argentine. Having grown up in the San Francisco Bay Area, Neil had always viewed Asian-American culture as second nature. Baysia, as he occasionally calls it, is host to a very large Asian population. So, for the majority of his life, Neil would be immersed in the many distinct nuisances that make the different Asian demographics so unique. Upon arrival in New York, however, he began to question his privileges as someone who is Asian-American identifying, but also Western passing. Recognizing that many others may share similar experiences, Neil decided to write his essay as a way to advocate for biracial Asian-America.

‘O HAWAII KU‘U KULĀIWI: SONGS OF MY BELOVED HOMELAND

By Aya Chang
Columbia College

I went to bed at six o'clock this morning. The time difference between New York and Hawai‘i is six hours, which means that the live stream of Kamehameha Schools’ 99th annual Song Contest began at one thirty this morning, and—to the bewilderment of my non-Hawaiian friends—I stayed up to watch the event in its entirety.

Song Contest is an annual competition between classes at the KS Kapālama campus, a prominent high school on the island of O‘ahu founded for students of native Hawaiian descent. Every March before spring break, each class of approximately 450 students (freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors) competes for six coveted awards by singing *mele* (songs) in unison, a capella in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i (the Hawaiian language). The contest is broadcasted live on TV and on the radio throughout the Hawaiian Islands and streamed on the internet—in both English and ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i.

At the core of our identity is our language. We live by our language. It is how we think. It is how we communicate what we want and how we achieve it. It is how we express our love, our hate, and our indifference. It is how we *sing*. To learn a language without gaining an understanding of its native speakers would be to memorize the notes of a song without ever learning how it sounds.

Despite the salience of knowing one’s own language, in 1896 a law was passed that effectively banned ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i in schools. Those caught speaking ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i were “severely punished” (Oliveira 2014). Because of this, the Hawaiian language nearly went extinct. The KS Song Contest is a way for Hawaiians to remember and celebrate the revival of their language.

The destruction of native languages, particularly the Hawaiian language, is ultimately linked to colonization. The Hawaiian word for colonization is *kolonaio*. While those unfamiliar with the language might dismiss *kolonaio* as being a Hawaiianized version of an English word, educated individuals will recognize that the word has *kaona*—it is also a metaphor. *Naio* is the Hawaiian word for worm, and *kolo* means to crawl, so the term *kolonaio* literally means “crawling with worms.”

One of the best ways to disempower a people is to burrow into their minds, like worms, explains University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Professor Katrina-Ann R. Kapā‘anaokalāokeola Nākoa Oliveira. Also, by “infecting and incapacitating them at every level of consciousness, while simultaneously stripping them of their language,” the historical memory of an entire people is erased, along with their traditional knowledge systems (Oliveira 2014). Every 14 days, a language is lost (Rymer 2012), which means that every two weeks the human race is one step closer to homogeneity. When a language is forgotten, so are its people.

A side effect of the suppression of native Hawaiian cultural practices and the adoption of Western principles, which coincided with the illegal overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i by the U.S. at the end of the nineteenth century - was that it created a “gap generation” of Hawaiians. This generation, which included my father, was born late enough after the language ban to be raised by non-Hawaiian speaking parents but too early to benefit from the revitalization efforts of the late twentieth century (Krummenacher 2016).

To be a part of a gap generation is to be disconnected from one's ancestors and forced to assimilate, but somehow to end up in an uncomfortable middle zone, stretched between two identities and slightly estranged from both, as if one is *nothing* at all. Even with cultural revitalization, any amount of cultural oppression—whether by governmental policy, societal discrimination, or a combination of the two—will have resounding effects on all subsequent generations. Ambivalence towards one's own identity is the quintessential plight of the cultural minority, which is experienced by indigenous and immigrant populations alike.

The only way to counteract the oppressiveness of a dominant majority is to embrace native languages. By reclaiming the language, one can reclaim his ancestral and cultural heritage.

The way that the Hawaiian language endured systematic oppression reveals the strength of its people. This strength is documented in “Kū Ha‘aheo E Ku‘u Hawai‘i,” a song written by Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu and performed at the 2016 KS Song Contest:

Kū ha‘aheo e ku‘u Hawai‘i

(Stand tall my Hawai‘i)

Mamaka kaula o ku‘u ‘ūina

(Band of warriors of my land)

‘O ke ehū kakahiaka o nā ‘ōiwi o Hawai‘i nei

(The new dawn for our people of Hawai‘i is upon us)

No ku‘u lahui e hā‘awi pau a i ola mau

(For my nation I give my all so that our legacy lives on)

Efforts to revitalize the Hawaiian culture and language culminated in restoration of Hawaiian *hula* (dance), *oli* (chants), and *mele* during the Hawaiian Renaissance of the 1970s and beyond, as well as in the reintroduction and expansion of Hawaiian language instruction in schools. In 1978, ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i was reestablished as an official language of Hawai‘i. In 1984, the first of nearly a dozen ‘Aha Pūnana Leo Hawaiian language immersion preschools was opened in Kekaha, Kaua‘i by a group of ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i activists to foster a new generation of native speakers (Oliveira 2014). These are significant parts of a greater movement to reclaim the Hawaiian identity through the native language, but there is, admittedly, still work to be done.

According to Oliveira, “in a flourishing native society, commerce and governmental affairs are carried out in the ‘ōlelo makuahine (mother tongue) of the land.” If the Hawaiian language continues to be celebrated and spoken in schools and homes throughout the islands and abroad, this vision may not be far from actualization.

