BUT YOU’RE ASIAN...
BEING ASIAN/AMERICAN AT HAVERFORD

ASIAN/AMERICAN

POST-CONVERSATION
TRANSCRIPT

COMMUNITY
CONVERSATIONS
AN OMA/CPGC COLLABORATION
Being Asian/American at Haverford

re.act: Community Conversation Series
Sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) and Center for Peace and Global Citizenship (CPGC)

Friday, Feb. 26, 2016 CPGC Cafe, Stokes 104

SESSION OVERVIEW

What does it mean to be Asian/American at Haverford? What issues do Asian international and Asian American students face, especially given the transnational history of the Asian diaspora? We will discuss these issues and share the recent Facilities Fund proposal to establish an Asian American Resource Center on campus.

[re]CC COMMITTEE

- Stephanie Zukerman, CPGC Program Coordinator
- Tamar Hoffman ‘16, CPGC Intern
- Benjamin Hughes, OMA Program Coordinator
- Oluwatobi Alliyu ‘16, OMA Intern
- Clara Abbott ‘18, OMA Intern

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

- Kelsey Owyang ‘16, Organizer FACILITATOR (BOTH SESSIONS)
- Yixuan Zeng ‘18, FACILITATOR (CLOSED SESSION)
- Nishat Hossain ‘18 FACILITATOR (CLOSED SESSION)
- Divya Shiv ‘16 FACILITATOR
- Jee Soo Kang ‘16 FACILITATOR
- Theresa Tensuan, Dean of Diversity, Access, and Community Initiatives
SESSION NOTES: CLOSED DISCUSSION ON ASIAN INTERNATIONAL AND ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

- A conversation on the dynamic between Asian international and Asian American Pacific Islander students at Haverford. Open to members of the campus community who self-identify as of Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander heritage.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. How can Asian and Asian American students support each other?
2. How can the ISSO/OMA support Asian and Asian American students?

INTRODUCTIONS

- Name, class, optional fun fact, how the college identifies you (may be different from how you self-identify)
- Discussion guidelines: “I” statements; critique the idea, not the person; safe space

BAROMETER ACTIVITY ON SELF-IDENTIFICATION

- Place markers on two sides of the room, one marked Asian American, the other Asian International.
- Everyone stands by the marker with which they identify
  - Ask for volunteers to explain why they are standing where they are.

SMALL GROUPS

- Each group should have at least one Asian American and one Asian international student, by college definition.
- Within the groups discuss the following themes:
  - Labels/identity
  - Language
  - Microaggression/Discrimination (explain)
  - Resources (or lack of)
SESSION NOTES: OPEN DISCUSSION ON BEING ASIAN/AMERICAN AT HAVERFORD AND AARC OPEN FORUM

- An open forum on the recently proposed Asian American Resource Center (AARC) and general discussion of Asian / American experience at Haverford. All students, staff, and faculty are welcome to attend. (12:30-1:30p)

INTRODUCTION OF ASIAN/AMERICAN RESOURCE CENTER PROPOSAL

- How did it start? / how did each of us get involved?
  - Born out of a box of books with no place to put them
  - Nothing on currently on campus for Asian American students
  - DC Basement- renovated this summer (space is in flux)

SILENT POSTER DISCUSSION OF WHAT PEOPLE WANT FROM THE AARC *Included*

- Posters (Hopes & Dreams, Physical Resources, and Programming) are included at the end of this review.

THOUGHTS FROM THERESA TENSUAN

- During her time as a student, Haverford Asian/American population was mostly 1st generation Asian American students; also, the international student program was very specific and of only certain countries (different kinds of solidarity work).

- A key topic was political alignment/solidarity for Asian American students in reparations for Japanese internment

- She did her graduate work at Berkeley during the birth of Asian American Studies in the late 80’s.

