

# ASIAN AMERICAN FEMINIST COLLECTIVE

SOLIDARITY, POLITICIZING, TALKING BACK



**VOLUME 2**

HOW TO MAKE  
HISTORY.

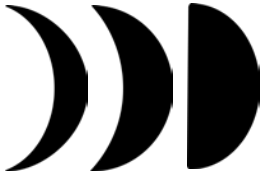
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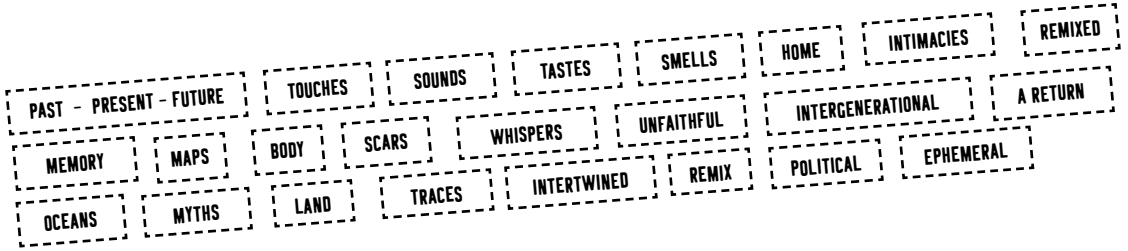
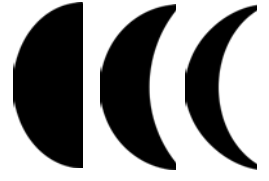
## COVER ART BY ANGEL TRAZO

Angel Trazo is an artist and Asian American studies Master's student at UCLA. Her art centers diverse stories in forms such as visual note-taking — a method of combining illustrations with quotations of an event/talk/etc into a graphic summary as a way of preserving and transporting important conversations about community — as well as illustrations, children's books, and comics. She self-published her first children's book, *We Are Inspiring: The Stories of 32 Asian American Women*, in 2019.

**Featured on cover, clockwise:** Yuri Kochiyama, Kimiko-Matsuda Lawrence, Kim Coco Iwamoto, Grace Lee Boggs, Virginia Yu, Protestor at 1991 Broadway Opening Night Picket of Miss Saigon (Based on image by Corky Lee), Haunani Kay-Trask; Center: Lia Shigemura and Helen Zia



# WE BRING OUR HISTORIES TO FEMINISM



## THE ARCHIVE // SALONEE BHAMAN

There's something powerful about the promise of an archival repository: they hold within them stories, secrets, and clues about the past that all seem to be waiting to be put together and made recognizable. Inside each dusty box or slide of microfilm is a snippet that someone, somewhere, felt that the future must know about. Someone made a choice to preserve these objects, and to tell these stories. Rifling through these carefully preserved artifacts of the past can create a sense of urgency for a historian: what are we supposed to learn from these documents? Why did someone save them? This can be the trap of the archive as well: who decides what documents are saved? Which characters get to play the starring role in history? Who counts?

Too often, archives are resigned to the hallowed repositories of universities and municipalities. Those who can access them must read between the lines, interpreting within gaps and silences and implications, in order to find the working people who make a city run, the women and caregivers who nurtured movements and people, and the stories of diaspora, migration, and displacement that lack tangible form.

Luckily, these stories can be found. Often, these stories are in our homes, tucked away in a photo album, or in the minds of someone we love or respect or know, waiting to be coaxed out and committed to paper and tape-- stories waiting to be treated with the reverence of History. Oral histories, familial objects, and community learning are at the core of feminist historical practice.

# WE MAKE HISTORIES.

When I brought up my khanom jeen dreams up with Thai friends in NYC, they just looked at my wide-eyed and pointed out, that

It's hard for even chefs in restaurants to make from scratch.

Even my Khun Ya buys the noodles from street stalls and makes the broth herself.

Still, I was stubborn.

I would find a way, even if they did not turn out exactly right, I wanted to try

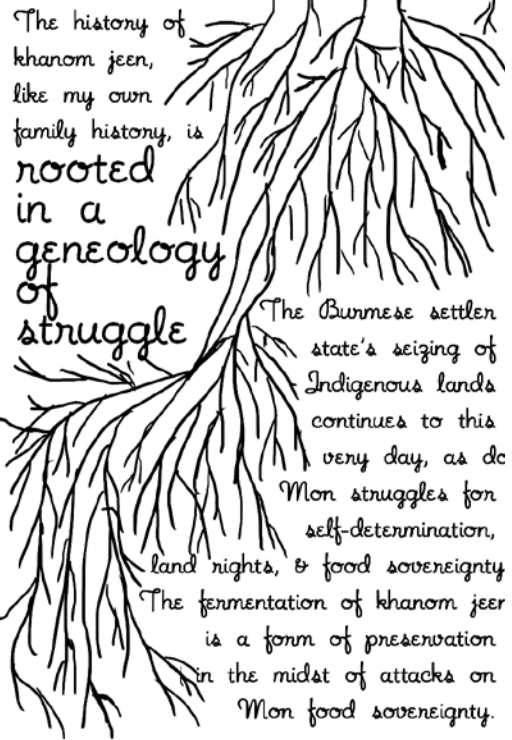
My attempt to make Khanom

Jeen is my attempt to connect with the Mon heritage and history that's been stolen in displacement from settler colonialism & genocide.

The history of khanom jeen, like my own family history, is rooted in a genealogy of struggle

The Burmese settler state's seizing of Indigenous lands continues to this very day, as do Mon struggles for self-determination, land rights, & food sovereignty

The fermentation of khanom jeer is a form of preservation in the midst of attacks on Mon food sovereignty.



Khanom jeen is intertwined with Mon ways of life. Traditionally, khanom jeen would usually be made & served at religious festivals which often took place at a temple.

It would be a large-scale production requiring hours of hard labor by community members who brought in the highest quality ingredients they had selected from their rice & fish harvests. The dish would then be enjoyed by everyone who had pitched in - it was a party food!

## UNRAVELLING KHANOM JEEN, BY AREE WORAWONGWASU (EXCERPT)



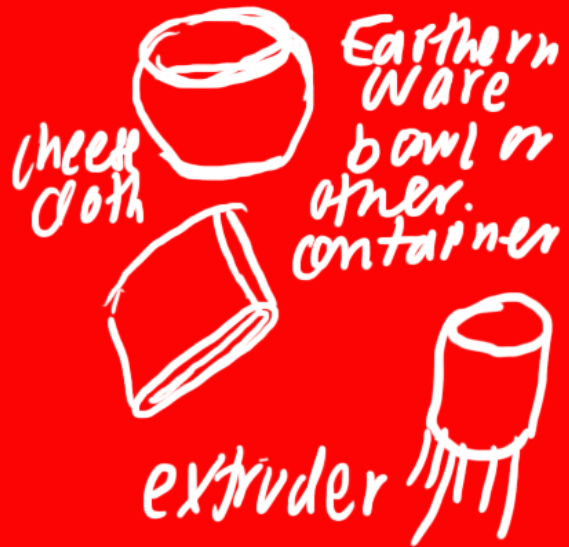
# Anoo's Homemade Khanom Jeon Recipe

or, a daughter of the Mon diaspora attempts to reconnect with her heritage while displaced on stolen Lenape land

