



Asian American Voices



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LaGuardia Community College

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NOTE FROM THE EDITORS
Asian American Voices
No.5, 2023

It is our honor and pleasure to write an editorial for the fifth issue of the Asian American Voices journal. The journal continues to display the talents and experiences of LaGuardia students engaged in Asian and Asian American identities and scholarship. The issue opens with honoring Reine Sarmiento for her long-term service for the Asian community.

The current journal is a display of the changing times. However, even in the digital world, students' written work discusses the universal human dilemmas of spirituality, identity, truth, and love. The journal opens with two submissions reflecting on deep memorable moments. Anuska Khadgi brings her reflections of "Tihar- Nepal's Most Beautiful and Meaningful Festival" and Anisha Alom discusses the role of rituals in our lives. Thaw Lin Aye in "Love and self-identity" describes the most challenging human experiences, which is one's relationship with the self.

Role of language in the essay "Language and Identity in the Poetry of Indian Kenyan Writer Shajila Patel" by Janelis Germosen exposes the dual nature of language. On one side, the English language with its 171,146 words offers a vast scope of expressions, but on the other side it could serve as a vehicle for oppression and repression.

Family is the center of Asian families. In his critical essay "The Hopelessness of Familial Politics in Hanif Kureishi's short story My Son the Fanatic" David Garate analyzes the struggles of a father and son who are caught in the web of two opposing cultures. Mingyo Song in "Memories of Food: Bitter and Sweet" portrays her memories of preparing food with her mother while Kalsang Nyima reflects on momos and Aourmi Ahmed on delicious frozen dessert kulfi. They all express their hunger for the joy of sweets.

"I am, but I am not" Breaking Stereotypes Project, inspired by a similar initiative created by the New York Region of PTK, celebrates the diversity of LaGuardia Community College by providing a space for students to share their stories in order to break down stereotypes that can lead to bias, discrimination, and violence. Participants were given an image of a book and asked to write inside their book qualities they identify with, and on the outside, qualities others identify them as.

This is representative of how we can all be judged by our "cover." We can start to break stereotypes by understanding that there is more to everyone's unique story if we are willing to listen.

Students' artwork shows flowers, beauty, and fashion. The dual dress submitted by Liberty Zulita expresses dual associations within the minds of immigrants; people who live simultaneously in two cultures. Coincidentally, the cover of the current issue displays a double rose embraced by a background of five roses. Thanks to the submission of Ashley Funesto, we have an insight into the fractally multifold form of her rosary identity.

Realizing that the Asian celebrations at CUNY and LaGuardia CC have over 30 years of history, the Editors have decided to bring the memories of the past events. This theme opens with an essay "A Short History of Asian/AAPI Heritage Celebration at LaGuardia Community College" and is accompanied by photos and a poem from previous events. During the pandemic, when the

celebrations were exclusively remote, one of the events displayed Asian proverbs with music. To honor those times of anxiety and uncertainty, we have decided to share those proverbs again as their wisdom provided soothing relief to us.

The journal continues its success thanks to diligent support of faculty who encourage their students' submissions: Anita Baksh (English), Joy Sanchez-Taylor (English), Charity Scribner (English), Tuli Chatterji (English), and Liena Vayzman (Humanities). We are always grateful for their work and passion and submissions of our students' experiences.

The Editors

Long Island City, New York
May, 2023

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1.

Recognizing the AAPI Leader: Dr. Reine Sarmiento

Reine Sarmiento, Interim Vice Chancellor for Enrollment at the City University of New York

The Editors of Asian American Voices would like to express our gratitude towards Reine Sarmiento, a distinguished AAPI leader who has served as the former Assistant Dean for Enrollment Services at LaGuardia Community College, and currently holds the position of Interim Vice Chancellor for Enrollment at CUNY. Her noteworthy contributions and fervent advocacy towards promoting the growth and development of the AAPI community, both at LaGuardia Community College and other CUNY campuses, merit recognition and appreciation. On behalf of the LaGuardia community, the Editors acknowledge Vice Chancellor Sarmiento's invaluable support towards fostering an inclusive academic environment for AAPI students, faculty, and staff, and recognize her instrumental role in enhancing the educational landscape for the AAPI community at CUNY.

Throughout her tenure at LaGuardia Community College, VC Sarmiento established a dedicated working committee, tasked with coordinating and implementing the AAPI Heritage Celebration. This committee successfully hosted a series of educational events and workshops, intended to introduce and expound upon a range of pertinent issues and themes relevant to the AAPI community, to the wider campus community. The AAPI celebration events were executed in collaboration with local AAPI non-profit organizations, small businesses, and community leaders, and a cohort of AAPI-affiliated faculty and staff members at LaGuardia Community College.

At LaGuardia, VC Sarmiento was instrumental in creating a space for AAPI students and scholars to feel seen, heard, and valued on campus. She worked tirelessly to create resources and

programs that celebrate and honor the unique experiences of Asian American students. VC Sarmiento has been a powerful advocate for equity and inclusion in higher education, and her dedication and passion have been an inspiration to us all.

The ensuing contributions have been provided by LaGuardia colleagues, who had the privilege of collaborating with VC Sarmiento, across a range of AAPI initiatives in the past.

I have been fortunate to have worked with Dr. Sarmiento for many years as a colleague at LaGuardia and now as our Vice Chancellor, overseeing the Special Programs College Discovery is under. While at LaGuardia, Dr. Sarmiento headed the Asian-American Heritage Month Committee and she was intentional to bring all students, both Asian-Americans and non-Asian Americans to work together and tried to make the celebration and learning opportunity through various academic presentations rich and collaborative. Dr. Sarmiento not only leads well but she leaves a significant mark on us both personally and professionally as a great role model. She demonstrated to all of us that we can't forget where we come from. Her leadership, innovation, and dedication have been instrumental in shaping the academic landscape of our college and university and have made a significant impact on the academic community.

Among her many achievements, what made Dr. Sarmiento so successful in climbing up the ladder within the institution is her style of working with others. Her way of creating a team spirit yet her direct, nurturing manner really earned the trust from all parties. Dr. Sarmiento has a deep commitment to promoting diversity, equity and inclusion in higher education. Her unwavering dedication to creating an inclusive and supportive academic environment for all has made a significant impact on the college and university community.

Kyoko Toyama
Professor and Counselor

Dr. Reine Sarmiento's commitment and dedication to CUNY and its students are reasons why CUNY stands strong. At LaGuardia Community College, the impact of her service is visible in the vibrancy of the communities and coalitions that were formed directly as a result of her efforts. Asian American organizational efforts have grown and become stronger due to work she puts in to make ethnic studies initiatives at CUNY much more than thematic heritage months. We look forward to her continuing leadership and remain inspired by her example.

Ann Matsuuchi
Instructional Technology Librarian & Professor

I had the privilege of working with Vice Chancellor Sarmiento during the formative years of my career at CUNY. At the time, I was an international doctoral student at the CUNY Graduate Center, and had the opportunity to join the AAPI Committee at LaGuardia (which was known as the Asian Heritage Committee) led by VC Sarmiento. Back then my understanding of the challenges faced by the AAPI community was limited, particularly with respect to the underrepresentation of Asian Americans in the mainstream narratives of U.S. history, society, and academia. It was through

my interactions with VC Sarmiento and other esteemed colleagues on the committee that I gained profound knowledge and insight into these pertinent issues. Thank you for your guidance and for establishing an exemplary leadership model for the AAPI community at CUNY.

Tomonori Nagano
Professor of Japanese

Part I

Reflective Essays

2.

Tihar Festival in Nepal

Anuska Khadgi

Nepal is recognized for its diverse one hundred and twenty six castes and ethnic groups. We have different festivals among which Dashain and Tihar are the biggest festivals in our country. They are celebrated across the country by all castes and ethnic groups. I belong to the Newar community and we celebrate Tihar for five days. The fourth day is known as Mha puja. Mha puja is only celebrated by the Newari group of people. Mha puja usually means self-worship day. We create mandalas, a sand painting with different colors and flowers in front of each family member. The lady head of the family worships each member's body by putting tika (a red paste made with red color and rice seed) and showering flowers. All members of the family—from the eldest to the youngest family member—sit together and eat our traditional variety of foods and drinks. This cultural practice teaches us to worship oneself and helps us celebrate our existence in this world.



Celebrating Mha puja

The fifth day is known as “Bhai-Tika” where we pray to god for the long lives of your brothers. According to the beliefs of the Newar community, it is said that on this day Yamraj, the god of death, visited a sick brother and his sister engaged Yamraj to stop him from taking away her brother. She did everything she could to prevent Yamraj. She lit the area with candles, created mandaps (rangoli),

distributed fruits and flowers in an effort to hold Yamraj. She put seven different colors of tika (a red paste made with red color and rice seed) on the forehead of her brother and performed other traditional practices to distract Yamraj. According to Newari belief, it is said that if the Yamraj consumes food that includes salt he cannot take away the life of anyone on that particular day. So the sister bribes Yamraj and adds salt to the delicious food that she serves to Yamraj. In the end, Yamraj eats the food served with salt, and the sister's efforts paid off. As a result of her endeavor, Yamraj could not take her brother's life. With this belief, we Nepalese have been celebrating this festival for many years to nourish the bond between siblings.