- She also gave a quick pitch for the *Intimate Subjects: Gender and Race in Theory and Practice* Symposium at Bryn Mawr, Friday, February 26, 2016
  - An extraordinary event that brings together three leading women of color scholars in the humanities and social sciences, *Intimate Subjects* showcases a new wave of interdisciplinary research emerging out of the productive intersections of race and sexuality, human and animal, and gender and labor. Featuring panels on topics as diverse as the tropes of slavery and human trafficking that circumscribe the lives of Filipino migrant domestic workers in Dubai; the passionate representations of legendary actor Bruce Lee, created by his wife and his mistress; and orangutan-human interdependency in Malaysian Borneo, this one-day symposium spans geographic and disciplinary topographies. Engaging contemporary debates in critical race studies, transnational feminism, affect theory, and theories of globalization, *Intimate Subjects* highlights the power of innovative scholarship and thinking in the liberal arts.
PETER LIANG CASE DISCUSSION

- KELSEY & JEE SOO
  - KELSEY: We need a space of solidarity for Asian American students, also making space for solidarity across oppressed groups.
    ■ Do not want to be the silent minority
    ■ We could have these types of discussion in the resource center.
  - JEE SOO: Introduces Peter Liang case discussion
    ■ The first NYPD officer in ten years to be convicted for manslaughter- racially charged incident

- READ: Peter Liang Was Justly Convicted. He’s Not A Victim | Annie Tan & Belle Yan http://www.huffingtonpost.com/annie-tan/peter-liang-was-justly-convicted_b_9299860.html

- REACTIONS TO PETER LIANG ARTICLE
  - Anger in response to justice system in place
  - How can one support someone who killed an unarmed black man- we should be in solidarity with black community
  - Indictment a catalyst to divide the oppressed
  - The one time when we are willing to believe Liang’s side
  - U.S. prison system is not just- doesn’t matter who is behind the badge- when taught to dehumanize people, anti black no matter what

CLOSING

- As everyone left, they were given note cards and instructed to make two promises:
  - One about creating safe spaces on campus
  - One about self-care
HOPES & DREAMS

- To not notice myself subconsciously repressing memories, experiences, and feelings I have had growing up in Chinatown as a young girl. I want to embrace her and remember her. I don’t want to keep supplanting her and overwriting her.

- I would like to see a better understanding but also mindful distinction of Asians and Asian Americans.

- Space where students can share experiences and find supportive listeners.

- A space where many students feel comfortable learning, relaxing, and participating.

- Having very real, candid discussions about Anti Blackness in Asian American communities/xenophobia in Black communities.

- Place I can learn a language not offered at HC/Trico.

- I hope this is a space where all students Asian descent feel welcomed and all are reached out.

- A deeper sense of belonging and comfort.

- More connections between Asian international students and Asian American students.

- That the Asian/Asian American Resource Center can be a safe and brave space for our community and the Haverford community as a whole and a way for our voices and experiences to be recognized and heard.

- A place where everyone feels welcomed.

- For asian students to feel comfortable and represented in POC spaces.

- That the resource center is just the beginning of greater attention to Asian students and their specific needs.

- More Asian professors, an enhanced Asian student program, more Asian inclusion guest speakers.
  - Yes. agree. more POC profs in general.

- That the resource center is just the beginning of greater attention to Asian students and their specific needs.

- To expand our general conception of what it means Asian.

- Mutual accountability = Mutual love and respect.

- A supportive, inclusive space.

- Get to know more Asian American students on campus.

- To shatter stereotypes and create cultural, social, political awareness about the Asian, Asian American community.

- A larger Asian American student population (why is it so small?)

- A space that helps to bridge the experiences of Haverford Asian American and Asian national students and creates a dialogue about identity with the entire campus.