## Ingredients

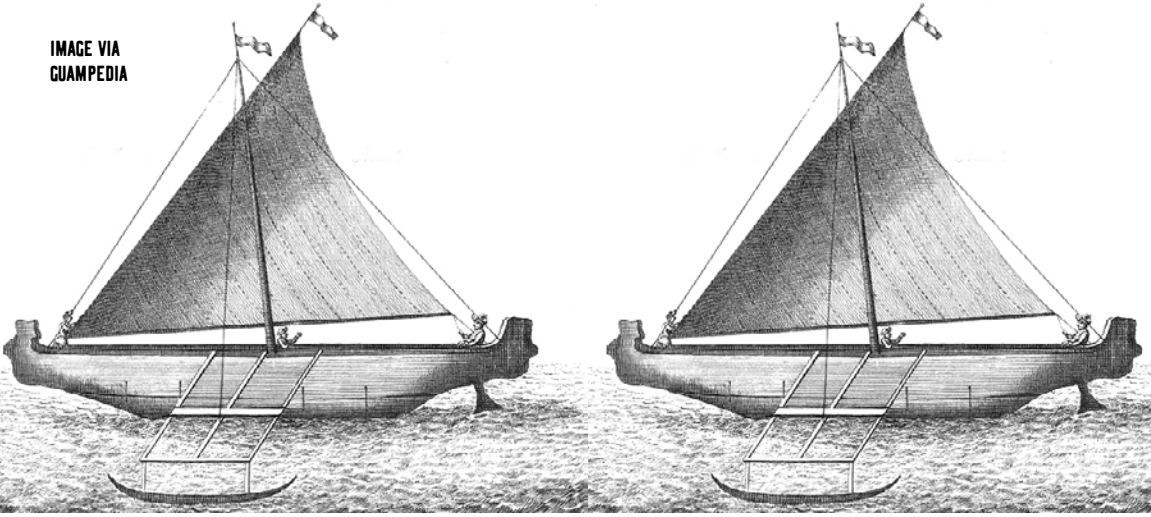


## Utensils



1. Place the rice grains in the bowl & soak in clean water. Seal with banana leaves, and secure it with a heavy lid.
2. Let the rice grains ferment for three days. Change the water daily to prevent a sour odor. Mix the rice grains thoroughly to assure an even fermentation.
3. After two days, the rice grains should be soft. Wash them thoroughly and replace the first fermentation waters with salt brine. Leave the rice undisturbed to continue the fermentation.
4. Grind the rice grains with a pestle. Add water as needed.
5. Let the starch mixture rest overnight so that it can settle.

IMAGE VIA  
GUAMPEDIA



## THE SAKMAN, A GUAMANIAN OUTRIGGER CANOE

BY AANCHAL SARAF

Prior to the 17th century Spanish colonization of Guam, the sakman was known as the “fastest sailing [vessel] in the world.”[1] Spanish colonists “destroyed the sakman and forbade chamorros to sail the ocean,”[2] and by the middle of the 19th century, the knowledge of how to build and sail sakman was lost.

In 2008, for the first time in centuries, the sakman set sail in Guam. Using drawings made by a colonist, a group of Chamorros had rebuilt the boat, named *saina*, and learned to steer it from a skilled teacher in Micronesia.

The sakman was reconstructed from traces of historical documentation, a state of precarity that echoes the turbulence of our ecological present. Until very recently, *saina* was the only sakman sailing on the ocean. She embodies loss in the present. Seemingly lost in the violence of colonial encounter, vessels like the sakman, the Hawaiian Hōkūle’a, and Filipinx balangay have reemerged, buoying along the surface of waterways settler nations have tried to claim as their own. Often constructed from settler anthropological observances, these vessels are nonetheless a protest in material form.

The rigid boundary between nature and culture has been rigorously policed by the very powers that rendered the sakman a nearly-forgotten technology. The sakman pushes us to think about the conceptual moment of its resurgence as the thread of possibility that survived Spanish colonization, American colonialism, Japanese occupation during World War II, and the current American militarization and infrastructural buildup of Guam. ■

[1] Perez, Craig Santos (2010) from unincorporated territory [*saina*]. Omidawn: 14.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., 15.

**"IT IS POWER TO KNOW YOUR OWN HISTORY. WHEN I DO MY WORK NOW, I UNDERSTAND THAT I TAKE THAT HISTORY WITH ME IN WHATEVER WAYS THAT I KNOW, TO TAKE THAT AND CLAIM THAT AND KNOW THAT—THAT IS POWERFUL...I KNOW THAT YOU ARE BUILDING ON WHAT CAME BEFORE YOU. THAT IT MAKES YOU SMARTER AND MAKES YOU THAT MUCH MORE POWERFUL TO THEN CARRY FORWARD IN THE WAYS THAT YOUR GENERATION, AND GENERATIONS THAT ARE COMING AFTER YOU, CAN REALLY HOLD." -PATRICIA ENG**

## **“ ORAL HISTORY WITH PATRICIA ENG**

**INTERVIEWED BY VIVIAN TRUONG - OCTOBER 2017**

*In 1982, Patricia Eng founded the New York Asian Women's Center (now Womankind), the first organization on the East Coast to address violence against Asian immigrant women.*

I asked one of the women doing a community assessment, 'So domestic violence is when your husband is abusing you. How come you never told anybody?' And she goes, 'Well, because no one ever asked.' That was the beginning.

The Center was the first organization of its kind on the East Coast that was working with battered immigrant women, and to name [and] claim that was so important. But it was [also] about having this home for women, a political home to name our own experiences and identity. That political awakening was itself the essence of the Center...By building community among those who are all left out—that's the strongest coalition you can build. I know what it feels like. That's where, for me, it starts. It doesn't start with the analysis, it starts with the gut feeling.

We found that so many women were eager to have this conversation... This was the space that women were saying, 'I want to talk about issues about being an Asian woman and there's no place to do that.' It was a place where women were finding to be a home to help other women. People had different kinds of analysis or needs, but the connecting point was having a common experience of building community. Along the way, women were becoming more politicized through that experience. The Center was the first training ground for women to voice their own experiences as Asian American women [which] was what was so compelling about the Center and brought so many folks early on.

We haven't ended domestic violence in the community nor in the country, but has it shifted our culture...You still see the same issues playing over and over again. But the outrage, the tools, and the responses are different. [It's] still not perfect, but they're there." ■



TENANT ORGANIZING PAMPHLET PRODUCED COLLECTIVELY BY THE CHINESE PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION, METROPOLITAN COUNCIL ON HOUSING, AND MOBILIZATION FOR YOUTH LEGAL SERVICES IN NEW YORK CITY'S CHINATOWN (1975-1980) // SOURCE: ROCKY CHIN PAPERS, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES (WAG.325).



# FAMILY HISTORIES OF DISPLACEMENT

REFLECTIONS ON TRACING  
TRANSNATIONAL HISTORIES

BY DIANE WONG



As a social scientist, I am conscious of how we are trained to extract from archives and never to preserve, grow, or build our own. I am grateful for my training in Asian American Studies because it taught me that archives can also include our own family history albums. I spent this past summer in Shanghai trying to draw deeper connections between my academic writings on displacement to my own family histories with movement. How do we begin to record these moments from our past that unknowingly inform our current commitments? As I was conducting oral histories with my remaining family members in Shanghai, I was handed an envelope full of contents: family photos, letters, housing deeds, stamps, and other things I thought were forever lost during the cultural revolution or from demolition.

I know now that my academic work starts in Shanghai and begins with my grandma, who lived in a longtang called 四明里, which used to border Huaihai and Chong Qing Roads. As she and her neighbors were slowly displaced over the span of eight years to make way for a six-lane expressway, so were family timelines and personal items, photographs, memories, intimacies, and things in need of preservation. Before I left, I visited where her longtang was supposed to be located before demolition. Most of the area has changed but some things remain the same. Like the elderly women selling jasmine flower bundles on the expressway bypass and the sweets shop where many of my grandma's patients worked for decades.

I am still not sure how else to begin to write about this place where I feel connected to and distant from at the same time. But the contents inside the envelope has allowed me to piece together what it was like to live in my grandmas longtang, the family photos fill in details that oral histories can no longer capture. As I learn how to incorporate displaced family archives into my own research practice, I wonder how we can use archives to not only record the past but to imagine new futures that intersect timelines, overlap past lives, and create moments you wanted to share with someone or a place but never had a chance to until now. ■



# DREAMING DIASPORAS IN CHINATOWNS AROUND THE GLOBE

DIANE WONG INTERVIEWED BY MINJU BAE

REPUBLISHED EXCERPTS FROM THE GOTHAM CENTER FOR NEW YORK CITY HISTORY

"The intimacies of home shape our political lives. I grew up in Flushing which is not far from New York's Chinatown. The more time I spent in Chinatown over the years as an organizer and cultural worker, the more often I found myself asking: What are the political consequences of perpetual uprootedness? What can encounters with displacement tell us about the political possibilities inherent within immigrant communities?"