Celebrating bhai-tika with my family

3.

What Role does Ritual have in our Lives?

Anisha Alom

Everyone solves difficulties in their own unique way, and everyone has their own beliefs. Rituals have a crucial influence on the way we live our lives. They play an important role and purpose in the cultural community.

Rituals are beneficial in a variety of ways. They benefit your health, keep your community together, and deliver great changes to the community. Rituals provide us with a sense of safety. There are numerous forms of rituals. As stated in “Why Rituals Are Good for Your Health”: “...Rituals signify transition points in the individual life span and provide psychologically meaningful ways to participate in the beliefs and practices of the community.” They have been instrumental in building community, promoting cooperation, and marking transition points in a community member’s life. And as strange as rituals might be from a logical perspective, they have evolved as distinct features of human culture (Honarvar, 2). In other words, practicing rituals are a way to express your beliefs in building a community. It has emerged as a distinct characteristic of human society. Rituals help to strengthen unity within a group.

When I started investigating rituals, I saw that one thing that practically every ritual has in common is that they are created for a reason, and the most important reason is to promote good health. According to Andrew Newberg, the associate director of research at the Marcus Institute of Integrative Health, “rituals lower cortisol, which in turn lowers heart rate and blood pressure and increases immune system function.” (Honarvar 2). This quote shows that by practicing a ritual you help your body to function better. As I am a Muslim, I have been practicing fasting since I was eleven years old. In Islam when a child enters puberty, he or she is expected to fast during Ramadan, the holy month. Fasting is something that everyone in my family does. Through fasting, our purpose is to appreciate Allah (who Muslim people worship). However, fasting is not only about worship, it also helps us in many ways. According to the Journal Of Nutrition Fasting and Health, “Some of the health benefits of fasting for diabetic patients include the reduction of blood glucose [40], increased breakdown of glucose [42], reduced insulin production [40, 46], and increased glucagon production [42, 46] to facilitate the metabolic breakdown of glucose (glycolysis) [30, 33, 40, 42]. Fasting is helpful for everyone’s health because it lowers cholesterol levels, as the above quotation illustrates. Diabetic patients benefit from fasting because it lowers blood glucose levels, increases glucose breakdown, lowers insulin production, and has a variety of additional benefits. This is especially useful for persons whose lives are in danger and who must be cautious about what they eat. It assists them in managing their diabetes. I have discovered that practicing specific traditions keep the community together throughout their lives. We get to spend time with loved ones when we have a ritual. We have the opportunity to discuss our differences, which clarifies previous misunderstandings and brings people closer together.

Every year during Ramadan, no matter how much I lost touch with my family over the year, we come together and rekindle our affection. Muslims are expected to practice self-control during Ramadan, not only with regard to food but also with regard to anger, negative thoughts, and behaviors. So that I can practice my ritual, I stay peaceful, and many others who observe Ramadan do as well, bringing harmony to our community. During Ramadan, we all have the opportunity to break negative behaviors.

Rituals deliver great changes to the community. It supports the regulation of our emotions. It also allows for the elimination of anxiety and brings connections of love. Ari Honarvar further states, “rituals reduce anxiety, improve performance and confidence, and even work on people who don’t believe in them” (2). A study conducted in the University of Toronto showed how after performing a ritual, contestants experienced less stress than when they did not perform the ritual. When I fast during Ramadan I see a positive change in me. I feel as if it brings peace to me and my community. The Journal Of Nutrition Fasting And Health reflects on Ramadan by mentioning how “Ramadan fasting leads to positive changes in the attitudes of individuals, thereby resulting in the socio-cultural balance of the community and environmental harmony” (1). This quote conveys that practicing a ritual contributes towards creating positive energy in our community.

One of my classmates, Indrani, wrote about yoga, a ritual which is different from the ritual I practice. She mentions that though yoga comes from Hindu religion and Ramadan, from Islam, the purpose of both the rituals is same: “Controlling the breath is the same as controlling awareness. They go hand in hand. During meditation, the breath, the heartbeat, metabolism- it all slows down, just like in sleep” (Veylanswami 4). As we know, having control over awareness is very important to making the right decisions for ourselves and others. When one practices yoga, one learns to manage ones breath, thereby making one a master of one’s consciousness. This has slightly different benefits than observing Ramadan because while we fast, I don’t really pay attention to our own breath but instead focus on remaining calm around others. They are, nonetheless, equally significant. As social animals, we should have personal or communal rituals to help us stay on course in life. Rituals boost our self-assurance. They can help us cope with our grief or build our bonds with one another. They also keep us healthy. We should continue to practice physical and mental self-care rituals for the purpose of self-love.

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Part II

Critical Essays

4.

Love and Self-Identity: Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*

Thaw Lin Aye

Love is a magical word that has different meanings and no one can explain clearly about it. We all have different happy or sad stories of love that are covered in our hearts forever. Loving someone is not an easy thing, for it can make us suffer. *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri, portrays the difficulties of a second-generation child in the US, especially with regard to love. Gogol Ganguli is the main character, and also the son of Ashoke and Ashima. As he understands more about himself, he realizes that he wants to be a “normal” American. However, his parents push him to be more Bengali. This leads to conflicts about his cultural identity that make him unhappy and unable to love someone. Although Gogol has many relationships in his life, he never knows what true love is.

Gogol's first impression of love is from his parents' married life. Ashoke marries Ashima in Calcutta, India and they move to the United States. Upon immigrating here, they bring their South Asian traditions with them. Ashima stays at home to cook, clean, and do all the house chores while Ashoke works to earn money as a breadwinner. At first, their relationship was distant, as it was an arranged marriage. It is not until Ashoke dies that Ashima realizes she was in love with him, but she never expressed this when he was alive. As the narrator observes, “She had grown to know and love her husband” (279). Gogol cannot understand his parents' marriage and finds it awkward. Being born and raised in a Western culture, he is more familiar with American love marriage which has more flexible gender roles and freedom. Living between two completely different ways of love makes Gogol feel lost.

His hatred of his name also affects Gogol's first kiss. He is depressed about living with a name he does not like. He finds it an embarrassment because it has nothing to do with who he is. He is also tired of explaining to people that it is a pet name, actually Russian and it does not mean anything in English and Bengali. Before taking the SAT in high school, Gogol is invited to a college party. He meets a girl named Kim there, but he does not want to introduce himself as Gogol because it distresses him. As the author explains, “He wishes there was another name he could use” (95). He thinks of other ways to bring it up to her, and he realizes that he can use his good name, Nikhil. Then, he kisses Kim, but it is not Gogol who does. Therefore, Gogol's first kiss, which is the starting point of his love stories, is ruined by the anguish over his name.

Gogol does not have a happy ending with his first love. He starts college at Yale after he finishes high school. In the autumn of his sophomore year, he meets a girl named Ruth on the train when he goes back home. She is American, and her parents are divorced. He falls in love with her, and she is his first official girlfriend. After some time, Ashima and Ashoke begin to learn about their son's ties to Ruth. Although Gogol meets with her family twice in Maine, his parents do not care for

the relationship and they want him to distance himself from her. However, Gogol wants his parents to “simply accept her, as her family accepts him” (117). He believes that his parents disapprove of her because she is not a Bengali girl. In the meantime, he has to spend his springtime alone as Ruth goes to England for a semester at Oxford. He feels dismayed when he finds out his parents are so glad to hear this. Although his relationship with Ruth comes to an end, it was his first experience of love that he will never forget.

Despite his breakup with Ruth, Gogol moves on in search of a new partner for his life. At one of his colleague’s parties, he finds his new love. Her name is Maxine, and her lifestyle represents the true Western culture which is so different from Gogol’s family traditions. He spends most of his time with her but not with his parents. While they are together, Gogol begins to ignore Bengali culture and live as an upper-middle-class American like Maxine. He eventually moves to her home and he “falls in love” with her (137). Nonetheless, everything changes after his father’s sudden death due to a heart attack. Gogol feels guilty for not caring enough about his father, thus he goes back to his parent’s home. Since Maxine cannot understand his return to his roots, they have conflicts and break up. His relationship with Maxine is a reminder for Gogol that he cannot really love someone from a different culture at least at this point in his life.

Gogol finally comes back to Bengali culture after many failed attempts at finding love. Ashima makes him date a girl who has the same traditions as they do. At first, he declines his mother’s offer, but in the end he agrees in order to make her happy. Moushumi and Gogol have a first date in a bar, where they begin to learn about each other. She is a daughter of his mother’s friend, and they had met before when they were young. They both fall in love quickly since their similarities in culture bring them closer. This definitely pleases their parents. As Lahiri writes, Gogol and Moushumi are “fulfilling a collective, deep-seated desire” (224). Within a year, they marry by following their parents’ wedding arrangements. Although they have a happy married life at the beginning, their relationship does not last long. Moushumi begins to doubt if it is the life she wants to live. Her feelings for Gogol start to change as she cheats on him with her first love. Gogol has no clue until she carelessly mentions her affair on the train. No sooner does he know the truth than his married life comes to an end. As Tamara Bhalla argues in “Being (and Feeling) Gogol: Reading and Recognition in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake*”, “cultural similarity does not necessarily result in easy romantic relationships” (10). In fact, their similarities both bring them together and break them apart. Therefore, Gogol is unable to find love even when he marries within his traditions.