- More dialogue between Asians and Asian Americans.
• Place that all Asian countries are represented
• Solidarity between and amongst Asian and Asian American students, as well as for other POC and affinity groups
• Bridging the gap among asian american, asian international and american students. Collaborating with the affinity groups. Being more connected!
• More student run programming for annual events. Speaker series so people expect it. Get people involved with stuff. Visibility for asian american discussions. Institutional memory.
• I would like everyone of all identities to have a space where they feel safe, welcome and appreciated
• A place that will be inclusive of all Asian identities
• I hope to be able to support whatever resources and around for whatever resources students want
• A community space encouraging dialogue, identity, development, and advocacy for AA issues
• That Asian American Students feel supported in their research, thinking, and experiences on campus socially and academically
• Space to celebrate all people who identify as Asian or Asian American (including biracial people and adoptees
• Options for vibrant, open, and inclusive, engaging Asian American experiences on campus!
PROGRAMMING & EVENTS

- Mental Health
- Speakers, a single quiet space to have group discussion
- Networking
- Closed group discussion, celebration of Asian holidays, workshops and teach-ins, current event discussion in Asia and US
- Both open and closed discussion spaces- no need to regulate through organizations like OMA, no need to disrupt activities in places like SPGC when there is a dedicated space, students discussing with students. Speakers! Could be like academic teas/discussions before/after talk for informed and comfy space
- Highlight different Asian Cuisines
- Asian American activists, writers, etc. (I didn’t learn about this in school)
- Speakers on the asian immigrant experience
- What it means to be HAPA (?). Idea of Hope(?)
- Deeper cross campus connections with clubs, affinity groups, offices, and academic departments"
- Discussing/learning about politics between Asian countries
- I would hope for the resource center to create a safe space where Asian American students can feel comfortable. For Non Asian Americans (like me), I would like to visit the center to learn more about the differences within the Asian American community. I’m also interested in learning about their prior schooling experiences
- Movie screenings and party ideas with an asian/asian american lows (?)
- Collaborations with other offices. The OAR would love to host students from HASA. Please let us know how we can partner.
- Movie nights!
- Collaborations with other Haverford offices and staff, workshops, speakers, forums...
- Collaboration with SAGA, WC, BSL, and other affinity groups
- More clarification and awareness about East Asian culture. Lunar new year is not just Chinese new year! So many asian countries observe the lunar calendar!
- Connecting with Asian American women alumni
- Food nights!
- SPEAKERS
- Asian american and Pacific Islander mentorship. Educational programs: a space to host talks/lectures workshops. Open library- books are v important. Space for student groups to meet and hang out. A safe space.

- Safe space discussions on Asian/Asian American identity and issues

- Black and Asian solidarity conversations

- Yes- support for other students of color and marginalized students, also community building across Asian American Groups
  - Yes! I would love more ways to be a WOC ally on campus

- Inviting speakers who are Asian and Asian American who can speak to the Asian and Asian american experiences (academic and overall)

- Discussions on model minority/solidarity between minorities

- Forums when Asian and Asian american students can voice and discuss related issues at Haverford and beyond, discussions about supporting other affinity groups and people of color

- History lesson series of workshops on the construction of race and whiteness in the US

- Events that celebrate culture without exoticizing it. Programs to educate others and facilitate discussion to break down barriers and misunderstandings

- Books on A/AA exp. Mental health resources. Board games/etc. Comfortable space to hang out and socialize.
PHYSICAL RESOURCES