Displacement is a common theme in the lives of immigrants in this country — most immigrants and refugee families know what it's like to be uprooted from a home over and over again. There are over one hundred new galleries and dozens of new upscale bars, restaurants, and streetwear boutiques that are occupying spaces in New York's Chinatown that once housed families, immigrant-run businesses, and garment factories. The places you grow to love can disappear overnight.

There is a rich history of women-led resistance and political agency in these neighborhoods. The activism we see in Manhattan's Chinatown today [is] in a much longer lineage and history of women-led cultural production through Asian American collectives like the Basement Workshop and Godzilla: Asian American Art Network. My current project captures how immigrant women and youth in Chinatown are active in the making of urban space and urban politics. Ordinary shop spaces like Wing On Wo & Co. can serve as a catalyst for intergenerational organizing and particularly for the mobilization of women. Actively listening to what women talk about on a daily basis offers tremendous insight on the ways in which political values, ideologies, and practices are formed or negotiated over time." ■



# SAKHI HISTORY



**"SAKHI" MEANS  
"WOMAN-FRIEND"  
IN MANY SOUTH  
ASIAN LANGUAGES.**

Sakhi for South Asian Women was founded in 1989 by Anannya Bhattacharjee, Mallika Dutt, Tula Goenka, Geetanjali Misra, and Romita Shetty. Sakhi was the first South Asian Women's Organization (SAWO) in New York City-- in the 1980s, NYC had many religious and cultural centers, professional associations, and national-specific groups serving various demographics of South Asians, but none existed to help South Asian women specifically. The founders of Sakhi recognized the great need for services of support to immigrant survivors of gender-based and domestic violence. Sakhi has and continues to support South Asian women survivors by connecting them to needed resources and creating a community space.

Notably, Sakhi located domestic violence as a political and social justice issue, and not a personal or "family" issue to be kept in the shadows. For many women, being part of Sakhi's community allowed them to discuss their experiences navigating identity, sexism, classism, and violence in the context of their lives as South Asians for the first time. They also called upon men to be allies in the work against gender-based violence, understanding that it takes all of us to change behaviors and shape futures based in values of gender equity.

Sakhi and other organizations like it were important in that they offered an alternative to white feminist spaces for women of color and immigrant women, as well as offering what was missing in their own cultural communities - a space for women whose experiences did not align with their communities' idealization of womanhood. This history illuminates the falsity of the idea that the feminist movement in the United States was created for and by white women. The creation of the feminist movement was and continues to be a multiracial and multicultural enterprise. It is imperative that we do not erase the contributions, interventions, and innovations of immigrant women from our understandings of feminist history. ■

Sakhi's work continues today,  
You can learn more at [www.sakhi.org](http://www.sakhi.org)

**SENTI SOJWAL**



## FOUNDED IN 1979–1981,

## THE UNBOUND FEET COLLECTIVE

was a queer feminist Asian women's literary performance group. At the time, it was radical. They had an audience of over 600 people and talked candidly about sexuality, gaining a significant Asian lesbian following. The 6 original members were Nellie Wong, Genny Lim, Kitty Tsui, Canyon Sam, Nancy Hom, and Merle Woo. Kitty and Canyon met at Asian American Feminist, an Asian women's rap group that also would regularly share food and talk about racism and sexism. Unbound Feet laid groundwork for Kitty to publish poetry and her book, *THE WORDS OF A WOMAN WHO BREATHES FIRE*, was the first published by a Chinese American lesbian. They disbanded in 1981 over Merle Woo's grievance against the University of California-Berkeley, after they refused to renew her contract as a lecturer for Asian American studies. ■

Research by Julie Ae Kim

# A RETURN // THAHITUN MARIUM

EXCERPT FROM FIRST TIMES // [ASIANAMFEMINISM.ORG/STORIES](http://ASIANAMFEMINISM.ORG/STORIES)



**"IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO GO BACK TO A PLACE OF LOVE WITHOUT THE PEOPLE YOU LOVE STILL THERE."**

I remember my mom found it extremely difficult to call her family in Bangladesh for a long time after her second eldest sister, my Momena Khala, passed away, and then a few short months later, her mother, my Nanu, left us as well. Ammu would not be able to call back right away as she had always done before. She could not muster the courage or energy it took to physically pick up the phone, use the calling card, and connect the line to Bangladesh — to hear the voices of her relatives, to face the reality of deep loss which can be stifling when you're already so far and geographically estranged. Calling cards and handwritten letters were her only link between all she had ever known, left behind in the dust, tied to this new country of unfamiliarity and alienation.

When we did return back home the first time, after almost a year and half since both of their deaths, there was a somber quiet when visiting our extended family; a collective breath was being held. When we went to Khulna during this trip, my mom and my cousin Mary, held each other on the verandah and wept loudly like the floodgates of desh's dark Kalboishaki storms had come to drown our pains once more.

What seems like ages ago, on another balcony in the same house in Khulna, Nanu sat on the balcony for hours, connecting the two parts of the puraano apartment, the day of Khala's janaza, wondering: how did her girl tragically leave this world before her? How do we bury the same offspring who came from our own body? Were fibers of our soul, our anchor on this earth, pieces of ourselves, testament to our existence? How do we live without them?

Loss is funny in many ways; it comes back to you decades later, as hiccuped memories, and a sudden slew of sadness. I haven't thought about Nanu or Khala in a long while; but on some winter mornings, between the months of late September and early April of any year, our small window of immense loss, thinking about all those times as a little girl at my Nani'r bari in Meherpur, or Momena Khala's house in Khulna, can bring me to tears.

The first time returning was impossible for Ammu, but she learned to be herself again and to deal with a new relationship to these places and people back home. Loss can begin to taste different when you've been marinating in it for a long time. ■

## RECURRING WOMEN // VEASNA HAS

EXCERPT FROM FIRST TIMES // [ASIANAMFEMINISM.ORG/STORIES](http://ASIANAMFEMINISM.ORG/STORIES)

I had never met my grandmother before. Growing up, my mom's stories of her painted the portrait of a rebellious woman. My mom would tell of how she would get frustrated as a young girl to come home from school and find that the pages of her lesson books had been torn out by her mother, who rolled them up to make cigarettes. Yey Tem had been a lifelong chronic smoker and was approaching 100 with no problems until a recent accident. I wish I'd had a chance to know her old self.

My parents said their farewells to Cambodia in 1983 when they fled to the United States with three young children in tow, escaping the repercussions of the Khmer Rouge. My parents' stories of their youth in Cambodia always seemed so idyllic and carefree — almost otherworldly. I was 14-years-old, and it was 2005, the summer before I would start high school and my first time visiting Cambodia. Both of my grandmothers were nearing their final years, and my parents wanted to be sure that me and my sister Khemara would have a chance to meet them at least one time.

Yey Tem looked exactly like she did in all the photographs I had seen. The photo album pages depicted a cast of recurring characters of my extended family in various stages of life over the years, while Yey Tem, stooped in her chair, always in the portrait's center, remained unchanged. Meeting her at last, she seemed so small. Her face was so finely wrinkled that it almost seemed smooth again, and her skin had sagged so much that you could barely see her eyes. Here she was, that same bold, slightly careless woman who smoked pages from lesson books.

One of the photos from the trip is a wide shot of the pathway leading up to the entrance of Angkor Wat. My mom is in the foreground, facing the photographer. Further back behind her, already halfway down the walkway and unaware that the moment was even being captured, are me and my sister. For my mom, this temple was one of the very places that she loved to go see as a girl. She would excitedly skip up the steps, while Yey Tem walked yards behind, never in a rush. Taking us to see it now, decades after her own childhood visits, must have been like *déjà vu* for her. But Yey Tem couldn't walk now and wasn't in this version of the picture, and the stairs of the temple had more people on them than she ever remembered. ■

ILLUSTRATION BY  
KHEM HAS

# UHL-GOOL // EXCERPTS FROM MEMOIR, JULIE AE KIM

Everytime I visit my parents' home in Bayside, my mom urges me to go with her to get a facial. I don't know what the word for facial is in Korean, my mother always just says uhl-gool. "Want to go do your face? We need to go do your uhl-gool," she would say, looking at my face with concern, looking for signs of sadness, worry, pimples, wrinkles, secrets.