Through the Hawaiian language, Hawaiians are able to ground themselves in their cultural identities. I joined three of my friends early this morning in a Wallach lounge to watch Song Contest, and, while everyone else was asleep, I was reminded of who I am. *He Hawai‘i au, mau a mau. I am Hawaiian, now and forever.*

AYA CHANG

is a first-year in Columbia College.

She was born and raised in Hawai‘i, on the island of O‘ahu. Aya is ethnically half Japanese, a quarter Chinese, and a quarter Native Hawaiian.

As an American citizen of Asian descent, Aya is technically Asian-American, although she understands that this term doesn't really define her.

She grew up understanding herself as a native Hawaiian, but here in New York, where there are very few people like her, she has been forced to embrace those aspects of her identity that make her fit in with those around her. She hopes that readers will be able to relate to her message.





ARCHITECTURE OF EXCLUSION IN MANHATTAN CHINATOWN

By Myles Zhang

Columbia College & Oxford University

In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act restricted Chinese immigration to the US, prohibited Chinese females from immigrating on grounds of prostitution, and revoked the citizenship of any US citizen who married a Chinese male. The consequences of this xenophobic legislation led Chinese immigrants to flee racial violence in the American West and to settle in Manhattan's Chinatown. With a population now of around 50 thousand (2010 US Census), this remains the largest ethnically Chinese enclave in the Western Hemisphere.

Thanks to New York's geographic location as a port city with high industrial employment easy connections to the American interior, this city became the primary point of entry for waves of immigrant groups in the 1800s: Irish, Germans, Italians, and Eastern Europeans. What makes

the Chinese different, though, is the survival and resilience of the immigrant community they created. Other immigrant groups – namely the Germans and Irish – converged around large neighborhoods and surrounded themselves with familiar language and businesses. Of these 1800s enclaves, all have since disappeared as the children of these first-generation immigrants successfully assimilated into American society, earned higher incomes than their parents, and therefore chose to disperse to non-immigrant neighborhoods with better housing stock and schools. Yet, the Chinese remained.

The resilience of this community results from a confluence of factors: cultural, geographic, and (most of all) racial. Of innumerable immigrant groups to the US, the Chinese were among the only to have the most restrictive laws placed on their immigration. This stigma drove them toward three types of low-skilled manual labor – with which white Americans still deeply associate with the Chinese – laundries, restaurants, and garment manufacturing. Like the Chinese, other groups – particularly Irish-immigrant females – began working in these professions, but they soon climbed the social ladder.

As an architectural historian, I am fascinated about how this political and racial agenda of exclusion is imprinted in the built environment of Chinatown. To present this neighborhood's geography: For most of its history, Chinatown was bordered to the north by Canal Street, to the east by Bowery, and to the South and West by the city's federal courthouse and jail. The center of this community lies on the low wetland above a filled-in and polluted lake, called the Collect Pond. Historically, this area contained the city's worst housing stock, was home to the city's first tenement building (65 Mott Street), and was the epicenter for waterborne cholera during the epidemics of 1832 (~3,000 deaths) and again in 1866 (1,137 deaths). The city's first slum clearance project was also in Chinatown, at the present-day Columbus Park.



Every drawing in Myles Zhang's article is drawn by the author himself. These are images of Manhattan Chinatown.



Myler 2.

Race-based policies of exclusion can take different forms in the built-environment. The quality of street cleaning and the frequency of street closures are a place to start. Some of the city's dirtiest sidewalks and streets are consistently located within Chinatown – as well as some of the most crowded with street vendors (particularly Mulberry and Mott Street). Yet, as these streets continue northward above Canal Street, their character markedly changes. The sections of Mulberry Street in Chinatown are unkempt and always open to traffic and truck deliveries.