- A list of Asian alumni contact information, bios, etc. A continuously updated display of the history of Haverford with respect to Asian students, faculty, administrators, and issues (e.g. Haverford's response to WWII Japanese internment)
- Literature/pictures/excerpts from Asian/Asian American writers/poets/artists
- Interns, kitchen, Asian board games, books, art supplies
- I would love to have a beautiful library to learn about Asian histories of migration, culture, and diaspora
- Set of activities and games from Asian countries, art by Asian students
- A space occupied not only for affinity group/club meetings, but at all kinds of times for various purposes
- Collection/Archive of advice and encouragement from upperclassmen/alumni about your experience at HC
- Books, comfortable lounge furniture, imac and printer snacks
- Books on all subjects regarding Asia and Asian identifying people in USA
- Mental health resources and counseling specific to the needs of Asian American students
- Would love to see news sources from around the world
- I hope the center can educate people on notable Asian American people or movement. I know nothing about Asian American history
- A space/resource where people can talk about personal issues, where people are trained to understand them. Books and info to equip to empower students.
- Food
- Asian snacks
- Comfortable study space and event space (a mini stage?)
- Poetry and Art by Asian American Artists
- Rice cooker?
- Syllabi of classes related to Asian/Asian American topics/issues
- Library of Books and Movies of POC solidarity, untold Asian narratives, queer resistance in POC spaces.
- Poster/Photo Archive gallery with multiple years worth of physical endurance, some cool poster event designs over the years, non official events (students come up with events and their event features this material...cool!). Chairs and Tables access to tables and music (for comfy chairs).
ASSOCIATED PRESS

When I first heard about Akai Gurley's killing, that a Chinese American police officer, Peter Liang, had shot Gurley to his death, I knew to be prepared for tough conversations around police brutality, Black lives and the Asian American community. I knew there would be strong emotions surrounding Officer Liang, especially after Officer Liang received a resounding "guilty" verdict on the count of second degree manslaughter of Akai Gurley.

Still, I did not expect more than 10,000 people, predominantly Chinese Americans, rallying in Brooklyn and around the nation on Saturday in defense of Officer Liang. I was more surprised that some of my cousins attended the rally in Brooklyn.

I understand people's instinct to stand by others in their community, but the anger and protests in support of Officer Peter Liang are misplaced.

The only time I'd ever seen such a large rally of Asian Americans was in footage of the Vincent Chin case. At the height of Detroit's auto-industry crisis in 1982, Vincent, a Chinese American man, was having his bachelor party, when a group of white laid-off autoworkers called Vincent a "motherfucker," mistaking Vincent as Japanese, and blaming Vincent for taking their jobs. Two auto-workers, Ronald Ebens and his stepson, Michael Nitz, chased Vincent down and beat him to death with a baseball bat.

Unlike Peter Liang, the two men, Ebens and Nitz, walked away from the case.
Eben and Nitz never served time for killing my uncle Vincent.

When those two assailants never served a day in jail, different Asian American groups coalesced nationwide by the thousands to protest Vincent's death, its surrounding injustices, and for rights for Asian Americans.

Lily Chin, Vincent's heartbroken mother, fought for years to get justice. My maternal grandmother and my great-aunt, Lily's sisters, flew across the Pacific to support Lily, eventually bringing my parents to the United States. Lily mourned until she passed in 2002.

"Vincent Chin has far more in common with Akai Gurley than with Peter Liang."

I bring Vincent up because a freelance writer, Shirley Ng, referenced Vincent Monday in a NY Post op-ed comparing Officer Liang to Vincent and Private Danny Chen, a Chinese American who committed suicide after constant racial harassment from fellow soldiers. Ng claimed Asian Americans have never had justice, citing Vincent and Danny's cases as why we should support Officer Liang. She further stated Asian Americans were "united" behind Officer Liang.

Her article was insulting and wrong. Vincent Chin has far more in common with Akai Gurley than with Peter Liang.

Like Akai Gurley, my uncle Vincent was killed because he was a person of color.

Like Akai Gurley's family, my family continues to mourn the death of a son.

Ng does not speak for me, nor does she speak for the entire Asian American community.

Injustice is injustice. We should all agree that 1. People should not be killed, and 2. People who kill other people should be held accountable and face the consequences of their actions.

That night, Officer Liang pulled his gun from his holster. Unlike what Ng stated, the gun didn't just go off -- Officer Liang pulled the trigger. Officer Liang didn't provide medical attention or call for an ambulance -- instead, he bickered with his partner over who would call this in. Officer Liang may have not intentionally killed Akai, but he did, with his reckless actions.