My instinctual reaction was "ah-nee, I don't need it, no," shrinking away from her eyes. I didn't want her to look too closely, to see the three-month-old cyst on my chin, the thick layer of medium beige that was visible under a heavy light, my relationship with my not-a-man-not-a-woman partner I kept hidden right underneath my chest. I wasn't ready for her to really see me.

I hadn't visited home for a couple of months, even as my mom texted me daily and called me weekly, asking when I'd be coming. "Maybe next week, I'm really busy at work." In my phone calls, I was always just about to shower or head into class—both of us in on the lie but without the strength to call it out. As soon as I arrive, my mom is in the kitchen cooking all my favorite food, like a bribe or maybe a reward, minari with doenjang, stir-fried spicy chicken stew, sliced acorn jelly.

My mother's hands were rough, but her face was smooth. The wrinkles pulled back in a way that make me believe in the magic of the underground skincare clinics run by immigrant Korean women in their own homes, bringing their knowledge from across the ocean. My mother who would never throw away the spoilt milk but instead used it for her hair. My mother who collected clothing from those Korean families who were better off, those who owned supermarkets, laundromats, automobile shops, to pick out the ones she wanted to wear before organizing the church bazaar that happened on Northern Boulevard every week.

I pretended to hate going to Heesuk shi's home where facials were an easy \$50 + a wrapped up kimchi jjigae, but I never fought it too much. The facials were never just an exchange of money for goods. It was never impersonal, just a \$100 + a \$20 tip. Not in our immigrant community where strength came only from the underground networks, the informal set ups, the lack of English made up by the fluent and sharp Korean that could easily cut you with its bite or heal you with its unashamed love.

"Do you have time to fit us in for a facial tonight? My daughter is visiting, and I want to make sure she gets her uhl-gool done before she leaves. She works for the mayor, so she has to keep up her appearance." It was 8 p.m. on a Friday night when we pulled up to a suburban home. Heesuk shi exclaimed, "How lucky you are that your daughter spends so much time with you." The home was a two bedroom unit with one bedroom dedicated to her aesthetic practice.

Stripping down to my neutral cotton underwear and just a towel across my chest, a blanket slid just under my collar bones. The plush mattress was electrically heated, my entire backside like warm black coals. Wet cloths stripping my face of my tinted moisturizer, concealer, blush, eyeliner, then a slather of cream on my face, cold. Fingertips kneading my dough of a face, the knuckles pushing alongside my cheekbones, jawline, right underneath my mouth, the pain steadily growing unbearable, but just as it started it stopped.

Next, the warm mist that hovered over my face reminded me of my ex's standing clothing steamer, clug clug clug clug clug clug. My favorite part came right before the part I hated the most: the squeezing of the sebum out of the thousands of tiny pores on my face, each like its own little house to be cleaned, Marie-Kondoing the gunk, satisfyingly empty. Then, the sanitizing with some gadget I've never seen with my eyes but could taste, the metal acidic taste in my mouth, even though it was zapping the bacteria on my face. As I was drifting off to sleep, I felt my mom stand next to me and hold my hand. ■



# HAIR // ASHNA ALI

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED AT  
HEART JOURNAL ONLINE

My mother and her five sisters grew up with long black braids  
down their backs/ there are dozens of pictures of them standing  
in lines in Khulna/ in Dhaka/ in order of descending height/ ascending age  
I grew one/ took me years/ I enjoyed the feeling of it  
pressing between my shoulder blades/ under my backpack/ its swing  
at school dances/ I would sometimes pull it around my waist  
when I was scared or lonely/ my own hug/ eventually I had more reasons

smart girls in Italian novels who were beautiful  
because of their hair/ characters on American television whose hair  
flicked in rhyme and fingers/ I started letting/ it out  
braiding flowers/ into it like in those black and white photos  
of white women in the 1970's/ everyone sat around singing songs  
around fires with daisies dotting/ their braids and wreathing their foreheads/  
(that's not what it was like for us, that's not where we were, says my father)  
but my mother and her sisters/ really love the music/ from when they were young

one day I was watching Sister Sister/ a television show  
two smart, black twins are separated at birth/ find each other  
their parents move in like a family/ unite them  
ensuing in all manner of hilarity/ (I have no sisters)  
I too had my long black braid/ just like them/ like my mother/ a long time ago  
I would fling it/ over the back of the couch/ while I watched the show  
fed my fantasies/ of growing up to be a woman/ just like my mother –

but my mother/ she complained/ how much work my hair was/ eesh!!  
too much, too much/ she threw up her hands/ walked silently  
behind the couch/ with scissors/ sliced it/ all the way off/ my long black braid  
just like that/ just like that  
my head popped/ shot from a sling cut the cord/ between her past  
/my future

she put it in a gallon Ziploc bag  
the television blared/ my hair my hair my hair  
she stood and laughed  
/she won.

Thirteen years later/ a week from my wedding day  
a gallon Ziploc bag  
the gift/ of my braid back.

# #THISISASIANAMERICA



**@annala1019:** My grandma has been one of my all time favorites for my entire life. She came to America from Sri Lanka with three small children in the late 1960s, not knowing a single soul. Seeing the signs of an impending civil war take place, my Grams was able to escape ahead of time, and ended up paving the way for her sisters and their families to escape from the island as well. This was remarkable for our family, given we're Tamil Sri Lankan and from the north of the island, which was deeply affected during the war. In Sri Lanka, my grandma was a college botany professor, and, after coming to the US, realized quickly that she would need to change professions. A friend let her know that Met Life was hiring. She got on a bus, not really knowing where to go or what stop to get off at. She ultimately got a job and even submitted the proposal for one of the first word processors. She is fiercely independent, extremely intelligent, and marvelously loving and sweet. She is a trailblazer in so many ways [and] so much of who I am is because of who she is. ■



**@steakandmeggs:** Years before they banned Chinese men, they banned Chinese women. US laws kept families apart for decades – the bachelor society of US Chinatowns on one end of the world, + the ghost towns in China, filled with women and children, on the other. My great-great-great-grandfather left his dirt-poor hometown in Toisan, smuggled on a freight

ship to the US. First lured by an empty promise of “gold mountains,” he ended up working on the Transcontinental Railroad, in dangerous conditions and earning a fraction of his white counterparts’ wages. Forced to lay tracks on top of his comrades’ bones, he switched to the only other path available to Chinese and opened a laundromat in Five Points NYC.

The Chinese Exclusion Act passed in 1882, telling him that he was no longer welcome. My ancestor returned “home” to his wife and son after decades apart. His son would also try his own luck opening a laundromat in America, as a “paper son.” He too returned to Toisan decades later. His grandson, my great-grandfather, also came over as a paper son and laundryman. Like his forefathers, he had to leave his wife and son behind. He enlisted in the US Army during WWII hoping the government would reward him and let his family join him. In photos of his service, fighting a war for a country that didn’t count him as their own, he sticks out like a sore thumb in a line of mostly white soldiers. Three generations later, he was ultimately able to bring his family over,. 70 years later, Chinese-American WWII vets received recognition for their service in the form of a Congressional Gold Medal. Most of the 200,000 vets, including Jack, didn’t live to see the day. ■



# THE MYTH OF THE SIDEWAYS VAGINA

EXCERPT BY TIFFANY DIANE TSO

When Alicia Tan was in high school, an older boy messaged her on AIM asking her if she had a “sideways pussy.” Tan, who is of Chinese and Cambodian descent, was thrown off by the question, as any 14-year-old might be.

Throughout the history of the Internet, or at least as far back as 1993, naive people have questioned whether or not Asian women’s genitalia are oriented differently than other races. In fact, Asian women have been barraged with the bizarre rumor of having sideways vaginas for well over a century. Most of the time, the claim isn’t offered up as a question but a statement meant to be accepted as a universal truth, or a problematic joke at the very least.