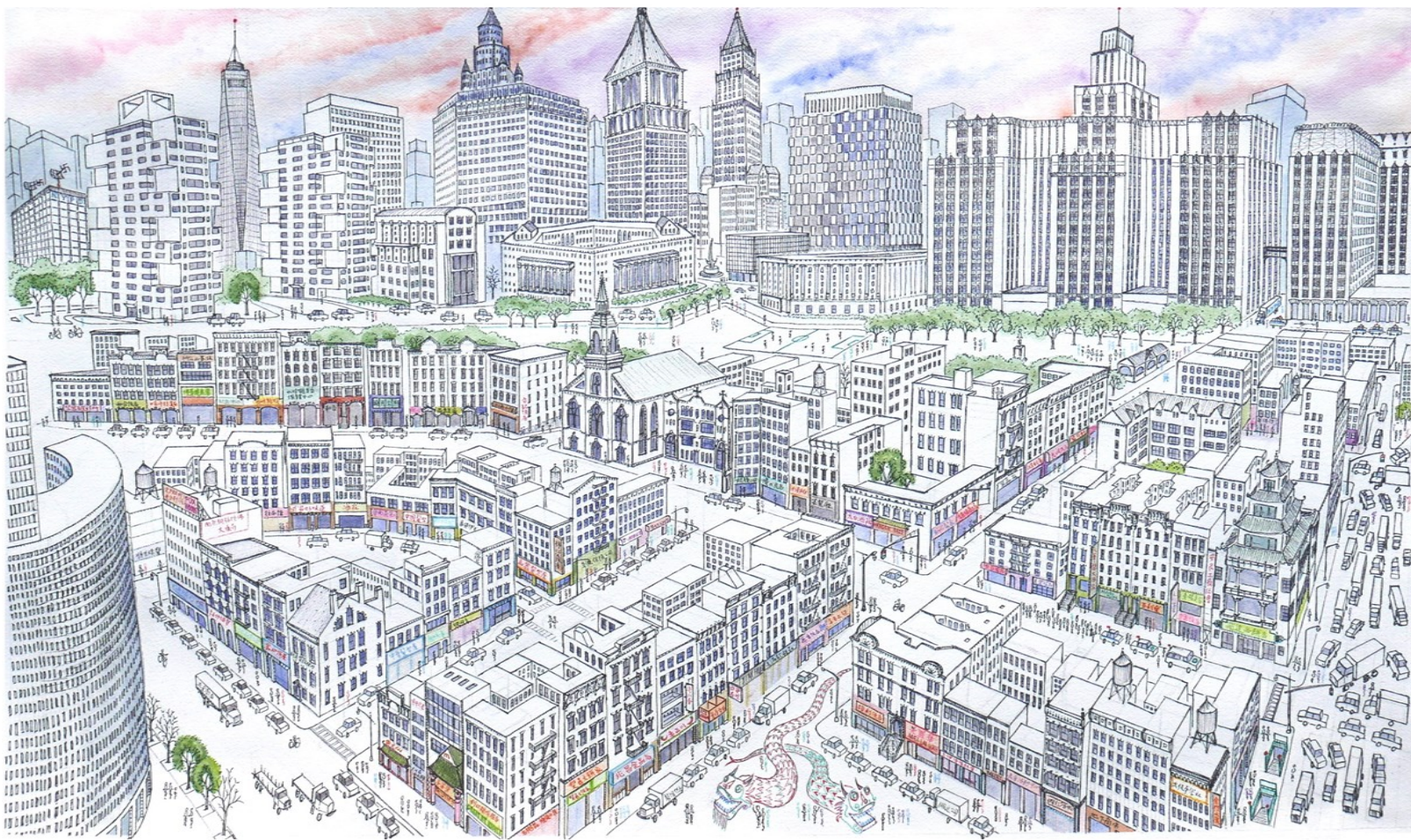
The street sections immediately north (in the enclave of Little Italy) are frequently cleaned and closed for traffic most of the year to create a car-free pedestrian mall bordered by Italian restaurants. These policies continue when examining the proximity of Chinatown to centers of political power and criminal justice. Since 1838, the city's central prison (named the Tombs because of its foreboding appearance) is located just adjacent to Chinatown. The Fifth Police Precinct is also located at the center of this community at 19 Elizabeth Street.

Yet, although this neighborhood was ranked 58th safest out of the city's 69 patrol areas and has a below-average crime rate, the incarceration rate of 449 per 100,000 people is higher than the city average. NYC Open Data also reveals this neighborhood to be targeted for certain – perhaps race-specific and generally non-violent crimes – like gambling and forgery. Or, the only financial institution to face criminal charges after the 2008 financial crisis was the family-owned Abacus Federal Savings Bank – on allegations of mortgage fraud later found false in court by a 12-0 jury decision in favor of Abacus.

When it comes to tourism, Americans seem to have a paradoxical relationship with Chinatown's "oriental" culture and cuisine. On the hand, there is a proclaimed love of Chinese cuisine and art, as evidenced by the profusion of Chinese-themed restaurants for tourists in Chinatown, or as evidenced by the phenomenon in art history for western artists (and particularly French Impressionists) to incorporate decorative motifs from East Asian woodcuts and ceramics into their work. There is simultaneously exclusion of the people – from the society who created this food and art – from political power and social mobility. Still today, Americans seem to want competitively priced Chinese products without suffering the presence of the foreigners who produced these products.

The Lower East Side Tenement Museum preserves the city's only remaining mid-19th-century tenement – with its original furnishings and interior intact. The narrative presented to museum visitors is one of the largely Irish, Jewish, German, and Italian immigrants' struggles in America. Visitors are welcomed into recreations of how these apartments appeared a century ago, and they are shown photos by social reformers Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine of these immigrants' living conditions. However, the museum's official narrative excludes two aspects of the architectural history of tenements: 1) That these European immigrants were not alone and that later waves of Chinese, Black, and Latin American immigrants suffered in similarly cramped quarters. 2) The photos presented to visitors of old immigrant New York are replicated today in Chinatown – in living conditions that are only slightly less crowded than a century before. At the tenement museum, Europeans are cast as the protagonists of the immigration story – in this case, possibly at the expense of the Chinese who still live in the same buildings and same streets that Riis and Hine photographed.





Let us clarify one thing: the division in Chinatown is by no means “apartheid.” It is perhaps a division more subtle and difficult to notice. It expresses the kind of unequal treatment – antiquated housing, crowded conditions, and municipal apathy – that face many immigrant groups in the US. What we see in Chinatown is something altogether more complicated – as this neighborhood is also active in the process of gentrification with rising rents pushing out older Chinese businesses. If and when Chinese immigrants become fully integrated into American society, to what extent should the architectural fabric of this Chinese enclave be preserved, considering that its very existence is possibly a marker of race-based exclusion and the century-long challenge of the Chinese in America?



MYLES ZHANG

is an undergraduate student at Columbia and at Oxford University, studying the history and theory of architecture. His academic studies and independent research focus on architectural and urban history, with a particular interest in the causes of urban decay and its consequences on the built-environment. Myles uses computer simulations, website design, interactive mapping, and artwork to illustrate the complex forces influencing the development and planning of cities. For more information on Myles or if you would like to work with him, please check his webpage via www.myleszhang.org.



THE FUTURE PARADIGM

THE FUTURE OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION: A GEAR TO SOCIOECONOMIC AFFIRMATIVE ACTION?