Gogol’s unsuccessful relationships show that he cannot truly love someone. His romantic life is complicated as it is influenced by his parents and his cultural background. He tries to find his identity while he is in different relationships. All of them are temporary, for, as Natalie Friedman argues, he is just a tourist in love. Perhaps if he had discovered who he truly was, everything would have changed. Gogol teaches us that we have to figure out the meaning of love ourselves first before loving someone else. When we are young, we should embrace the importance of our family and culture. By doing so, we will have a better understanding of love, and our relationships will truly last.

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5.

Language and Identity in the Poetry of Indian Kenyan Writer Shajila Patel

Janelis Germosen

If you're a woman of color then society doesn't let you shine like you should, especially if you are queer. The lack of respect continues to grow if English isn't your first language and if you're an immigrant in the country you're living in. Shajila Patel's poem "Dreaming in Gujarati" expresses those exact frustrations based on her own experiences from growing up in Nairobi, Kenya to becoming a migrant activist, poet, and writer. "Dreaming in Gujarati" describes Shajila Patel's experiences navigating an English-centered world. She writes about being a child struggling to learn and maintain her mother tongue, Gujarati, while using English as a shield to protect herself from her family and her peers' mockery. Patel struggles with identity since certain words to describe her being don't exist in the Gujarati language.

Learning English is a double-edged sword; it has a wide scope of ways to explain and describe many concepts. For example Patel writes "Words that don't exist in Gujarati self-expression, lesbian and individual" (Patel). Although Gujarati is her mother tongue, it didn't have the range to cover her experiences as a queer woman of color. At the same time English can be used to belittle and attack people for those same realities it describes. When Patel reaches adulthood, she realizes how English-focused our world is, to the point that the whole world is expected to know only English. In the poem, Patel is sending the message that for queer women of color, most languages do not represent them or allow them to fully express themselves. Using her own personal experiences, she details the times that she's been mocked or treated like an outsider. Her writing lets her express her frustrations of dealing with racism in an English-centered world.

Patel is of Gujarati background born and raised in Nairobi, Kenya. Patel went to college in England and briefly lived in the United States. She studied political economy then worked in finance before she dedicated her life to poetry, writing and acting ("Meet Shailja"). When she lived in the United States, she became exposed to Slam poetry which helped her learn to write poetry to express and channel the anger she carried with her. She mentions that eventually her writings became too long, and they evolved into theater then later into a book (Taylor). Writing has always grown with her, morphing into the appropriate forms for what she is experiencing at the time. Sometimes, if you can't find a word to describe your experience then create it. Patel channeled all her experiences into her book *Migritude* which is a new word she created to combine "Migrant," "attitude" and "negritude." She shaved her head when she was eighteen, wearing combat boots. Her aesthetics were not typical for women. "Dreaming in Gujarati" shows that Patel's identity is not static; it progresses based on her experiences.

Patel's identity as a queer woman of color results in her not feeling accepted. In her poem, she describes a time when she is mocked for being different from the other children when she recalls, "I am six in a playground of white children; 'Darkie sing us an Indian song!'" It was her first introduction to racism. At this age, she is trying to fit in with her English-speaking peers, but she is rejected because of what she looks like. The white children denied her because she did not look like or act like them. She was not white nor was her English that good at the time. Her identity is something that cannot be shielded by English nor her mother tongue. Patel doesn't have words to express who she really is. Humans grow and change all the time; language should reflect that. This current generation has brought forth the usage of pronouns and deeper conversations about gender identity and issues that maybe traditional cultures reject or don't give a chance to. Although Gujarati is her mother tongue, it didn't have the range to cover her experiences as a queer woman of color. Patel's work hopes to inspire "a generation of migrants who don't feel the need to be silent to protect themselves" ("Shailja Patel"). Breaking the binaries of racism and homophobia helped shape Patel's identity; Patel no longer craves to belong but instead embraces the fluidity of being human.

The experience of becoming an adult helps Patel better understand racism in the English-speaking world and where she stands in it; this leads her to realizing how her father must have felt being a man of color who knows five languages. Compared to English it means nothing. She writes, "five languages, five different worlds. Yet English shrinks him down before white men" (Patel). In the English-speaking world, no matter who you are or what your background is you will always seem less valuable compared to a white cisgender man. Immigrants are also often considered more expendable than non-immigrants; for example, in 1972 Uganda, Kenya's neighboring country expelled its South Asian residents. From a young age Patel understood that her home might move at any time ("Shailja Patel"). Uganda tried to purge this population of people so they can have control over who can claim to be Ugandan. This discriminatory act against South Asians living in Uganda for generations fueled Patel to not be silent. Patel knows that she doesn't have the privilege to have a home that is stagnant, that her appearance will always deem her as the other. Patel uses these experiences in her poem to shed light on how multilingual people of color are treated in an English-centered world.

Most languages do not represent everyone or allow them to express themselves fully. One language isn't better than the other, and languages should be respected and allowed to evolve. This conservative view on language is what makes expressing oneself so hard. Although English can express a lot, it can also put people in boxes. Depending on how much you know, you can be labeled a fool or an academic. Patel's writing has allowed her to share her experiences with people all around the world. She's developed this language to express everything she feels as she grows into being a celebrated migrant traveling between multiple worlds. It's important to have a deeper conversation on the privileges of knowing English and how it affects people of color and how society expects you to always choose one side yet people's identities flow, change and develop.

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6.

The Hopelessness of Familial Politics in Hanif Kureishi's Short Story "My Son the Fanatic"

David Garate

"My Son The Fanatic" is a short story by British-Pakistani writer Hanif Kureishi. The story follows the conflict between Parvez, a Pakistani migrant and his English-born son Ali as they both struggle with cultural identity and acceptance that leads to misunderstanding each other's ideologies in the process. Despite being from Pakistan, Parvez has assimilated into English culture, and often expresses reservations of certain religious aspects of his Pakistani culture. Ali on the other hand, fully embraces the culture his father has abandoned, and has even begun dedicating his life to extreme religious practices, to the horror of his father. While on the surface, Kureishi's "My Son The Fanatic" is a dialogue on the tribulations of cultural identity in an alien environment, the underlying theme portrays a dysfunctional Pakistani family—the father Parvez and son, Ali—struggling to understand each other.

As previously mentioned, it is no secret that Parvez does not look back fondly on the Pakistani culture he abandoned when he migrated to England. On the contrary, he and his taxi-driver friends actively express their distaste for orthodox Muslims who view themselves as superior to others; they often make "jokes of the local mullahs walking around with their caps and beards, thinking they could tell people how to live" (Kureishi 221). Although he overtly avoids religion, Parvez is far from being an immoral heretic. In fact, he held the belief that even after death one holds earthly influence and that people must treat one another with respect. But while Parvez may hold these virtues, he immediately breaks them by mistrusting his son. When Ali first begins to act 'odd', quitting his job, clearing his belongings and distancing himself from his father, Parvez panics and assumes the absolute worst; lamenting to his friends, "I can't understand it!... 'I can't talk to him any more. We were not father and son- we were brothers! Where has he gone? Why is he torturing me!' (Kureishi 218). These fears are further amplified by his friend's assumption that "Ali was taking drugs and selling his possessions to pay for them" (Kureishi 219). In addition, to further Parvez's disappointment his friends warn him "to watch Ali scrupulously and then be severe with him, before the boy went mad, overdosed or murdered someone" (Kureishi 219). It is clear that Parvez has unresolved deep-rooted trust issues towards his son. And while Parvez initially offers to join his religious son in prayer in an attempt to connect, he ultimately cannot stand Ali's defiance and ends up severely beating him. Ali expresses the irony of the situation when he asks Parvez: "So who's the fanatic now?" (Kureishi 228).

Ali, as opposed to his father, has been alienated by English society and by Parvez who has himself assimilated into mainstream culture. Ali seeks comfort in community and religion, but it leads him to discriminate against the non-religious, including his own father. This is the source of Ali's resentment: not only does he feel alienated from his father, but when Ali finds his own niche and culture, he is met with distrust and religious intolerance from Parvez. He lays out openly his disdain of his father's drinking and gambling habits. He even expresses his disgust for Bettina, (a sex-worker

who his father befriends), and questions why Parvez would ever let “a woman like [her] touch him like that” (Kureishi 226). Given his virtues of Islam, Ali *intends* on helping the corrupt find religion and purpose, yet his father, according to him, seems to be a man corrupted by anti-religious attitudes and is exempt from saving. This contradiction makes it all the more apparent that Ali dedicates his life to Islam to defy dominant English national values that do not take into account England’s history of colonialism and its multicultural population.