In James Franco’s 2011 book *Palo Alto*, the anti-hero in one of his stories seduces a half-Vietnamese girl into sleeping with him with the line, “I heard that Chinese people have sideways vaginas.” In Three 6 Mafia’s 2005 song “Half On A Sack,” DJ Paul raps, “I got me a couple a Chinese bitches / Their pussies really sideways.” In 2001, Alec Baldwin hosted an episode of *Saturday Night Live*, and in a wartime skit delivered the joke: “I don’t pretend to know who these Chinese people are. I know they’re small, maybe one or two feet high. I know they sound funny when they talk. I know the womenfolk have sideways vaginas. But underneath their scales, they’re just like you and me.”

While the rumor seems to indiscriminately target Asian women across the board, there is a definite focus on Chinese women — as evidenced by the quotes from Franco, DJ Paul and Baldwin. Historian Judy Yung writes that the “ongoing myth that the vaginal opening of a Chinese woman was horizontal rather than vertical has been circulating as folklore since the 1850s,” when Chinese women were sold into sex slavery in San Francisco during the California Gold Rush era. She even points out that one historical text denotes “the possibility that Chinese slave dealers would resort to surgical illusions in order to reap more profits from their property.” Though it seems to be a rare case if there were in fact instances of surgical alterations, they could have had an influence in perpetuating the myth.

During the 19th century, Asians (namely Chinese) in America were viewed as the “yellow peril,” foreign savages that were infesting the country and stealing jobs from working class white laborers by working harder for lower pay. And even before the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Page Act of 1875 essentially barred the immigration of all single East Asian women into America, under the assumption that all of them would turn to sex work.

The law bound Asian women’s ability to immigrate with marriage status and led to a massive gender imbalance in the Chinatowns of America. In addition to segregation, this scarcity meant that the typical American man had little to no interactions with actual Chinese women. So while Chinese men were reduced to dirty and criminal rat-tailed fiends, the women were viewed as undesirable prostitutes — with unorthodox sex organs.

The sideways vagina claim stems from a certain gendered and sexualized racism. When this strange fascination with Asian women’s vaginas emerged, Asian women living in the U.S. lacked agency: we were denied immigration, citizenship, voting rights, labor rights and more. The white male imagination asserted the sideways vagina onto Asian women. Cruelly, it has also kept the myth alive.

**MATERIALS FROM THIRD WORLD WOMEN'S ALLIANCE,  
SOPHIA SMITH COLLECTION**

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY DEMONSTRATION**  
in solidarity with all freedom fighters  
and prisoners of war



Mon., March 8 - 4:30pm  
S.F. Federal Building  
450 Golden Gate

My wish is to ride the tempest,  
tame the waves, kill the shark.  
I want to drive away the enemy  
to save my people.  
I will not resign myself  
to the usual lot of women.

—Vietnamese fighter

Solidarity with National Liberation Struggles!  
Support all Freedom Fighters and Prisoners of War!  
Fight for Women's Liberation! Build an Anti-imperialist Women's Movement!

Sponsored by Women Against Imperialism and New Movement in Solidarity with Puerto Rican  
Independence and Socialism. For more information: 561-9340 weekdays.

You cannot be neutral in the world today. There can be no fence straddlers. We are engaged in a war to the finish between the oppressed and the oppressors; between those who produce the wealth of the world and those who own it.

To combat an international enemy (i.e. imperialism) an international resistance is needed, therefore the need for third world unity.

The concept of third world unity encompasses the struggles for liberation in the Americas, the Caribbean and on the continents of Africa and Asia. It is our belief that a socialist is committed to the liberation wherever they may be. These struggles must be interlocked with one another in order to obtain the most effective results. It is clear, therefore, that mass migration back to our respective homelands is not necessary for Black and other Third World peoples to achieve freedom.

We must likewise be concerned with the long range results of our struggles. Since we have a common oppressor, we must try to achieve a society which is free from racism and the exploitation of man by his fellow man, nation by nations, or woman by man. All third world people have suffered under the yoke of white racism and economic pillage by the imperialist powers.

**FROM "WHAT IS THE THIRD WORLD?", TRIPLE JEOPARDY,  
THIRD WORLD WOMEN'S ALLIANCE, NOVEMBER, 1971**

To amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide for legal accountability for sweatshop conditions in the garment industry, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 7, 1997

Mr. CLAY introduced the following bill, which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce

A BILL

To amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide for legal accountability for sweatshop conditions in the garment industry, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE AND REFERENCE.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the "Stop Sweatshops Act of 1997".

(b) REFERENCE.—Whenever in this Act an amendment or repeal is expressed in terms of an amendment to, or repeal of, a section or other provision, the reference shall be considered to be made to a section or other provision of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

The Congress makes the following findings:

(1) The production of garments in violation of minimum labor standards burdens commerce and the free flow of goods in commerce by spreading and perpetuating labor conditions that undermine minimum living standards and by providing an unfair means of competition to the detriment of employers who comply with the law.

(2) The existence of working conditions detrimental to fair competition and the maintenance of minimum standards of living necessary for health, efficiency, and general well-being of workers are a continuing and growing problem in the domestic garment industry.

(4) The amendment of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide for legal responsibility on the part of manufacturers for compliance with such Act's wage and hour, child labor, and industrial homework provisions by contractors in the garment industry and to provide civil penalties for violations of that Act's recordkeeping requirements is necessary to promote fair competition and working conditions that are not detrimental to the health, efficiency, and general well-being of workers in the garment industry.

SEC. 3. LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMPLIANCE WITH WAGE AND HOUR PROVISIONS OF THE GARMENT INDUSTRY.

(a) AMENDMENT.—The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 is amended by adding after section 14 the following: "LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMPLIANCE IN THE GARMENT INDUSTRY WITH SECTIONS 6 AND 7 "SEC. 14A. (a) Every manufacturer engaged in the garment industry who contracts to have garment manufacturing operations performed by another person as a contractor—

"(1) shall be civilly liable, with respect to those garment manufacturing operations, to the same extent as the contractor for any violation by the contractor of section 6 (except for violations of subsection (d)) or 7, for any violation by the contractor of the provisions of section 11 regulating, restricting, or prohibiting industrial homework, and for violation by the contractor of section 12; and

"(2) shall be subject to the same civil penalties assessed against the contractor for violations of such sections.

"(b) For purposes of this section:

"(1) The term 'garment industry' means the designing, cutting, sewing, dyeing, washing, finishing,

LAW AS  
ARCHIVE,  
SPECULATION,  
FANTASY

performing the cutting, sewing, dyeing, washing, finishing, assembling, pressing, or otherwise producing any men's, women's, children's, or infants' apparel, including clothing, knit goods, hats, gloves, handbags, hosiery, ties, scarves, and belts, or a section or component of apparel, except for pre-manufactured items such as buttons, zippers, snaps, and studs, designed or intended to be worn by any individual who is to be sold or offered for sale, including a label engaged in such activities, or (B) designs, cuts, sews, dyes, washes, finishes, assembles, presses, or otherwise produces any item responsible for the production of a garment worn by children's, or in some apparel, including clothing, knit goods, hats, gloves, handbags, hosiery, ties, scarves, and belts, or a section or component of apparel, except for pre-manufactured items such as buttons, zippers, snaps, and studs, designed or intended to be worn by any individual which is to be sold or offered for sale.

"(3) The term 'contractor' means any person who contracts, directly or indirectly through an intermediary or otherwise, with a manufacturer to perform the cutting, sewing, dyeing, washing, finishing, assembling, pressing, or otherwise producing any men's, women's, children's, or infants' apparel,

including clothing, knit goods, hats, gloves, handbags, hosiery, ties, scarves, and belts, or a section or component of apparel, except for pre-manufactured items such as buttons, zippers, snaps, and studs, designed or intended to be worn by any individual which is to be sold or offered for sale.

"(4) The term 'retailer' means any person engaged in the sale of apparel to the ultimate consumer for personal use."

(b) LIABILITY TO EMPLOYEES.—Section 16 (29 U.S.C. 216) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b), by adding after the first sentence the following: "A manufacturer in the garment industry (as defined in section 14A(b)(2)) shall also be jointly and severally liable to such an employee to the same extent as the contractor in the garment industry (as defined in section 14A(b)(3)) who employed such employee if the contractor violated section 6 (other than subsection (d)) or 7 in the production of apparel or components of apparel for such manufacturer.;"

(2) in subsection (b), by inserting in the last sentence "or by a manufacturer in the garment industry" after "by an employer"; and

(3) in subsection (e)—  
7  
ing "first or second sentences"; and  
(B) by inserting "or by a manufacturer in the garment industry" after "liable".