By Eun Ji Sally Son

Assistant Editor of APAC Journal

In the fall of 2018, a group called *Students for Fair Admissions* sued Harvard of discriminating against Asian American applicants. What started off as an act of calling out discriminations against Asian Americans quickly became another debate on affirmative actions, which complicated the matter by expanding the parameters of the issue. Rather than saying that these students stand against Asian American discrimination, articles and people labeled them as “the anti-affirmative-action group.” By doing so, many Asian Americans were put in a tough spot where if you stand with your people, you are suddenly standing against all the other minorities, and if you stand with other minorities, you are suddenly ignorant of the discriminations that your community is facing.

This case of anti-Asian American discrimination did not have to become a black-and-white debate on affirmative action, putting Asian Americans on a tough spot, and creating a split within the community. Rather, it could have actually become a great chance for Asian Americans to get together and discuss the discriminations that we face for being Asian Americans. Often, by putting the ‘model minority’ stereotypes on Asian Americans and shining lights on a handful of successful Asian Americans, the society tries to show how minorities can succeed just as well as white people.

I once read an article stating that “Asian-Americans are among the most prosperous, well-educated, and successful ethnic groups in America” and that we are a problem for the social justice brigade. These statements undermine the size and diversity of the Asian American community. The Asian American population has one of the greatest socioeconomic gaps. In 2016, Asians of the top 10% income bracket made 10.7 times as much as Asians in the bottom 10%, making Asian Americans the most unequal ethnic group among America’s major racial and ethnic groups. It’s not just the income that differs across Asian Americans.

The Asian American population is composed of more than 30 different ethnic subgroups and nearly 300 different languages. Hence, viewing Asian Americans as a homogenous community ignores the toils that certain subgroups of Asian American may experience more than the others. We need to raise awareness of these stereotypes

that generalize a massive and diverse community and undermine the hard work of Asian Americans.

Asian American discrimination is an issue of its own that needs attention, but since the Harvard case opened another debate on affirmative action, I’d like to briefly discuss the future of affirmative action. When the *Grutter vs. Bollinger* case was concluded in 2003, Justice Sandra Day O’Connor acknowledged that since the time the *Regents of the Univ. of Cal. v. Bakke* was concluded, the number of minority applicants with high grades and test scores has indeed increased. Although she concluded that The University of Michigan Law School’s consideration of race in admission was not prohibited by the Equal Protection Clause, she commented, “We expect that 25 years from now, the use of racial preferences will no longer be necessary to further the interest approved today.”

Affirmative action is a general term that could be interpreted in many ways, especially in the U.S., where many schools advocate holistic admission processes. Hence, it gives us a further reason not to view the debate on affirmative action as one that only has black and white. For instance, in the *Regents of the Univ. of Cal. v. Bakke*, the court supported racial affirmative action, yet banned setting rigid racial quotas. As society changes, it’s important to make sure that the current policies are the best fit for how our society is today. For instance, as mentioned previously, the socioeconomic gap among certain minorities groups have increased over the last 25 years. Having observed these changes, some institutions use socioeconomic affirmative action to promote diversity on their campuses. It’s been 15 years since Justice Day O’Connor commented that maybe in 25 years, the use of racial preferences will no longer be necessary. I think the debate that resulted from the Harvard case was a reminder for our society to examine whether we are making progress toward promoting equal opportunity.

NEW RHETORIC, SAME BIGOTRY AND THE LEGACY OF ASIAN AMERICANS

By Schoni Song

School of International and Public Affairs

America has a long and complicated history of discriminating against many a group of people, included among them the Asian-Americans. From the Anti-Japanese Laundry League in 1908 to the Asiatic Exclusion League in the early twentieth century, not to mention the alien land laws and the Anti-Coolie Act, the list simply goes on and on.

In fact, the influx of Asians into America is a multifaceted sociological reality. But one thing that is true of Asian-Americans is that they most probably fall under the purview of “bimodality.” In layman’s terms, it means that the immigrants largely have their genesis in two distinct socio-economic demographics.

First, we get the elite type; they are the doctors, lawyers, and academics. Then we have the less educated, less skilled and poorer Asian immigrants. As a friend of mine once jokingly said to me, the impression is that Asian immigrants come in two varieties and two only:

Doctors and clerks at 7-Eleven. There just seems to be no middle. Well, this obviously isn’t true but there certainly exists a very large gap, as it is also the case between Chinese Americans in Clayton, California and those in Sunnyside, Queens.

What both ends of this peculiar bimodality in an ethnically diverse immigrant population have in common is that their kids tend to perform unbelievably well at school. They are represented in America’s most prestigious universities in far larger numbers than their share of the population.

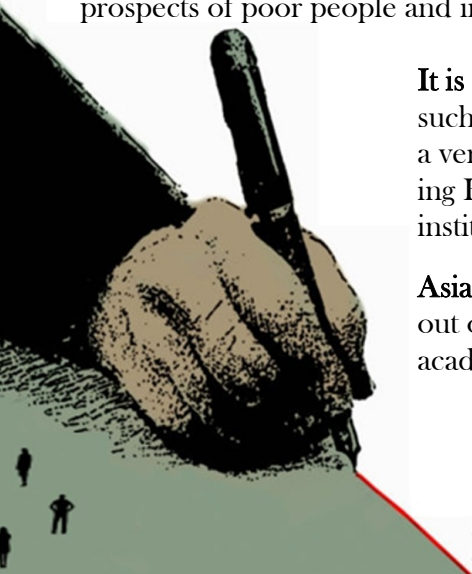
For example, Asians compose less than 20 percent of California’s population but almost 40 percent of its state universities. They make up more than 40 percent of the students at UCLA—and hence the joke that the school really stands for “UC a Lot of Asians.” And this pattern of stellar academic performance is observable all across the United States albeit in a lesser extent than in California.