Kureishi’s masterful short story is an allegory for an often neglected issue within struggling migrant families: how cracks in family dynamics push an already brittle household to crumble. Parvez, a migrant, who had limited opportunities upon arrival to England and thus assimilated to English customs and took whatever jobs were available –being a taxi man in the night-shift is far from ideal. However, this consequently robbed the connections between father and son. Their relationship degraded into estrangement; Parvez lacked trust for his son and was thus doubtful that his son’s chosen path would be a sound one. Being neglected of paternal connection, Ali resented his emotionally distant father. Kureishi’s short story demonstrates the value of love, communication, and empathy. His work shows the need for us to acknowledge the experiences of individuals who might seemingly be distant or unreachable, but have a reason for their perspective.

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7.

Memories of Food: Bitter and Sweet

Mingyo Song

Growing up, my parents worked hard to provide for my sister and me; because of this, I did not see them frequently or spend as much time with them. While I understand the reason behind their long hours now, I was unaware of it as a child. Though it may seem exaggerated, sometimes I would go as far as to question my parents' love for me. Nevertheless, every year, without fail, I would wake up to the smell of miyeok-guk on my birthday. Miyeok-guk, or seaweed soup, is a Korean dish with miyeok (seaweed) and beef in a broth made of fish sauce. In Korea, mothers eat miyeok-guk postpartum as part of their recovery process; additionally, it is a tradition for people to eat a bowl on their birthdays to honor and thank their mothers for giving birth. So now, on my birthday, my mom and I would each have a nice, warm bowl of miyeok-guk that we made together. Miyeok-guk is a prominent part of my identity and culture, and I have many fond memories associated with the dish. Just as I have memories with a cultural dish, literature often uses food as a metaphor for other topics. In this essay, I will address how the use of food in literature helps introduce themes like memory and culture through an analysis of *Tongues and Bellies: The Whole Kahani* (2021), a collection of short stories by British-South Asian novelists.

Food often plays a significant role in our memories; this is displayed in literary texts as well. In "The Connoisseur" by Nadia Kahir Barb, Shamim, a wedding crasher, goes to a wedding and reconnects with his past through catering. Shamim recalls his experience scouring for food at a young age. Throughout the story, we gain a deeper understanding of Shamim's relationship with food and his culture. As he sips on his borhani, Shamim remembers his view of the drink as a child: "... he had found the spicy yoghurt drink distasteful and wondered why anyone would choose to drink it" (Barb 139). However, Shamim's appreciation for his cultural food has increased as he has grown, and he recognizes the importance of the drink paired with biryani. Shamim's previous opinion of the borhani becomes a fond memory, his current view of it representing how he has changed over time. Shamim's past and present sentiments about the same drink show that although he is in a similar position to his youth – scouring for food, his tastes have matured.

While some have fond memories of their cultural food, others are unable to do so. For example, in Khadija Rouf's short story "Confection," a woman recalls her experiences as a biracial child and the difficulties her parents faced as an interracial couple. With an Indian father and British mother, the narrator constantly hears comments about her appearance and culture. However, her identity is jeopardized when her father has an affair. As a result of his infidelity, the narrator gradually loses part of her identity: "Our meals change after he leaves. We stop eating curry, pakoras, samosas, gulab jamun. Instead, we eat end-of-the-day sandwiches on special offer" (Rouf 101). After her father leaves, her identity, as well as any traces of her father, fades into a distant memory. Even though her

mother attempts to erase any evidence left of her ex-husband, the narrator makes efforts to salvage any trace left of him. While her mother grieves a marriage shattered by infidelity, the narrator grieves not only her father's presence, but the loss of her food and culture.

“The Last Supper” by Reshma Ruia further extends the theme of food and memory to portray a dying chef, Gaston Marcel's reflection on his journey of becoming a chef. As he dines alone in the restaurant that he once cooked for, he reminisces on his career. Throughout his recollection of his journey as a chef, he is served the very food he once crafted – only that this time, these dishes are crafted by different hands. Gaston reflects on the early days of his career—not as a chef, but as an apprentice. He recalls what his mentor, chef Anton first told him while he learned the art of cooking: “Food is like a prayer. Whether it is a slice of bread or caviar from the Caspian, you must treat it with the same reverence” (Ruia 108). It is this moment that Gaston embraces as part of his philosophy for the rest of his career. While for many people, food is just something one eats to satiate hunger—others, like Gaston, view it as something to be cherished. It is clear that this memory of his mentor has stuck with Gaston, as he lets it become a focal part of his career.

It is without question that food plays a significant role in people's lives, as is illustrated through literature; these short stories show different ways food presents itself in our memories. We see a wedding crasher who reconnects with his youth through catering, a woman who holds onto the memory of her father through her cultural dishes, a dying chef who reflects on the moments that defined his career. All three narrators, written in different stories in different settings, are brought together through food and the memories tied to them. This sentiment is also represented in real life; certain cultural dishes are tied to events such as weddings or holidays, which often hold special meaning to many people. Though there are several different cultures in the world, one thing rings true—food is a vehicle for our memories, and the memories are what we cherish.

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Part III

Recipes and Reflections on Food

8.

Momos and Me

Kalsang Nyima

Dumplings, popularly known as “Momos” in Tibetan, is one of the main dishes in Tibetan culture. Momo has a very special meaning in my life. When I was a child in the 1980’s, I remember my parents making momos on special occasions or on Sundays. There was a time when Tibetans prepared this dish only on special occasions or if they had special guests coming in. It may be because it takes a longer time to make it and also it needs a special kind of appliance which is called “Moktu”. Momos represent my identity and I grew up eating them. Making momos is a collective effort where family members often join in its preparation. When I saw my mother plucking chives, cilantro, and scallions from our field, I knew that we were going to have dumplings today. My village is called Lakhawala and is surrounded by the Himalayas in India, where we grow our own vegetables and grains. My mother loves to work in the field, taking care of the vegetables, and flowers. My parents had grown up in Tibet but ever since the Chinese invasion of Tibet, my parents have fled to India by walking hundreds of miles on the snowy mountains passing through the Himalayas. Once they arrived in India, they made Lakhawala, a small village, their home.

I used to be overwhelmed with joy sitting next to my mother and helping her make momos. I realized that preparing momos is complicated and time consuming, and as I was young, all I could do was help my mother wash the greens. I remember the laughter and the smiles we shared while making the momo. When the momo is in the process of getting steamed, my joy was similar to how author Esmeralda Santiago’s describes her memories of guavas in “How to eat Guava”. Santiago writes: “As children, We didn’t always wait for the fruit to ripen. We raided the bushes as soon as the guavas were large enough to bend the branch” (3). This shows the author’s excitement when eating guavas as a child in Puerto Rico. Momos is stuffed with a combination of ground meat, mixed with the chopped garlic, ginger, cilantro, scallions, chives, and salt to taste; the beautiful filling is covered with a thin layer of flour. It’s shaped as a circle and cooked with steam for 20 minutes. It is always better and recommended to serve the dish with the homemade hot sauce (chili paste) or one can also try it with tomato ketchup. It also goes well with hot soup of any kind and a sliced cucumber on the side. The moment after the momo is cooked, my family gathers and sits in a circle keeping the food in the middle.

I wish I had a time machine to go back so that I can enjoy and cherish those moments again. It has been a while since I moved to New York, but I can still recall the memories when my mother puts the momos on our plate and I let it cool before I could eat. Fortunately, there are lots of Tibetan restaurants at Jackson Heights so I sometimes stop by the nearest Tibetan restaurant to eat momos. The smell of the cooked momo and the juicy soup coming out of the momos reminds me of my childhood and I can only wish that my parents were here with me to enjoy the delicious food.



My momo dish

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9.

Kulfi: The Taste of Childhood Memories

Aourmi Ahmed

One of the best ways to cool down on the hot streets of Bangladesh is by indulging in kulfi ice cream, known as Indian ice cream. It is made of vibrant spices and ingredients including milk, sugar, cardamom, and nuts. Some flavors you might find are vanilla sprinkled with sliced almond and cardamom, rose essence, pistachio with chopped nuts, mango ice cream with dried nuts, and coconut with saffron strands and shredded coconut. You can typically see street vendors serving kulfi ice cream in metal molds outside on the busy, hot streets of Bangladesh. I visualize these images from the stories of my mother. She tells me that the streets of Bangladesh are filled with different food vendors who set up shop next to each other. In order to beat the heat, my mother used to sneak out of her house to get ice cream. The kulfi vendor would sell the ice cream in a wooden box filled with ice and salt. A cloth would be placed between the ice and metal molds. When you paid for the ice cream, the vendor placed a popsicle stick into the ice cream, and off you went with your creamy dense treat. Every bite is cold, refreshing, and flavorful with crunchy bits of nuts.