4. RECORDKEEPING.

Section 16(e) (29 U.S.C. 216(e)) is amended by adding after the first sentence the following: "Any person who to establish, maintain, and preserve payroll records required under section 11(e) shall be subject to a civil penalty of not to exceed \$1000 for each employee who was subject of such a violation. The Secretary may, in the Secretary's discretion, compute civil penalties under this section for each pay period for willful violations. Any person who submits fraudulent payroll records to the agencies enforcing this Act in any of its investigations or hearings or as evidence in a court action, which records will conceal the actual hours of labor worked by employees or the violation of section 6, 7, 11(d), or 12 shall be subject to a civil penalty of \$10,000 per act of fraud and \$15,000 per act of fraud for a second offense.

SEC. 5. EFFECTIVE DATE.

The amendments made by this Act shall take effect upon the expiration of 30 days from the date of its enactment.

ILGWU MEMBERS MARCH THROUGH CHINATOWN, 1982



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE KHEEL CENTER ILGWU COLLECTION, CORNELL UNIVERSITY

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE KHEEL CENTER ILGWU COLLECTION, CORNELL UNIVERSITY



# HOW CHINESE AMERICAN WOMEN CHANGED U.S. LABOR HISTORY

EXCERPT BY HUIYING B. CHAN. REPUBLISHED FROM AAWW.ORG WITH AUTHOR'S PERMISSION

Beyond dim sum restaurants and new bubble tea and dessert cafes, historic sites of resistance line Chinatown's streets. On Mott Street, over 20,000 garment workers — almost entirely women — once marched down the center of Chinatown to Columbus Park on a warm Spring day in 1982. They donned union hats and raised picket signs to press for the renewal of their union contracts. United, immigrant Chinese American women called for workers' rights that would forever impact U.S. labor history.

Women leaders exposed the plight of working women, and extolled the Chinatown community to carry on with the struggle for better wages and better working conditions. Within hours, dozens of garment shop owners called the union, finally agreeing to renew the workers' contracts. That day, Chinese women won a historic victory in labor rights, securing wage increases and benefits for tens of thousands women workers in the city.

I first saw the black and white photo of elderly immigrant Asian women a decade ago when I was in high school. I was just beginning to be exposed to Asian American history in afterschool youth programs. A friend had shared it on Facebook. My initial reaction: shock— I had never seen or

heard about protest being something grandmothers in my community participated in; and then curiosity— what was this moment in Chinatown's history and why had no one told me about it before?

In 1980, there were 25,000 Chinese garment workers employed in 430 shops. Women made up over 80 percent of the workforce. Canal Street hosted a heavy concentration of garment shops. Conditions varied. Overcrowding was common and buildings were often old and neglected. The shops presented hazardous conditions for workers, including inducing tuberculosis from poor ventilation and kidney and gastric problems from dehydration and long hours working under stress.

Women had to deal with over 10-hour workdays and they were paid by piece. The \$3.35 minimum wage was often ignored and instead, workers were paid based on the number of clothing that they made and style-sewed. According to the union during that time, garment workers on average earned \$5,500 annually in reported wages in 1981, after accounting for seasonal and part-time work.

More and more shops were unionizing because of the mutual benefits between shop owners and workers.

The contractors refused to agree to terms that were already agreed upon by the manufacturers and the union. Instead, they threatened to take away holidays and other benefits. Workers were furious and resistance in everyday conversations filled the subways, grocery stores and homes. Threat of a strike became a greater reality. Workers soon joined together, speaking on radio stations, phone banking, handing out leaflets in the streets to organize and mobilize fellow workers to join the strike.

The day of the strike finally came on June 24. Over 20,000 mostly women workers participated.

"The Chinatown bosses' attempt to break our union is like a grasshopper trying to stop a car in its tracks. They are daydreaming in broad daylight and acting like a blind bat trying to knock down a tree," Shui Mak Ka's voice boomed at the podium. A garment worker and core organizer of the 1982 Strike, she addressed thousands.

I met Shui Mak Ka one Sunday afternoon. Mrs. Ka speaks Cantonese and Karen Low helped interpret union words I do not understand. Although I speak Cantonese, union and strike vocabulary words were ones I never learned before.

She shares, "They gave me a stack of papers to read from at the podium. And I said 'waste of time.' What did I say? Quite simply, we workers must be united. It's not yet spring, unless all flowers blossom. We cannot rely on a single worker's power, but we need all the workers together," she says.

Following the speeches, the workers marched. Once the rally began, the union's office received endless calls from employers finally conceding and agreeing to sign the contracts. After the Uprising, the ILGWU became more active in the Chinatown community in supporting Chinese members and addressing the social issues affecting the community. The

strike in itself also made it known that Chinese women workers organized actively for their rights and would not let ethnic ties with Chinese employers stifle their fight for economic justice.

As a result, employers held back on wage cuts and withdrew their demand to take away holidays and key benefits. The strike paved the way for increased bilingual staff for workers, English classes and transportation services.

The following year, mobilized by the strength of collective unity, the community came together to fight against the jail.

The city had moved to build a jail in the heart of Chinatown. In addition to behind-the-scenes meetings and organizing efforts, 12,000 people marched from Chinatown to City Hall to protest the city's plan. The jail was still eventually built, with the city government saying it needed its location there because of its proximity to the courts, a similar argument made for the expansion of the current jail in Chinatown under Mayor de Blasio's plan to close Rikers.

The community then compromised to gain back a piece of the land next to the jail, which became the Chung Pak building that housed a senior residence, day care, and health center.

Members of the ILGWU, including May Chen, meanwhile, went on the co-found the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, the first national organization for Asian Pacific American union members. All of the women joined ILGWU staff and continued to be involved in the labor movement.

"The next generation needs to learn how to organize. Know that other people's issues are your own. If you don't organize, you too will lose all of your benefits," said Mrs. Ka. ■



**I FIRST SAW THIS SIGN, WHICH HAS BEEN IN Q-WAVE'S POSSESSION FOR ALMOST 10 YEARS**, when I went to march with the Lunar New Year for All (LNYA) contingent in 2018. I went because the girl I liked at the time (who is now my girlfriend) told me she might be there. In the end, she didn't show up, but I decided to stay anyway. I was so stunned by the sign's message—so plain and so simple. But it shouted a truth that I, at the time, couldn't form into words myself.

Fast forward to Pride 2019—my first opportunity to march in Manhattan's Pride parade, which I was hesitant about, because of the heat, the walking, and the waiting. But one experience wiped away any negativity I felt about the task. We were marching down 5th Ave handing out postcards with our info on it for outreach purposes, when another Q-Waver tapped me on the shoulder. "Christine, that girl is crying over there, go hug her."

I look over and see this woman of Asian descent not just crying but full on sobbing. I asked to hug her and asked her why she was crying. "That sign," she choked out, and pointed at the sign I was holding. "I am an Asian Lesbian and I respect my family," she told me. "You never see that in mainstream culture... it's just so...real." At this point, she was almost unintelligible. I try to comfort her and hug her one more time, but I have to catch up with my contingent.

At this point, I myself am crying, and a sense of shame starts welling up in me. Shame, because of how resistant I was to marching. Only four years ago, I was a babygay that had showed up to Manhattan Pride with my other Asian lesbian friend. Neither of us were really out, and we were terrified we were going to run into people we knew the entire time. However, every time we saw a group that organized around Asian LGBTQIA+ people, we squealed and grabbed each other. That representation and visibility was so important—to be able to see people who looked like us, and who are comfortable and PROUD of who they are, in a community that loves them. It taught me the importance of marching, that it wasn't for me at all but for those that might see us and know that they too are seen. ■

**WRITING BY CHRISTINE LIU,  
SIGN BY Q-WAVE**



## WE, TOGETHER

"In the Hawaiian language, 'ōlelo Hawai'i, there are multiple pronouns for "we." Kākou is generally the most broad, inclusive form of "we," referring to "we, three or more," which could be everyone in a room, everyone in earshot, et cetera. There is also kāua, which is a "we" that means something more like "us two" or "between you and me." Another pronoun, māua, is also a dual "we" but with more exclusive connotations, as in "you and I (and not anyone else)." Mākou is similarly an exclusive "we" for three or more. Each of these forms of "we" carries specific forms of responsibility, or kuleana, as they signify different types of relationships."