What is clear from these data is that Asian-Americans have the grades and the test scores—but at 5.6 percent of the total American population, they don’t have the votes. Then which minority population actually has the votes? Well, it turns out the split is almost even between Hispanics and black people, representing 12.5 and 12.3 percent of the population respectively. But as the woeful political trajectory of Donald Trump should have made obvious by now, who really has the votes among the minority ethnicities are the progressives. Less than 30 percent of Asian-Americans identify as Republicans, while more than 65 percent are Democrats and a small percentage unaffiliated.

However, it is worth keeping in mind that progressive social engineering projects like the employment of racial criteria in higher education admissions don’t simply hurt the chances of well-off white people - they also turn out to hurt the prospects of poor people and immigrant families.

It is imperative to be reminded of precisely why race-based admissions are an issue of such paramount significance to some minorities. There is a political group that envisions a version of America that lives in the public schools, which do an appalling job at educating Hispanic, black, and poor people, who consequently show up in low numbers at elite institutions.

Asian-Americans, on the other hand, do an unbelievable amount of work both in and out of school, spending multiple times as much as non-Asian students do on organized academic and extracurricular activities ranging from music lessons to SAT prep.



This is very much true across the economic spectrum. Working-class Asian-American families in Queens send their children to tutoring sessions and piano lessons at a much higher rate than do rest of the American population, even though the relative financial burden required to make that happen is enormous to say the least.

For that reason, progressive Americans and their political representatives would rather see these people penalized than prosper. Back in the old days, America's power politics exploited the law to keep the "white man's standard in a white man's country." Conversely, today the same tool is being used by some to maintain a backward vision in the world's most forward-looking nation. In either case, it's still at the expense of Asian-Americans. ***It's new rhetoric, same bigotry.***

Then, what can we do? We first need to recognize that we can never fix past injustices with new injustices. We're all differently situated. The solution then is to look at each other as individuals. In short, we're going to be in a much better position to do justice when we stop focusing on the perversion that is known as social justice. Social justice stands in direct contrast and opposition to justice. Justice is about you taking action and getting what you deserve.

On the other hand, social justice may or may not give you what you deserve based on what your social group deserves when you take action. Justice is a word that doesn't need a modifier, just like the word "good" doesn't require a modifier. Instead, when you add the word "social" to it, you're detracting from the original word.

Likewise, Asian-Americans as individuals deserve to be rewarded based on their merits of the present and not their legacies of the past. But restoring some of the lost histories of Asian-Americans could still go a long way to improve the confidence and livelihood of not only the Asian-American community but also all of America.

When people think of the genesis of Asians in America, we normally start with the Chinese immigrants arriving in the 19th century during the California Gold Rush. But little do we talk about the dozens of Asian-Americans who ended up fighting in the American Civil War.

Most Americans know about the egregious internment of Japanese Americans during the Second World War.

But few people ever credit the 100th Infantry Battalion—which was mostly consisted of Japanese Americans who had been serving in the Hawaiian National Guard prior to Pearl Harbor.

It wasn't just the Asian-Americans. Just about every creed and culture arrived here in America in smaller numbers than ever conceivable today. The discourses that reverberate within these walls of racial contours are fundamental of and indispensable to the history of this great nation as a whole.

People from all walks of life, Asian-Americans included, have had a role in defending this country, standing up for it, growing it, improving it—and courageously sacrificing their lives for it. Americans who are not "white" or those who don't view themselves as "white" have had a paramount role to undertake in America's most glorious of triumphs and turning points—let alone some of its shortcomings and less proud moments, too.

The United States of America is undoubtedly at its freest and wealthiest juncture since its founding. That is a great legacy with which many young Asian-Americans have all been gifted. But they are also throwing away many of the timeless and precious traditions with which they have been blessed: a solid family structure, the social fabric of communal and religious commitments, and the culture and heritage of meritocracy. At the end of the day, no political rhetoric or government program can fill those gaping holes. Every endeavor by Uncle Sam to make that happen will only end with the aggravation of precisely the failures big governments were designed to alleviate.

SCHONI SONG

A native of Seoul, Schoni Song is a Master's candidate at Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs. He served two years as Army Translator in the 2nd Operational Command of the Republic of Korea Army. Always having lived an international life of mobility, Schoni is deeply interested in the impact of conflict on international (but mostly East Asian) security policy. Passionate about connecting with people who have the same passion for making a difference, he has worked with political campaigns, think tanks and the media with a strong focus on political affairs.

INTERVIEW WITH MICHELLE YE HEE LEE A TRUTH FINDER

By Seeun Yim

Editor-in-Chief of APAC Journal

The truth, no matter how bad, is never as dangerous as a lie in the long run by Ben Bradlee. Searching for American Dream and pursuing freedom in the midst of political turmoil in their homes during the 1970s and 1980s, immigrating to the United States was a beacon of hope to the first generation of Asian American settlers. Now has been more than almost 30 years to witness the fastest growing of Asian Americans but a reveal of truths of this nation's fastest-growing racial group is veiled.

What do we know about Asian Americans? Do Asian Americans view American society different from other racial groups? How should the ideal American society look for a better future? To enlarge access to keen insights and diverse perspectives on Asian American identity and the direction of American politics for harmonious racial diversity, the Asia Pacific Affairs Council has interviewed *Michelle Ye Hee Lee*, a reporter on The Washington Post's national political enterprise and accountability team.

Seeun [S]: Time flies! Do you remember the first time we met when we were kids? I still remember you chewing dried squid jerky and offered me one with mayonnaise on it. How do you feel to be interviewed?