Akai Gurley died because of Peter Liang's actions, accidental or not. That's second degree manslaughter.

The signs "One tragedy, two victims" held up by protesters do not apply here. Officer Liang may have been shortchanged by a police institution that did not train him properly and then abandoned him, but he is not a victim. His actions directly and unjustifiably caused the death of another.

The situation Officer Liang created is vastly different from the situations of Asian Americans who are harassed, trafficked, robbed, deported, or killed for being Asian or Asian American. Jessica Klyzek, a
woman who was handcuffed, struck by police, and threatened with deportation at her place of work, is just one recent example of many.

Vincent Chin and Danny Chen never killed anyone. They are victims and can no longer speak up for themselves.

When those defending Officer Liang argue "he never meant to kill anyone," they spout the same reasoning Eben and Nitz used to avoid prison for my uncle Vincent's murder. That's unacceptable.

It's hard to put ourselves, Asian Americans, in Akai Gurley's shoes. Truly, I cannot imagine police officers conducting vertical patrols or pulling guns out in the stairwells of Chinatown apartment buildings without reasonable suspicion. I feel no danger in being shot in my own apartment complex as an Asian American.

What we can do is try to empathize with Akai's family after the death of their son.

Ng proclaims herself a Manhattan Chinatown native, and I am as well. I grew up near Danny Chen in Manhattan's Chinatown, and attended his middle school a few years before him. Danny could have been any of my friends. Vincent is my family. Our families and our communities, mourned and fought for them.

While I understand the knee-jerk reaction that the Chinese American community has to protect a Chinese American officer, we, as a community among others, must hold Officer Liang accountable for his actions.

Do these protesters want Officer Liang exonerated? To get a more lenient sentence? Or is the support a distorted way of saying, "Why do we treat Chinese cops like this and not white cops?" I share Twitter user @bomani_jones's confusion: "it's hard to tell if the peter liang (sic) supporters are upset he got convicted, or upset that other cops don't get convicted *but* he did."

"The signs 'One tragedy, two victims' held up by protesters do not apply here."

I do believe Officer Liang received different treatment than other non-Asian police officers who have committed similar, or worse, acts of violence. But instead of arguing Officer Liang deserved an acquittal or a lenient sentence, I believe police officers, regardless of race, who kill anyone under similar circumstances, should be convicted of unlawful homicide and go to prison too, alongside Officer Liang. Officer Liang is awaiting sentencing, but, as with any defendant convicted of manslaughter by a firearm, Officer Liang should serve prison time.

The New York Police Department employed Peter Liang to protect the public trust. Officer Liang failed that night. He may have been unaware he was complicit in a system of injustice that preys on Black lives, yet he voluntarily operated in that system. Let's analyze the facts, prosecute those who commit crimes, and continue to fight for victims and their families.

If we are to move forward from this, we all need to stand against the systems that brought Peter Liang into the stairwell where Akai Gurley stood. It was no accident that Officer Liang was in a public housing stairwell
and not one in a private housing complex.

Decades of "broken windows" and "stop and frisk" policing, housing and income segregation, prison-industrial complex, and flat-out anti-Black racism led Officer Liang's superiors to place him there. We must re-imagine what policing looks like in our communities so that such tragedies are avoided in the first place.

When the Asian American community fought for Vincent Chin, and then for Danny Chen, we built power from within. More importantly, we built power across and coalitions between many communities. We fought for accountability, federal hate crime legislation and protections of military personnel. While the Saturday rally might have united some in the Chinese American community, it certainly has divided us from others who have been harmed and continue to be harmed by this system of injustice.

I urge my Chinese American and Asian American communities to think long and hard about which side of history we are on and what it means to support Officer Liang. We must fight for the justice Akai Gurley and his family deserve, just as we fight for the justice Vincent Chin and Danny Chen deserve.

*This post originally appeared on [Medium](https://medium.com). Belle Yan contributed to writing this piece.*

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