-Maile Arvin, 2015, *Indigenous Feminisms Roundtable*



SIGN BY TENAYA IZU, COURTESY OF QWAVE

# TO BE UNDERWATER AND HOLY

>>> BY KAY ULANDAY BARRETT

EVERY SURVIVOR IS SPLENDOR.  
EVERY SPOON IS SACRED.  
EVERY COUGH IS AN ALTAR ON THE BEND OF RIBCAGE.  
EVERY CANE IS A DRUM CALLING INTO THE EARTH.

YOU WILL BE TOLD THAT YOU ARE NOT WORTHY OF A PARTY.  
YOU WILL BE TOLD YOU ARE NOT A CELEBRATION.  
WHY EXIST AT ALL?

BECAUSE BREATH IS AN EXHAUSTED SHIP LAPPING THE WIND.  
BECAUSE YOUR MUSCLES ARE THE FATIGUE OF A SUNSET.


WHEN YOUR BODIES ARE CARNAL WAVES COLLAPSING,  
REMEMBER: TOGETHER WE CAN FIND THE SHORE.  
TOGETHER WE CAN ROCK AND WAVE AND REST AND BREATHE, TOGETHER.  
WE NEED TO MOVE TOGETHER.  
TOGETHER WE CAN RUPTURE VEINS INTO STORMS AND  
TOGETHER WE CAN BE THE GRIT AS PROMISING AS THE SOUND OF SHELLS.  
OUR LINEAGE TELLS US  
THERE WILL ALWAYS BE LAND AND OCEAN  
IN OUR BONES.

AFTER EVERY SHIFT OF TIDE,  
NO MATTER THE CATASTROPHE,  
PLEASE HOLD ON IF YOU CAN.

HERE'S A PROMISE:  
DARE TO PRESS AN EAR AGAINST MY CHEST  
AND ON THIS LOVE,

WE'LL GROW SCALES FOR EVERY CURRENT  
WE'LL PART EVERY SEA LIKE SCRIPTURE.

EXCERPT FROM "WHEN THE CHANT COMES" // [KAYULANDAYBARRETT.COM](http://KAYULANDAYBARRETT.COM)



AUTHOR GAIA GOFFE (LEFT), HER MOTHER, JUDITH HUGH-GOFFE, AND AUTHOR TAO LEIGH GOFFE IN FAN LENG LAU, HONG KONG. PHOTO: BRUCE YAN

## RE-FRAMING FAMILY: A GENEALOGY BETWEEN JAMAICA, CHINA, AND HONG KONG

BY TAO LEIGH GOFFE AND GAIA GOFFE

**TAO:** A few years ago, my mother, my sister, and I went to Hong Kong in search of our ancestral roots and routes. We were looking for the home of my mother's deceased father, Edwin. Born in Jamaica in the late 1920s to a Chinese father and Afro-Jamaican mother, he was taken to live with his stepmother in Hong Kong at the age of seven.

**GAIA:** I don't speak putonghua or Cantonese and know little about China's past – or present. Yet I – a British-born, American-raised, twentysomething of Chinese and Afro-Jamaican ancestry – travelled to China recently to better understand my complicated family history. My mother was worried that because we were not “full Chinese” we would not be accepted. This is how it has always been for people like us – “half Chinese” or black Chinese – in Jamaica, where my mother grew up. Those who are “full Chinese” are proud that they have no black in them and proud that they have a command of Cantonese and Hakka – and proud, too, that they are able to recount their family history, perhaps going back 1,000 years.

**TAO:** In search of traces of Edwin's life in Hong Kong's New Territories, on our first visit to Asia all we had was the name of village and old family photographs collected over the years. With the help of a new friend, we were led to the house where our grandfather grew up. Yau Tang-kwong, a man we later discovered was my mother's first half-cousin, greeted us at the door. We were surprised that he was unsurprised to see his black relatives. Whether he knew it fully or not, he had a black Jamaican grandmother too. It was as if he had been expecting us. Who knew there were Afro-Chinese people living in China that had deep roots going back to the 1930s?

**GAIA:** Edwin was raised in Fanling, in a house on Fan Leng Lau Road. Family lore has it that the house was built in the 1800s, before the arrival of the British, and was bought by our mother's paternal grandfather, Edwin's father Hugh Yee Fatt, and his brothers. In 1914, Yee Fatt, aged 25, had travelled to Jamaica, hoping to get rich. Chinese men had been voyaging to the Caribbean for years, first as indentured agricultural labourers, to work on plantations, and later to become merchants and shopkeepers. In Jamaica, he set himself up in one business after another, selling everything from fizzy drinks and

liquor to clothing and food. Business after business failed, so he decided to return to China. It was on that return trip that he and his brothers bought the Fanling house.

**TAO:** We had fancifully dreamed of but had not known if there were Afro-Chinese who remained in Hong Kong. Tang-kwong did not speak a word of English; we did not speak a word of Cantonese. And so we spoke in the only language we could, the back and forth of family photographs on iPad screens, of recognition, of kin. Weathered and torn photographs sat framed on the mantelpiece of the traditional Chinese house, and there we saw a portrait of our grandfather, our mother's father, who lived a life unknown to us in Cantonese and patois, between Jamaica, Hong Kong, and New York.

**GAIA:** My mother, sister and I have seen photos of the house. Arriving at Fan Leng Lau Road, we meet the village chief, Pang Kwok-hung, whose family, prior to 1923, owned the house we have come to view. Our family name, 丘, Hugh the version Anglicized in Jamaica, or Yau in Cantonese, is written above the door. Thrilled, we begin furiously photographing everything in sight. Inside, we meet Tang-kwong's 21-year-old son, Hing-lung, and study family photos, among which are some we know very well. It is strange to see the same pictures that hang on our walls in New York, hanging here, in Fanling. We are shown a special room with a family altar, a kind of extended mantelpiece with photographs on it. To our surprise, there is a photo, a small one, of my mother's father, Edwin, among pictures of a host of other deceased relatives. Never convinced he would be truly accepted by his fully Chinese relatives, Edwin, who died in 2003, in Florida, would have been happy he'd been recognised in this way.

**TAO:** Here were the muted narratives of my grandfather's boyhood in a sequence of images. Here we addressed the loss of history and how lost subjects were being found anew. These photographs communicated something unspeakable, an articulation of recognition and affirmation for the abject. Inscribed in the flesh of these photos was an entangled history of Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and Europe.

**GAIA:** Edwin returned to Jamaica in the '50s, where he found work as a driver. He never talked much about his time in Hong Kong or what life was like there for an Afro-Asian boy. No doubt he and his half brother were teased, taunted and had to endure being called hak gwai. It must have been similar for the hundreds of other mixed Chinese children sent to Asia from Jamaica. Edwin had an Afro-Jamaican mother. No photos of her were displayed in the family home. Pictures of Chinese relatives, by contrast, covered the walls. Indeed, our mother knew that when she displayed a large photo of her Afro-Jamaican maternal grandmother, Evelyn, it would be seen as an act of provocation. And so it was. Harsh words were spoken and the photo was quickly removed from the walls, never to be seen again.



**"GRANDMOTHER AND GRANDDAUGHTERS" - JUDITH HUGH GOFFE, EVELYN LLOYD, JANICE HUGH. ARTHUR'S SEAT, CLARENDON, JAMAICA, 1982. PHOTOGRAPHED BY LESLIE GORDON-GOFFE**

**TAO:** Though the birth of photographic technology happens to coincide with the abolition of slavery in the British West Indies in the 1830s, the fact that there is little photographic record that represents this historical moment. The absence of photographic representations of Caribbean Chinese families is a space for inquiry. How do we read the layers of silent narratives inscribed in family photographs? The silence exists in who is missing but also in the juncture between what is being performed in the family pose and the family dynamic. Even as family portraits can humanize and restore a sense of familial intimacy, they also police. In the diaspora, too, there are forces that push and blur the darker skinned and non-heteronormative subjects out of focus. What does it mean to be excluded from not only the frame of the family but also the frame of history?