Michelle [M]: I still like dried squid, so I'm not surprised to hear that is your earliest memory of me. I'm thrilled and honored to be interviewed, and so proud of you!

S: I want to congratulate you on your new journey as president of the Asian American Journalists Association (AAJA). How do you feel about this? And, why did you decide to become president?

M: Thank you! AAJA is a professional nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing diversity in newsrooms and ensuring accurate and fair coverage of minority communities in the news, particularly Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.



M: I joined when I was an 18-year-old college freshman who was searching for a network of professional journalists so that I can become one myself. AAJA has helped me through every step of my career, and I've been giving back to the organization as a volunteer national officer over the past five years. I ran for president because I am deeply committed to the mission of AAJA, and I want to help shape the organization's future and its impact on the industry. I'm very humbled to serve in this role.

S: A field of journalism is considered to be 'very American' to some Asians. Why journalism?

M: I moved from Seoul to Guam when I was 7 and grew up there until I left for college at Emory University. I always enjoyed reading, writing, and current events, and my parents always encouraged me to read and watch the news.

M: When I was 15, I applied for an internship program for high school students at my local paper in Guam, the Pacific Daily News. I instantly loved reporting; I got to talk to people, learn new things and then tell the public about it. I realized then that through journalism, I had a platform to help my community understand itself better. I worked at the newspaper for three years in high school through the program, and it was a formative experience that led to my current career path.

M: I'm lucky to have parents who have always valued my individuality, independence and encouraged me to pursue my passions and live the life that I believe to be right for myself. I'm very grateful, because I know that's not always the case among Asian families, especially among first-generation immigrants. (I was never good at science, so they knew I wouldn't become a doctor anyway!)

M: To this day, what I love the most about journalism is what drew me to it when I was 15: Finding new truths about our human experience and contributing to our collective understanding of what is going on in our world at this particular moment in history. I truly believe in journalism as a public service. Journalists have a saying: "Comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable."

M: We as journalists should be the voice of the underserved and overlooked, and be the watchdogs who hold the powerful accountable for their actions. That's why I love government accountability reporting, digging into complex facts and issues, and holding public officials accountable on behalf of the taxpayers who elected them, pay their salary and are affected by their decisions. My background as a Korean American who grew up in Guam really helps me bring a new perspective to covering domestic and foreign policy. I'm a 1.5-generation im-

migrant and a naturalized citizen - being American was a choice for me, and I value the in-betweenness of my identity.

To generalize a bit, there's a tendency among Asian Americans (especially first and 1.5 generation) to keep their heads down and work hard, without making noise or creating problems, and believe that our hard work will speak for itself. Like in many other professional fields, that mindset can pose a barrier to succeeding in journalism, where you have to ask tough questions, be nosy and aggressive, and be in the public eye.

(Cont'd) Especially as I moved into accountability and investigative reporting, I had to learn how to embrace those values and ideals while being an aggressive reporter. It's not always easy, and it's a shared struggle among many of the Asian American journalists I have met through AAJA.

S: The United States will have Presidential Election in 2020. There are Asian American politicians who decided to run in 2020. Do you think this can change the way Americans view Asian Americans?

M: The 2020 presidential election is already underway, including Democratic candidates of AAPI descent running in the primaries: Kamala Harris, Tulsi Gabbard, and Andrew Yang. With a wide-open Democratic presidential field, it will be fascinating to see which candidates emerge as frontrunners and whether the Democratic Party has rebuilt itself and learned lessons from the 2016 election.

M: Having presidential candidates of AAPI descent is an important marker for our community because it raises the visibility of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in politics. AAPIs are the fastest growing minority community in the country, yet we are still underrepresented writ large in politics and civic engagement. This is starting to change, albeit slowly, and until we start making dramatic progress, Asian Americans will struggle to be heard. In the 2018 midterms, a record number of Asian Americans ran for public office, many of them first-time candidates.

I hope to see more of it in 2020. Asian Americans still have yet to wield the full power they have as an electorate and political force in the United States. Voter registration and turnout rates among Asian Americans remain low, though they're improving. One major reason for this is that Asian Americans are quite fractured in terms of language and culture, which makes voter outreach and education difficult and costly. Asian Americans are underrepresented in the political donor class, particularly among high-net-worth individuals.

(Cont'd) There are efforts to change this, but not enough. There are so many Asian American lawyers, yet not enough federal judges — let alone an Asian American Supreme Court justice.

S: What do you think are essential strategies, values, and virtues these Asian American politicians need to have in order to further embrace and uphold the principle of diversity?

M: Of course, if you are elected into office, you must represent the priorities and values of your electorate, and be an advocate for the voters who chose you. Think of the members of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus who are not of Asian descent but represent majority AAPI districts.

But it's unavoidable as a high-profile public figure from a certain ethnic or racial background to be expected to set an example for the community — whether they want to or not. When people create spaces that never existed for a demographic, it's only natural that they are viewed as pioneers. I consistently hear from the Asian American community that as representation grows in politics, journalism, and media, they hope to see more mentorship. They see value in trailblazers paying it forward to the community and sharing lessons learned so that others can step up to do the same — at least until the representation of AAPIs becomes the norm.

S: I would like to call you as a truth finder. What are some truths you would like readers to know? How should the ideal American politics and society look for a better future from your perspective?

M: One of the most overlooked truths about AAPIs is our enormous power as digitally fluent consumers of media and technology, which is the fastest growing among all racial groups since 2000 and is projected to be \$1.3 trillion by 2022, according to Nielsen data.