My memory of kulfi doesn't start in Bangladesh. It starts in New York City. Although kulfi is sold in Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi groceries all over New York, I used to get them from my dad's mini market. I would skip down the streets of Church Avenue in Kensington, Brooklyn, with my sister and my mom. Kensington has been recently recognized as Brooklyn's "Little Bangladesh," but when I was growing up it was a predominantly white neighborhood. After long days of school, I would beg my mom to pick up my dad from his grocery store where he sold kulfi in an ice cream freezer. It would be sold in plastic popsicle containers that mimicked the real deal alongside strawberry shortcake ice cream and milky way bars. My mom thought that the mango flavor was creamy and dense but missed the crunchy bits of coconut flakes and sliced almonds. After the Wall Street crash of 2008, my father's mini-market closed. Since then eating kulfi ice cream is not the same as before.

Part IV

Breaking Stereotypes Project

10.

Breaking Stereotypes Project

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

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

Link to the project slides: <https://bit.ly/3ACLkP0>

Dana Trusso
Faculty Advisor of PTK



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

Participants were given an image of a book and asked to write inside their book qualities they identify with, and on the outside, qualities others identify them as.

This is representative of how we can all be judged by our "cover."

We can start to break stereotypes by understanding that there is more to everyone's unique story if we are willing to listen.

I am not...

- Lesser than anyone
- Oppressive
- Unworthy
- Ugly
- A person who only deserves to be here conditionally
- Only good for certain things

I am... A Bengali-American Muslim

Creative
food in the pots

SHINIG
Constantly growing
A loved friend and family member
Perseverant

HAPPY
A loved human :)

kind
MULTI-FACED
encouraging
good at communicating
MULTI-LINGUAL

From a "backwards" faith or culture

My name is Sahia Tahir.

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

I am not... making excuses for my actions.

You're so forgetful!

How did you fail the test you studied for?

Pay attention!

I am...

- trying my best.
- prone to being distracted by any type of reward.
- worried if I'm missing or forgetting anything important.
- No thoughts, head empty.
- All thoughts, head full.
- unable to remember things.

Get your head out of the clouds!

Are you ignoring me?

There's no need to worry.

...someone living with ADD.

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

I am not...

- obsessed with plastic surgery
- meek/submissive
- "exotic"
- the root of disease
- a perpetual foreigner
- Your K-pop idol

I am...

proud to be Korean-American

loving

independent


creative

outspoken

confident

my own person

Fluent in Korean and English



There is so much more to S. Korea than what is portrayed in media. I am far more than the stereotypes that are imposed onto me.

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

M. Song

I am not,

- Sly
- Angry
- Bride
- Bullying
- Humiliation
- Threat
- Verbal Threat

I'm Innon Bangladeshi

Riad

Legal

Caring

Creative

Friendly

Helpful

Generous

Responsible

A TREE IS KNOWN BY ITS FRUIT, A MAN BY HIS DEEDS. A GOOD DEED IS NEVER LOST, HE WHO SOWS COURTESY REAPS FRIENDSHIP, AND HE WHO PLANTS KINDNESS GATHERS LOVE.



I am not...

- Only know how to do math
- A bad driver
- Immigrant
- From China


I am...

From Taiwan

Warm & friendly

From a country

Also American



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

Part V

Art and Photos

11.

The Evolution of a Filipina in America

Liberty Zulita



As a first-generation immigrant here in America, I have noticed how my identity with my culture and nationality has changed drastically; especially in the way I dressed. Growing up, I have always loved fashion. And it was not just any “love”; it was through fashion that I defined myself. Day and night, I would always look at the latest fashion trends, the haute couture shows on YouTube, and would even sometimes raid my mother’s closet and wear the tallest heels she’s had, the dresses, and even the jewelry and walk down the supposed runway I had made in my head which was our

small living room. I loved expressing myself through fashion, and I always made sure to display it. And so back when I was living in the Philippines, despite having to uphold the “good girl” image my conservative family imposes, on Sundays when we would go to church I would always find ways to wear modest clothes in ways I felt were very pleasing to my eyes. And doing that made me feel like I was one step closer to being the fashionista I had always hoped to become someday.

But as I grew up, things had to change which meant I had to change what I’ve centered my life around. Fashion no longer became my goal and I had to act more “practical” according to my family. And so, I had to put it all on the side and focus on more important things to make my parents proud. Yet years later, I am now in America—specifically in New York, to pursue something completely different. In some ways it is ironic to think of how when I was young, I always dreamed of moving to the United States to pursue my fashion career and yet, here I am doing something that does not deal with any of that. But it was also a little blessing in disguise because I realized how despite not being actively a part of the fashion industry in this country, I could still showcase my love for fashion through my clothes. Now I have even more freedom to do so here than I did back when living in the Philippines because here no one is going to reprimand me. No one is going to dictate how I need to dress like when I was back in my hometown.

In my artwork, I was heavily influenced by Hannah Hoch and her collage/photomontage artworks. I was so enamored with how Hoch still showed her artwork despite experiencing criticism from Grosz and Heartfield during the Dada art movement (228). By explicitly choosing to focus on female imagery in her work during the post-war in Germany (229) Hoch actively fought for the rights of women. One of the reasons I decided to use her photomontage technique was because it was also my way of showing to the world how I wanted to dress instead of abiding by the rules of others. Her quote: “there are no limits to the materials available for pictorial collages—above all they can be found in photography, but also in writing and printed matter, even in waste products” (Hoch 1) ultimately led me to use materials that were not photographs at all. I used books, a thrifted top, washi tape, and a cutout of a female croquis to make my collage come to life. This technique was not quite common to me in terms of doing fashion illustrations as I am more used to doing it the traditional pen and paper way. So having to use these materials gave me a challenge as to how I could make this artwork come to life.

And so for this artwork, I wanted to show the transition I had from wearing such modest clothes to wearing just about anything I want. I also wanted to show some parts of who I am through the materials I used. In the right side, you will see that the dress is based off of the traditional Filipiniana dress. But to me, it symbolized the modest mindset of the Filipinos and the people I grew up with. And so, the dress covers almost every part of her body except for the chest up. That was how I was always told to dress myself. You can also see how at the top of her dress, she wears this belt that has “Philippine Culture” in it but cut into two separate words. I intended for this to show how the right side of the dress shows my country’s culture. Another detail on the top of the dress is the word “revolutionary literature”. Those words show my love for literature as well and how books influenced my thoughts and actions. They were my freedom to the world outside of my country. I always loved reading books that were set in different countries, especially the ones that were set here in America.

On the left side of the artwork, the dress was somewhat skimpy; it only covered the trunk of her body while the rest is very bare. It shows my transition from the modest clothing that I had to wear into something that I had always hoped to wear (although not literally skimpy clothes to be exact). By showing how this clothing voids any focus on my country’s culture, also made me realize how I adapted more to western clothing than to my country’s clothing. Hence I chose to have the

word “Philippines” on the left side as her belt because I still wanted people to know that I was not born in this country. I am an immigrant in all of its glory and I still wanted to show that to everyone who sees me. You will also notice how I have put my country’s national hero’s name and his literary works on the skirt of the dress. Jose Rizal fought for the country’s freedom through these two literary works. It sounds absurd sometimes because so many people died by fighting with their swords, and yet the person who only used a pen was awarded as the national hero. But it also shows the power of the phrase “a pen is mightier than a sword”. You can also notice how in the skirt, there are words circled with orange marker: “missing things” and “tarnished reputation”. These words define how I still feel like something inside of me is missing, and how I have a tarnished reputation because of my past endeavors. Lastly, going back to the right side of the artwork, you’ll see a quote that says:

“Those who went away never escaped from themselves; those who stayed at home never found themselves.” This was written by a Filipino writer by the name of Carlos Bulosan. He wrote about his life here in America. I loved this quote dearly because that was also how I felt back when I was staying in the Philippines and how I feel now while living here in America.

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12.

My Self Portrait

Ashley Nicole Funesto





This artwork represents me. The rose in the center represents myself and all the pieces in the artwork represent my experiences in life and this could represent that I would never be complete without any pieces of my experiences and the people around me.

I always believe that we all meet for a reason. Even though we would not know what the reason is about. But the people that you've crossed paths with today, the person that you sat with in the subway, the people that made you feel better in your life happens for a reason. They always give us something that we are not aware of. I guess they gave us the time. We shared a moment with them that we often forget. This idea is related to my artwork; There are different lines, colors, and shapes which represent myself. Myself isn't just about me, it's also about the people that I've crossed paths with. There are some huge colors that represent the moments that make me want to slow things down and enjoy the moment that I have with the people around me. There are some small dots that represent the people that I get to share for a small amount of time. Those are the moments that I wasn't aware that could be a part of me as well. There are some dark colors that represent the tough

times that I have. The whole artwork represents me and the people that have spent a moment with me.

The process that I made to do this self portrait is that I looked for papers that have designs and colors that I think would be a great fit to represent myself. Second, I painted the sheet of linoleum that I have created in class. I only painted the middle because I want to have a clearer version of the rose. Next, I tried having some lines in the edges of the paper because I feel like there is something missing. Also, I want to balance the colors. That's why I draw some lines in the edges in the color black to make it balanced. Lastly, I want to have some light and dark in my work. That's why I made some lines and shapes that are filled inside.