**GAIA:** What would Edwin, or to give him his Chinese name, Yau Wheelam, make of the genealogical journey taken by his daughter, Judith, and granddaughters, Gaia and Tao, to China in hopes of understanding how they fit into the Chinese experience? I'd like to believe he would quote the Chinese proverb, "To know the road ahead, ask those coming back."



**PASSPORT PHOTOGRAPH OF YAU WHEELAM, EDWIN HUGH, 1934, AGE 6, WHEN HE LEFT HIS PARENTS IN JAMAICA TO BE RAISED BY HIS CHINESE STEPMOTHER IN THE NEW TERRITORIES OF HONG KONG.**

**THE PHOTOGRAPH WAS FOUND AFTER HIS DEATH AMONGST HIS PERSONAL EFFECTS IN THE BASEMENT OF HIS HOME IN QUEENS, NEW YORK.**

**TAO:** An extension of the stolen body, the family photograph becomes an intimate site of both producing and challenging racialized and gendered hierarchies of the idea of the family. Ordinary family photographs carry this potential to speak the narratives elided by colonialism. As we know, within all families people do and do not look alike, and that does not much matter. What does matter is what can be fashioned out of what has been torn apart. ■

Read original stories at: "Albums of Inclusion: The Photographic Poetics of Caribbean Chinese Visual Kinship" (2018) Small Axe // How a Chinese-Jamaican's family history quest led her to Hong Kong" (2016) South China Morning Post

PHOTO COURTESY OF STEVEN CHASE / FLICKR

TREATIES WITH HAWAIIAN KINGDOM

FRANCE  
1857

DENMARK  
1846

JAPAN  
1871

RUSSIA  
1869  
SAMOA  
1887

SWEDEN, NORWAY  
1852  
UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION  
1885

AUSTRIA  
1875

BRITAIN  
1842

USA  
All broken

NETHERLANDS  
1862

BELENI

SPAIN  
1849

PORTUGAL  
1882

# MAUNA KEA PROTESTS: THE LONG FIGHT AGAINST COLONIALISM

EXCERPT BY MAILE ARVIN. REPUBLISHED FROM TRUTHOUT.ORG  
WITH AUTHOR'S PERMISSION

Hundreds of Native Hawaiians and allies are camped at the base of Mauna Kea, a mountain located on Moku o Keawe, or Hawai'i Island. They are organizing to protect the summit of Mauna Kea from the construction of a proposed Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT).

This project has been in the works for years, and has drawn opposition from Native Hawaiians who object to the environmental and cultural impact of a massive 18-story, five-acre telescope complex on sacred land. In Hawaiian mo'olelo (stories and traditions), Mauna Kea represents the piko (umbilical cord) and thus birthplace of Hawai'i island and the Hawaiian people. The summit is associated with a number of important akua (gods and goddesses), and is the site of numerous burials, altars and other spiritually powerful sites.

The opposition to telescope construction on Mauna Kea has a long history, dating to 1968, when the first telescope was built on the mountain. There are currently 13 telescopes already on the summit, several of which are no longer even in use. Many of these were built without proper permits and over community protests and lawsuits expressing concerns about environmental impact — Mauna Kea is the primary aquifer and source of freshwater for the island — and protection of significant cultural sites. There is a clear history of mismanagement of the observatories, including problems with waste disposal and spills.

While what's happening at Mauna Kea is inspiring to many Native Hawaiians and other Indigenous peoples around the world, proponents of the TMT and mainstream media alike have often represented the struggle simplistically as a fight between science and culture. In such

discourse, what is often presumed to be the self-evident good of advances in astronomy for humanity is often pitted against what is portrayed as a minority of Native Hawaiians clinging to outdated and selfish traditions.

Western science, including astronomy, has always been directly implicated in colonialism in Hawai'i and other Pacific Islands. Rhetoric of scientific advances being good for all humanity rings hollow in the Pacific context. After World War II, the U.S. and France used their Pacific territories as testing grounds for nuclear weapons. The U.S. told Marshall Islanders that nuclear tests rendering Bikini Atoll permanently uninhabitable would be "for the good of mankind". Marshall Islanders would experience thyroid cancers, miscarriages and a number of other deadly health impacts from the testing. Indigenous Pacific peoples have many good reasons to be skeptical of promises of a "greater good" — promises which have long served the interests of colonial powers at the direct expense of Indigenous Pacific lives and lands.

Relatedly, Indigenous Pacific Islanders have long been seen as "inferior" to Western civilization and incapable of advancing science. Until at least the 1970s, it was still commonly accepted among Western scholars that Pacific Islanders had populated their islands randomly and without skill through "accidental drift." In reality, Indigenous Pacific Islanders developed sophisticated practices of long-distance sea voyaging far earlier than Europeans. To portray Native Hawaiians as anti-science for opposing the TMT project is to replay colonial and racist rhetoric that deems Indigenous Pacific people unintelligent, backwards and uncivilized. One of the most beautiful things that the *kia'i* on Mauna Kea are proving is that actions can be taken today to heal the legacies and ongoing forms of colonialism and change our future. The vibrant life of the *pu'uhonua* that continues to develop and respond to the desires and needs of Native Hawaiians and allies at Mauna Kea proves to many of us that we are more than capable of self-government, of producing and teaching meaningful knowledge, of caring for our bodies and our land.

Today's opposition to the TMT — and the decades-long opposition to how telescopes have been built and managed on Mauna Kea's summit — is informed by an extensive history of science implicated in colonialism across the Pacific. This helps to explain why this issue is so deeply important to Native Hawaiians. There is one, clear and specific action that the *kia'i* are asking the state, the University of Hawai'i and the TMT corporation to take to begin to address past and current scientific and colonial injustice: Do not build the TMT on Mauna Kea. Science and colonialism deeply shape Mauna Kea's past, but they do not have to determine its future. ■

# WAYS THE PHILLIPINES CAN TALK

BY KAY ULANDAY BARRETT

Being amerikan,  
you draw in a journal about escape plans, arcing a fiction  
of getaways — here you cannot ease your way into a café,  
or walk to a bus station without being stared down,

Ma'am? they'll say glimpsing to the haircut, then cutting pupils  
towards breasts.

American feminist queer theory has no group as you buy gum at a  
store  
near the sleeping goats, or hold breath next to the baskets  
in a northern province. Ocean salt finds its way into your  
everything

Karabaos don't give a shit about your gender pronouns.  
Your family scissor words as your name skitters to the floor—  
Tomboy, I hear, fat, dark, like a man.

Titas shift the kanin their plates as though they  
could trim your fat, extend the length of your hair,  
sprout a loudmouthed husband at your side,  
all with the slightest bent joint

Then they turn to your beloved, exercise syllables  
like she's supposed to parade in them  
So tall, so thin, your skin so light like a model—you can't be Filipina,  
Koreana ka ba?

The comparisons are said the same as any harmless observation.  
Convictions of divide and conquer are tossed like habits.

There doesn't have to be a white man to make these claims—  
our own people learn how to harm enough,  
choose the right words, translate to English without flinch.

You both can hold hands b/c this is what friends do.

After midnight you assemble your limbs back to  
their rightful place as you rid the pressure formed  
by all day heat and no privacy.

Poverty is two small bedrooms shared by everyone at anytime  
and you hate that you want to go home,  
for free wi-fi, ache for your bed.

Mostly, you hate the fantasies of sand & revolutionaries  
right before the plane left the ground.

EXCERPT FROM "WHEN THE CHANT COMES" // [KAYULANDAYBARRETT.COM](http://KAYULANDAYBARRETT.COM)



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We engage in intersectional feminist politics grounded within our communities, including those whose backgrounds encompass East, Southeast, and South Asian, Pacific Islander, multi-ethnic and diasporic Asian identities. The collective seeks to foster dialogue that explores the intersections of Asian/American identity with issues of social justice in order to build towards collective liberation. They continue to interrogate and define the Asian American feminist movement through media-making, event curation, and digital storytelling.



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