Asian Americans consistently over-index relative to the general American population and other racial groups on key measures that show how much potential we have as influencers of trends in public opinion, media consumption, and technology development. Asian Americans over-index on the number of smart devices and electronic we own, our activities on social media, use of technology to communicate (at times by default, because apps like WeChat and KakaoTalk are the only ways we can communicate with our families), purchasing airline tickets, watching downloaded movies and TV shows, online shopping, and more, according to Nielsen. That means we have huge potential as audi-

ences and voters, to influence public policies and representation in media and entertainment. Yet, Asian Americans are consistently underrepresented in politics, policymaking, government, entertainment, and media.

We as a community need to step up in our civic engagement, and policymakers need to do their part to cultivate us as an electorate and listen to our concerns. There's so much opportunity to increase representation of the Asian Americans in this country.

S: We have a lot of young and bright Columbia undergraduate, graduate students, and the entire Columbia members as readers. This is the perfect time to share your future visions and inspire them.

M: We live in an increasingly polarized society where technology and algorithms have made it easy for us to only consume information that affirms our biases and political leanings. I witness the perils of this constantly in my job — through unproductive discourse on social media and charged responses from some readers.

My request and hope for your readers are that they diversify their news diet. You can't survive on dessert alone; round out your news and media consumption by learning about the viewpoints and opinions of those with whom you disagree. Follow social media accounts of those who hold different political views than yourself, so that you have a diverse feed.

I believe our potential to become a more tolerant society that accepts the diversity of viewpoints and experiences is inextricably intertwined with our habits of consuming news and information, particularly online. The more diligent we are in filtering out unproductive online activity, challenging the information presented to us, and holding those who spread information to a higher standard, the closer I believe we'll get to that ideal.

MICHELLE YE HEE LEE

is a reporter on The Washington Post's national political enterprise and accountability team, covering money and influence in politics. Previously, she was a reporter for The Washington Post's Fact Checker and a government accountability reporter at the Arizona Republic in Phoenix. Starting from January 2, 2019, she officially started her term as 2019-2020 Asian American Journalists Association (AAJA) president.

Sources

Experiencing America: Conversations with Residents at the Heiwa Terrace Retirement Community

By Alexander N. Carlson

"Concentration camp" is the term used by the Japanese American Citizens League to describe the facilities established following the February 19, 1942 issuance of Executive Order 9066, which authorized the forcible removal of civilians of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast states. (<https://jacl.org/asian-american-history/>) Although the term undoubtedly carries an additional popular connotation of Nazi extermination camps, it is the nevertheless defined by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum as follows: "a camp in which people are detained or confined, usually under harsh conditions and without regard to legal norms of arrest and imprisonment that are acceptable in a constitutional democracy." (<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/concentration-camps-1933-39>) For a conversation about the issue of word choice, see the NPR report "Euphemisms, Concentration Camps and The Japanese Internment." (<https://www.npr.org/sections/publiceditor/2012/02/10/146691773/euphemisms-concentration-camps-and-the-japanese-internment>)

Note from the Assistant Editor

By Miranda Li

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'O Hawai'i Ku'u Kulāiwi: Songs of My Beloved Homeland

By Aya Chang

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The Future of Affirmative Action: A Gear to Socioeconomic Affirmative Action?

By Eun Ji Sally Son

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New Rhetoric, Same Bigotry and the Legacy of Asian Americans