Part VI

AAPI Heritage Month

13.

A Short History of Asian/AAPI Heritage Celebration at LaGuardia Community College

Tomonori Nagano

AAPI Heritage Month, or Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month, is an annual celebration of the history, culture, and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States. It is celebrated every May across the U.S.

The AAPI Heritage Month has its roots in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when a group of AAPI activists, scholars, and community leaders sought to raise awareness about their communities' histories and struggles. The group lobbied Congress to recognize the contributions of the AAPI community. In 1977, Congress passed a joint resolution to establish Asian Pacific Heritage Week in early May. The resolution also noted the significant contributions of the AAPI community to the history and culture of the United States.

According to the record at the LaGuardia Library Archive, the first AAPI Heritage Month Celebration at LaGuardia Community College took place in 1991, following a CUNY-wide Asian Heritage Month celebration in 1990. The first celebration was originally called "Asian American Heritage Month," which was later renamed to "AAPI Heritage Month" in 2020 to better represent the diversity of Asian American faculty and students at LaGuardia Community College.

Terry Parker at the Library Media Services took videos of the AAPI Heritage Month in 1992 and 1993. According to these recordings, Kyoko Toyama and Harvard Lim led a faculty-student panel discussion on the diversity of Asian Americans in 1992. In 1993, a similar panel was held, followed by a fashion show of Asian traditional attires, a demonstration of Filipino sword fighting, and an introduction of the Chinese writing system.

Records between 1994 and 2001 as well as 2003, 2005, and 2009 are missing, but a number of long-term faculty and staff recollect that the AAPI Heritage Month continued to be celebrated during that period as well.

In 2002, the Korean Club sponsored an event on Wednesday, May 22, 2002, featuring traditional Korean music, dance, and martial arts. Korean food was sold and the food sale was donated to the surviving family of Alfred Vukosa, a LaGuardia student who died in the World Trade Center tragedy of 9/11, while working on his Coop Internship. "Gagaku Concert," sponsored by the Japanese Club, was also held at Little Theater on Wednesday, June 5, 2002.

The AAPI Heritage Month in 2004 stands out for the representation of elected-officials (or elected-officials-to-be) in the event. In addition to Virginia Fields, Manhattan Borough President, John Liu (future New York City Comptroller and NY State Senator) and Peter Koo (future NY City Councilmember) attended the event. Joyce Moy, Executive Director of Economic Development and future Director of Asian American / Asian Research Institute, chaired the planning committee and Gail Mellow, President of LaGuardia Community College, had a welcome remark. The program consisted of a series of reflections shared by faculty and student leaders of Asian-related clubs.

The 2006 events appeared to explore a new format of the celebration. Instead of a series of individual reflections, the 2006 celebration featured music performance and held the “Asian Rock Festival featuring Johnny Hi-Fi, Voodoo Soul, and Kevin So” on Saturday, May 6, 2006 in collaboration with the Laguardia Performing Arts Center (LPAC). A faculty-led panel on “Who is Asian Anyway? And What Does it Mean in America?” was also organized on Wednesday, May 17, 2006. The panelists included Joyce Moy, Kyoko Toyoma, Julio Chang & Kiman Thai (Students), Suma Kurien & Frank Wang (Faculty), and Reine Sarmiento & Robert Park (Staff). There were welcome remarks by President Gail Mellow.

The theme of the 2007 event was “Honoring Tradition - Taking On the New” and the AAPI Heritage Month continued to work with LPAC to host a month-long film screening event in May 2007. The AAPI cultural day was organized and featured both student and professional performers who demonstrated Asian music, dance, and performances on Wednesday, May 9, 2007. The performances were held at the Cobblestone Stage and this format of cultural celebration still continues today. A few Asian-based small businesses sponsored the cultural celebration and hosted a raffle event with prizes, including one round-trip domestic air ticket and pairs of NY Yankees game tickets. The library archive indicates that there is a recording of the event, but the recording itself is missing. Reine Sarmiento chaired the planning committee.

The format of the 2008 celebration largely followed the previous year. The events consisted of a faculty-led panel discussion (“Asian Americans Leading the Way” on Wednesday, May 7, 2008) and the cultural day at the Cobblestone Stage on Wednesday, May 14, 2008. The 2008 celebration took place in collaboration with the CUNY-wide conference on Asian American Women, which took place on Friday, May 16, 2008.

In 2010, the planning body of the AAPI Heritage Month became formalized and created a working committee. Reine Sarmiento, Assistant Dean of Enrollment Services (and current Interim Vice Chancellor of CUNY for Enrollment Management), and Ann Matsuuchi at Library took on the co-chairship of the Asian Heritage Working Committee. The AAPI Heritage Month events in 2010 included a panel discussion titled “Asian-Americans in Leadership Roles,” a table tennis tournament with Yanjun Gao, a LaGuardia student who was an international table tennis champion, and cultural celebration performances. The theme was “Asian Heritage Throughout the Diaspora: A Celebration of Our Contribution and Culture,” and all events took place on Wednesday, May 12, 2010. Buttons/Pins with a designed logo were created and distributed. Kyoko Toyama hosted a peace talk event with two Hibakusha (A-bomb survivors) on Wednesday, May 5, 2010. A recording of the events by Girard Tecson is available on his YouTube channel (<https://youtu.be/hJy5VVZpr6I>).

In 2011, a series of educational and cultural programs were organized on different topics including career (exploring Asian Americans in a variety of health careers), community (promoting civic engagement and cultural diversity), culture (encouraging the exploration of Asian culture via film, poetry, music and literature), and philosophy (understanding cross-generational gaps in identities

and cultural expectations among 1st, 1.5 and 2nd generation Asian immigrant families). A recording of the events by Girard Tecson is available on his YouTube channel. A special charity auction event was also scheduled in 2011 to support the victims of the March 11 earthquake and tsunami in Japan. The festival was preceded by the charity art auction for Japan, in which as many as 85 art works were contributed from the students and faculty of LaGuardia, local artists in New York, and some from overseas.

The 2012 AAPI Heritage Month was a month-long celebration from April to May of 2012 with a series of workshops and film screenings. The topics of these workshops/film screening included Vincent Chin, the Grace Lee Project, Asian art, Asian philosophy, and academic success among AAPI students at LaGuardia. The Ambassador of Japan came to LaGuardia to commemorate the 100th year anniversary of the gift of cherry trees from Japan to the U.S. and planted two cherry trees on campus. The main celebration took place on Wednesday, May 9, 2012. NY1 featured the celebration this year (<https://youtu.be/nIr37Lh9uUs>).

The AAPI Celebration in 2013 took place on Wednesday, May 8, 2013, featuring a welcome remark by NY Comptroller John Liu. A series of art events such as a conversation with Sin-ying Ho, who was featured in “Routes,” a 12-episode TV documentary series on the spiritual odyssey of 12 well-established Chinese American visual artists, and ceramic workshop by Sin-Ying took place as well.

The AAPI Celebration in 2014 was again a series of performances/panels from April to May 2014, including The New York Chinese Chorus on Tuesday, April 29, “Comics Studies Seminar: Alternative Manga Panel” on Tuesday, May 6, Monster Movie Panel (with Queens Poet Laureate Paolo Javier, Prof. Sigmund Shen, and independent film historian Karl Joseph Ufert) on Wednesday, May 7, and a panel discussion on social justice in Asia with panelists from Amnesty International on Tuesday, May 13, 2014. The main cultural celebration took place on Wednesday, May 7, 2014, with an opening remark by NY Comptroller John Liu. Two cherry tree saplings were donated to LaGuardia by the Japanese Consulate-General, which are still found in the courtyard. The college photographer started to take photos of the AAPI Celebration and posted them on the college’s Flickr site from this year.

The 2015 AAPI Celebration, chaired by Sandy Mao, probably had the largest number of workshops, each of which was organized by individual faculty members. The workshop included “Fresh Off the Boat Viewing Party & Panel Talk-back” (Ann Matsuuchi), “Indian Dance Lesson and History” (Payal Doctor), “Testimony of Hibakusha Wartime Survivors” (Kyoko Toyama), “Food and Japanese Popular Culture Presentation” (Robin Kietlinski), “Author Talk with Brandy Lien Worrall-Soriano on writing and survival” (Leah Richards), “Disasters and Japanese Popular Culture Panel” (Robin Kietlinski), “Taiko Drumming Workshop” (Kyoko Toyama), “Japanese Butoh Dance” (George Tsouris), and “STEM Career Panel for Asian and other Minority Students” (Shenglan Yuan). These workshops were held from March to May 2015. The main celebration took place on Wednesday, May 27, 2015 with an opening remark by Queens Borough President Melinda Katz. The New York Chinese Chorus performed again on Wednesday, May 20, 2015. SinoVision, a Chinese-language local news, featured the celebration (<https://youtu.be/3s0r9zRaBkc>).