By Schoni Song

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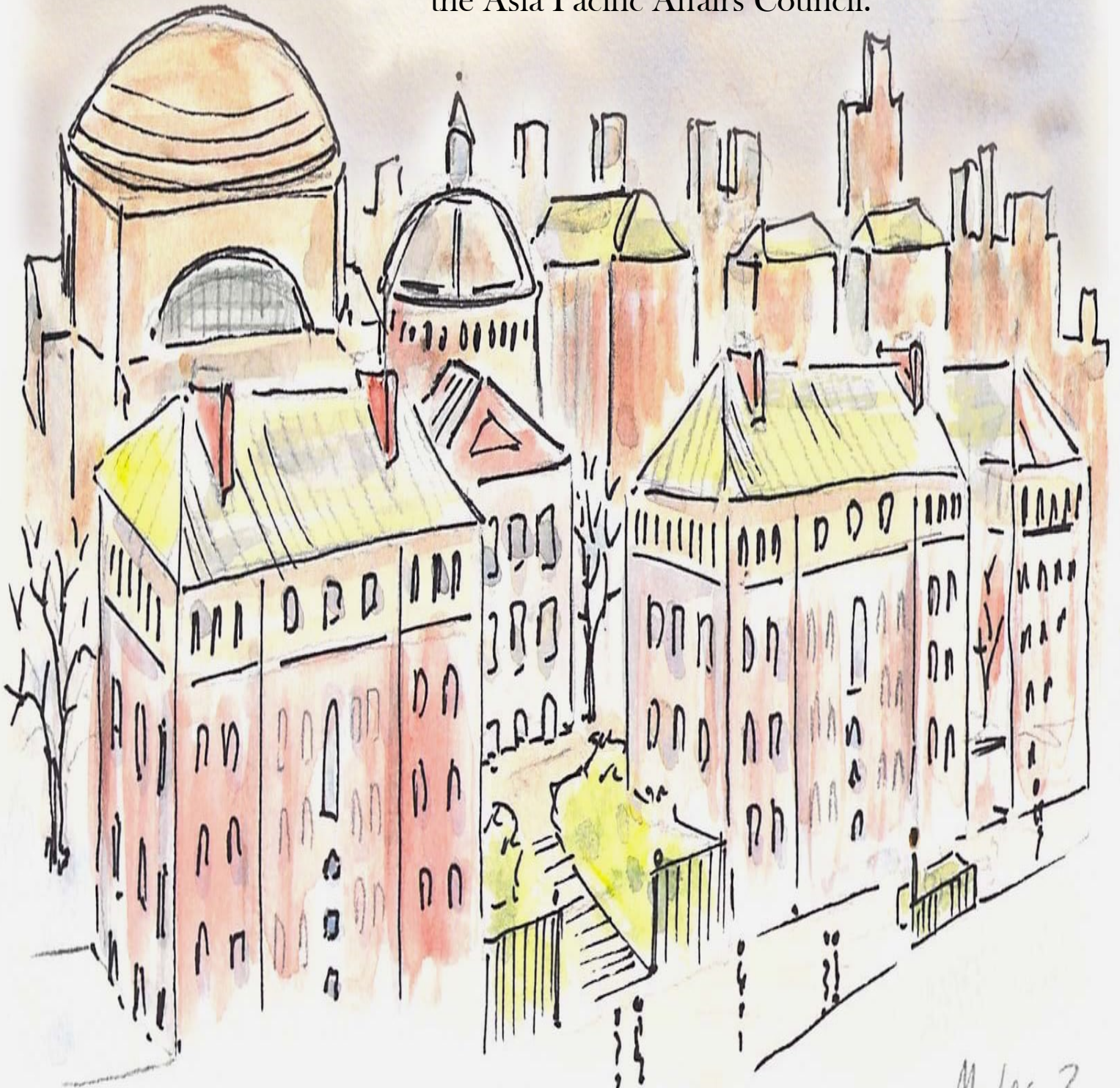
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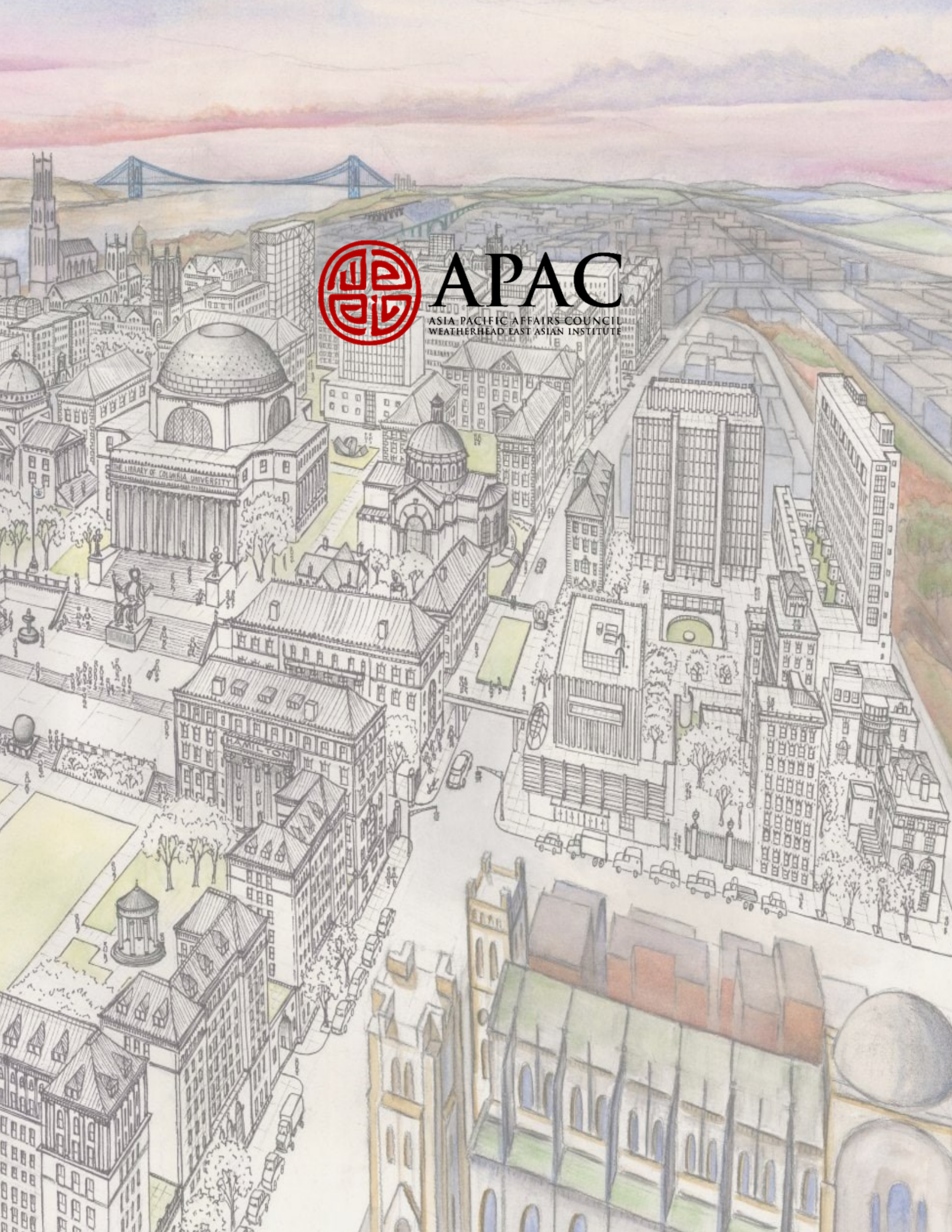
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Every drawing and sketch in
this journal was drawn and kindly
contributed by Myles Zhang (Class of 2019)
at Columbia University.

We thank him very much for his
contribution and collaboration with
the Asia Pacific Affairs Council.



Myles Z.



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