The 2016 followed the same format as the previous year and organized a series of workshops from March to May in 2016. The workshops included “Myanmar Culture Workshop”, “Japanese Culture Presentation: Etegami”, “Kung Fu Workshop and Performance”, “Taiko Performances with Tamagawa University”, “Land of the Rising Sound: Bluegrass Music in Postwar Japan”, “Alternative

Sexualities in Manga”, “Film Screening: Asian American Mathematician”, “Screening of Tested (documentary) with Curtis Chin” and “Short Films by First Time Indian Women Directors.” The main celebration took place on May 25, 2016

Following the past few years’ format, a series of workshops from March to May in 2017. The workshops included “Asian Americans in Western Classical Music”, “‘Freedom isn’t Free’ by Kaoru Ikeda: the Japanese American experience in internment camps”, “Film screening: Slaying the Dragon Reloaded (2011)”, “STEM panel: Asian STEM Professionals”, “Is Buddhism a Religion? Student presentations on the Rubin Museum”, “Implementing Critical Asian American Studies across Disciplines”, “Kung Fu and Qi Gong performance in Shaolin tradition” and “Film screening of Brett Kodama’s One-Two-One-Seven: An Internment Story.” The main celebration took place on Wednesday, May 24, 2017 with opening remarks by President Gail Mellow and Joyce Moy.

In 2018, the AAPI planning committee made a decision to host all workshops on one single day and organized a mini-conference rather than a series of month-long workshops. The workshops were organized on Friday, May 11, 2018, followed by the main cultural celebration on Wednesday, May 16, 2018, which was held in E-Atrium due to rain.

In 2019, the AAPI mini-conference took place on Thursday, May 9, 2019 and the AAPI cultural celebration was held on Wednesday, May 15, 2019. The mini-conference hosted a guest speaker from Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM), who discussed immigrant justice for new Asian immigrants. The cultural performances included Afifa Hye’s Bangladeshi Traditional Dance, AKF Dance Studio: Chinese & Korean Hip-hop Dance, Japanese calligraphy performance by Koka, Indian Dance Performance by Anja Dance Company, Kung Fu and Tai Chi Performance, Saree to the New World, and several student performances (K-pop dance etc). The first issue of Asian American Voices, highlighting the talent and experiences of LaGuardia’s Asian and Asian American students, staff, and faculty was launched.

The AAPI Celebration in 2020 was scheduled on Thursday, May 7th, 2020 (mini-conference) and Wednesday, May 13, 2020 (cultural celebration), but both events were canceled due to COVID-19.

The AAPI Celebration in 2021 resumed online and focused on the anti-Asian hate and violence that became the central issue among the Asian American students, faculty, and staff during the pandemic. In collaboration with the Asian American Federation (AAF), the AAPI committee hosted several workshops on anti-Asian violence in May 2021. Carmelyn Malalis, Commissioner of NYC Commission on Human Rights, was the keynote speaker for the virtual mini-conference on Thursday, May 6, 2021. Other workshops included “I am not a Virus,” a virtual workshop by the Museum of Chinese American, and the COVID-19 Asian American Oral History Project.

The most recent AAPI Celebration took place in a mixed format of in-person and online in the first week of May of 2022. The mini-conference took place from Tuesday, May 3, 2022 to Thursday, May 5, 2022. The cultural celebration took place on Wednesday, May 25, 2022. Council Member Julie Won was the keynote speaker.





AAPI/Asian American Heritage Celebration

Wednesday, May 12, 2010



AAPI/Asian American Heritage Celebration

Wednesday, May 11, 2011



AAPI/Asian American Heritage Celebration

Wednesday, May 9, 2012



AAPI/Asian American Heritage Celebration

Wednesday, May 7, 2014



AAPI/Asian American Heritage Celebration

Wednesday, May 27, 2015



AAPI/Asian American Heritage Celebration

Wednesday, May 25, 2016



AAPI/Asian American Heritage Celebration

Wednesday, May 24, 2017



AAPI/Asian American Heritage Celebration

Wednesday, May 16, 2018



AAPI/Asian American Heritage Celebration

Wednesday, May 15, 2019



**AAPI/Asian
American Heritage
Celebration**

Thursday, May 7, 2020 (canceled)

AAPI/Asian American Heritage Celebration

Wednesday, May 25, 2022



14.

A Collection of Poetry on AAPI Experiences by Anonymous Poets*Anonymous Poets*

We asked eleven renowned poets to write poetry about Asian Americans anonymously. Enjoy the poetry. The authors' identities will be revealed at the end of this document.

Anonymous S

Oh, wondrous tale of Asian grace,
Whose noble roots doth cross the seas,
Their storied pasts in every place,
Enriching lands with bounteous ease.

From East to West, their tales abound,
Of struggles and of triumphs too,
Their talents, sought and oft renowned,
In every field they venture through.

In streets of gold and sweat alike,
They toil and strive with steadfast pride,
Their hearts alight, their spirits bright,
Their goals and dreams a constant guide.

From humble homes to lofty heights,
They climb the rungs of life's great stage,
Their stories told in hues and lights,
A vibrant tapestry, age to age.

So let us lift our voices high,
And sing the praise of Asian might,
Their deeds and virtues we decry,
In sonnets fair, in verses bright.

For they, like my heroes bold,
Do grace our world with beauty true,
Their tales of wonder, yet untold,
Await the bard's fine pen anew.

Anonymous MA

We are a people with a rich history,
Of strength and resilience in the face of adversity.
From the rice fields of Vietnam to the streets of New York,
We've overcome obstacles that many would balk.

We are the immigrants who came seeking a better life,
Leaving behind our homes and all our strife.
We are the descendants of those who toiled in the fields,
Building this great nation with sweat and yields.

We are the doctors, lawyers, and engineers,
The artists, activists, and pioneers.
We are the dreamers who see beyond what is,
And the doers who make the impossible, possible with ease.

Our cultures may differ, but our hearts beat as one,
In pursuit of justice and a brighter sun.
We honor our past and the sacrifices made,
And pave the way for future generations to pave.

So let us rise up and raise our voices high,
And claim our place in this great American pie.
For we are the Asian Americans, proud and strong,
And our story will forever live on.

Anonymous RF

In fields of golden wheat and rice,
We find a people strong and wise,
Whose histories are deep and long,
Whose cultures rich and steeped in song.

Their journeys far, their paths diverse,
From shores of China to the verse,
Of poetry in Japan,
Their stories woven through the land.

Through trials and tribulations faced,
Their fortitude and grace embraced,
With every step they took in stride,
A steadfast heart, a dignified pride.

And though their roots may span afar,
Their hopes and dreams shine like a star,
Guiding them through paths unknown,
A strength and spirit all their own.

So let us honor these souls true,
And all they bring to life anew,
Their heritage, a priceless art,
Their spirit, etched in every heart.

For they, like my paths in the wood,
Are full of promise and all good,
Their footprints etched in history,
A living legacy for all to see.

Anonymous ED

In the quiet of the morning light,
A people's spirit takes to flight,
A soulful journey, deep and true,
With hope and promise shining through.

They tread the earth with careful grace,
Their hearts aglow, their steps in pace,
Their stories etched in every hue,
A tapestry of life anew.

Their cultures steeped in ancient lore,
Their wisdom deep, their spirits soar,
With every breath, they seek to find,
The beauty in the daily grind.

And though they may be few in sight,
Their presence shines like stars at night,
A constellation bright and fair,
A people's spirit, pure and rare.

So let us honor them with grace,
And all they bring to this great space,
Their voices ringing clear and true,
A living ode to me and you.

For they, like my verse sublime,
Bring light and hope in darkest times,
Their spirits soaring like a dove,
A testament to hope and love.

Anonymous JK

Oh, sweet and noble Asian soul,
Whose beauty shines like fire and gold,
Whose hearts are filled with passions bold,
And stories yet to be told.

From lands of jade and emerald green,
To urban streets and mountain streams,
Their cultures rich, their spirits keen,
A tapestry of life and dreams.

They wander through the world with grace,
With minds attuned to nature's pace,
And hearts that beat with timeless grace,
A people's spirit to embrace.

Through trials and triumphs they have come,
Their journeys vast, their tales to sum,
With every breath, a song unsung,
A promise of a brighter dawn.

So let us honor them with praise,
And all they bring to life's great stage,
Their spirits strong, their hearts ablaze,
A living ode to time and age.

For they, like my romantic soul,
Bring beauty to the world as whole,
Their spirits soaring like a dove,
A testament to hope and love.

Anonymous SP

In shadows deep and corners dim,
A people's spirit doth begin,
A journey fraught with pain and sin,
Their tales unraveling from within.

From tales of war to tales of peace,
Their lives a cycle that won't cease,
With every breath, a bittersweet release,
And every hope a whispered plea.

Through darkness deep and fears untold,
Their spirits soar, their hearts unfold,
With every step, a tale to be retold,
And every thought a story bold.

So let us hear their voices true,
And all they bring to life anew,
Their spirits strong, their hearts askew,
A testament to trials they've been through.

For they, like my confessional art,
Bear witness to the pain in heart,
Their spirits soaring like a dove,
A testament to hope and love.

In shadows deep and corners dim,
A people's spirit doth begin,
A journey fraught with pain and sin,
Their tales unraveling from within.

Anonymous WW

Amidst the green and rolling hills,
A people's spirit sings and thrills,
With every breath, their hearts fulfill,
A deep connection to the land and rills.

From mountains high to valleys low,
Their spirits soar, their wisdoms flow,
With every step, their stories grow,
A living ode to nature's glow.

Their cultures steeped in ancient lore,
Their souls attuned to nature's roar,
With every breath, a new explore,
A tapestry of life, rich and pure.

And though their journey may be long,
Their spirits strong, their hearts a song,
With every hope, a world made strong,
A people's spirit, pure and young.

So let us honor them with grace,
And all they bring to life's great place,
Their spirits strong, their hearts ablaze,
A living ode to time and age.

For they, like my nature's verse,
Bring beauty to the world as terse,
Their spirits soaring like a dove,
A testament to hope and love.

Anonymous EAP

Amidst the shadows, deep and dark,
A people's spirit leaves its mark,
Their tales of horror, fear, and stark,
A testament to a soul's embark.

Through trials and tribulations faced,
Their spirits strong, their hearts embraced,
With every step, a tale to be traced,
A journey to a darker place.

From haunted halls to eerie nights,
Their stories twist and turn in fright,
With every breath, a soul takes flight,
And every hope a chilling sight.

And though their tales may cause a shiver,
Their spirits strong, their souls a giver,
With every thought, a tale to deliver,
A people's spirit, pure and quiver.

So let us honor them with care,
And all they bring to life's despair,
Their spirits strong, their hearts a dare,
A living ode to a soul's nightmare.

For they, like my darkened verse,
Bring beauty to the world's hearse,
Their spirits soaring like a dove,
A testament to hope and love.

Anonymous H

In ancient times of myth and lore,
A people's spirit did explore,
Their journeys great, their stories more,
A tapestry of life to adore.

From distant lands of sun and sea,
Their spirits strong, their hearts set free,
With every step, a new decree,
A journey to a destiny.

Through battles fierce and tales untold,
Their spirits soared, their tales unfold,
With every breath, a story bold,
A testament to a heart's stronghold.

And though their tales may be of old,
Their spirits strong, their tales retold,
With every thought, a story sold,
A people's spirit, brave and bold.

So let us honor them with pride,
And all they bring to life's great stride,
Their spirits strong, their hearts abide,
A living ode to a hero's ride.

For they, like my epic verse,
Bring beauty to the world's diverse,
Their spirits soaring like a dove,
A testament to hope and love.

Anonymous WB

Oh, visionary Asian soul,
Whose spirit soars beyond control,
Whose heart beats with a fervent goal,
To find the truth, to make it whole.

From ancient lands to modern times,
Their spirits seek what lies behind,
With every breath, a vision find,
A journey to the divine.

Through trials and tribulations faced,
Their spirits strong, their hearts embraced,
With every step, a dream retraced,
A path to a higher place.

And though their visions may seem strange,
Their spirits strong, their thoughts arranged,
With every hope, a new exchange,
A people's spirit, brave and changed.

So let us honor them with awe,
And all they bring to life's great law,
Their spirits strong, their hearts withdraw,
A living ode to a spirit raw.

For they, like my prophetic verse,
Bring beauty to the world's reverse,
Their spirits soaring like a dove,
A testament to hope and love.

Anonymous JM

Amidst the pages of time's great book,
A people's spirit did overlook,
Their journeys great, their wisdoms shook,
A tapestry of life's great hook.

From ancient lands to foreign shores,
Their spirits strong, their hearts adores,
With every step, a story pours,
A journey to a greater force.

Through struggles faced and battles fought,
Their spirits rose, their wisdom sought,
With every breath, a vision wrought,
A testament to a soul's support.

And though their tales may be complex,
Their spirits strong, their hearts annex,
With every thought, a tale reflex,
A people's spirit, pure and vexed.

So let us honor them with pride,
And all they bring to life's great stride,
Their spirits strong, their hearts abide,
A living ode to a hero's ride.

For they, like my epic verse,
Bring beauty to the world's converse,
Their spirits soaring like a dove,
A testament to hope and love.

- Anonymous S:** Asked ChatGPT to “write a poem about Asian Americans like Shakespeare.”
- Anonymous MA:** Asked ChatGPT to “write a poem about Asian Americans like Maya Angelou.”
- Anonymous RF:** Asked ChatGPT to “write a poem about Asian Americans like Robert Frost.”
- Anonymous ED:** Asked ChatGPT to “write a poem about Asian Americans like Emily Dickinson.”
- Anonymous JK:** Asked ChatGPT to “write a poem about Asian Americans like John Keats.”
- Anonymous SP:** Asked ChatGPT to “write a poem about Asian Americans like Sylvia Plath.”
- Anonymous WW:** Asked ChatGPT to “write a poem about Asian Americans like William Wordsworth.”
- Anonymous EAP:** Asked ChatGPT to “write a poem about Asian Americans like Edgar Allan Poe.”
- Anonymous H:** Asked ChatGPT to “write a poem about Asian Americans like Homer.”
- Anonymous WB:** Asked ChatGPT to “write a poem about Asian Americans like William Blake.”
- Anonymous JM:** Asked ChatGPT to “write a poem about Asian Americans like John Milton.”

Part VII

Authors

15.

Authors' Bios

Anisha Alom: Anisha Alom is a student at International High School at LaGuardia Community College. She was born and raised in Bangladesh before immigrating to the U.S. in 2015. When she goes to college, she wants to major in humanities. She is bilingual and can communicate in Bangla, Hindi, Urdu, and English. Anisha is a lifelong learner and adventurer. Her ambition is to help individuals in defending their rights.

Anuska Khadgi: Anuska Khadgi is a recent immigrant from Nepal who has chosen the U.S. as her study destination. Currently pursuing a degree in Business Administration at LaGuardia, Anuska is an extrovert that thrives on exploring new places, trying different cuisines, and meeting new people. As an international student, leaving behind everything to embark on a new life in the U.S. is undoubtedly challenging. However, we all encounter life's frustrations, and she firmly believes that, with self-confidence and faith in ourselves, she will always discover a way forward.

Aourmi Ahmed: Aourmi Ahmed, originally from Bangladesh, is currently majoring in computer technology at LaGuardia Community College. Her hobbies include reading and being passionate about women in STEM, particularly coding. In terms of her career interests, Aourmi enjoys dismantling and reassembling things within the technology field. She currently resides in Brooklyn. She is a first generation Bengali-American, whose parents migrated from Bangladesh for a better life. Her goal is to obtain an Associates degree in Applied Science and to transfer to CCNY. She is planning to graduate from LaGuardia in 2024.

Ashley Nicole Funesto: Ashley Nicole Funesto is a student at LaGuardia Community College, majoring in Psychology. She moved to the United States from the Philippines in 2019. Ashley is a part of Phi Theta Kappa. She loves listening to music and podcasts.

David Garate: David Garate is a student at LaGuardia Community College, majoring in English to further his love and passion for literature. He seeks to eventually earn a Ph.D. and become a professor and teacher of literature himself.

Janelis Germosen: Janelis Germosen (They/Them) is a student at LaGuardia Community College majoring in Japanese. Born and raised in NYC, they enjoy playing video games, designing and illustrating for their brand EwwGerms on Instagram. They want to travel and share their art with the world.

Kalsang Nyima: Kalsang Nyima is a student at LaGuardia Community College, majoring in Nursing. He is a Tibetan, born and raised in India. His family had been living in a refugee settlement in India since the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1959, until he immigrated to the U.S. He chose Nursing because it provides an opportunity to take care of people in need. It provides an opportunity to take care of people in need. Also, he chose to be a LaGuardian because it is one of the most reputed colleges in the city where he believes besides teaching students about the professional courses, the college also teaches them to connect their knowledge to the different world events through initiatives, and therefore helps to bring a new meaning to education received. His meaning of Life is about living and being happy. He is a passionate traveler who enjoys exploring the world and photography as his hobby.

Liberty Zulita: Liberty Zulita is a student in LaGuardia Community College studying for the Nursing Program. She was born and raised in the Philippines and is now currently living in Queens, New York. Though she's studying in the medical field, she still loves to pursue her love for fashion and arts.

Mingyo Song: Mingyo Song is a first-year Early Childhood Education major at LaGuardia Community College. Additionally, she is a part of the Honors Program and Phi Theta Kappa. A first-generation Korean-American, she immigrated to the United States from South Korea in 2009; before moving to New York in January 2022, Mingyo lived in the Bay Area. Her hobbies include singing, drawing, and museum hopping.

Thaw Lin Aye: Thaw Lin Aye was born and raised in Myanmar (Burma) and he is currently studying Liberal Arts Maths and Science at LaGuardia Community College. He is interested in creative writing, wrote poems and short novels in Burmese, his native language. He also loves reading and watching movies in his free time.

