

ASIAN

persuasion



a collection of
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essays
art

on filipinx identity

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SOLIDARITY
FOR
ASIANS



SEOUL SEARCHING 2015

running time 105 MINUTES

directed by BENSON LEE

produced by BENSON LEE ANDREA CHUNG

starring JUSTIN CHON JESSIKA VAN TEO YOO

ESTEBAN AHN ROSALINA LEIGH

cross cultural

During a Netflix movie marathon, I came across Seoul Searching, the most relatable yet unrelatable movie I've ever watched. A John Hughes-esque 80's throwback film, it's about a group of foreign-born Koreans going back to their roots through a summer camp established by their government; the camp served as a way for those who didn't grow up in Korea to experience the culture of their motherland. The story and the depth of each character was loosely based on a true story, one which director, Benson Lee, lived in.

It was funny, slightly scandalous, heart-wrenchingly emotional, and relatable. It was one of those under-the-belt kind of movies the kind that hits you in the sensitive areas of the heart. It's the type of film that you will remember because of the impact it has on you. And as I was getting into the movie and learning more about the essence of each character, I began to see a reflection of myself in the film; I recognized how each of those Korean students didn't know one thing about their original heritage.

One of the main themes in this film is cultural identity and the search for what

it really means for people like the characters in the film, an exploration which is navigated through the camp as the characters fill the gap in their culture and heritage after spending their life in other countries. I was born in Quezon City, Philippines in February of 2000. Eleven months after the birth of my youngest sister in November, 2001, we packed our belongings and left everything family, friends, and my parent's childhood memories and moved to England in 2002 to start a new life. I'm not going to write you a full, explicit novel about my life, but I will tell you about my fluctuating journey to self-discovery.

Like some of the characters in Searching, there's a broken bridge between me and my native language and as I'm getting older, that bridge is slowly crumbling and disintegrating into nothing but an empty space.

"Saan ka pupunta at sino kasama mo?" "I'm going to a concert with friends."

"Ay nako, gumagastos yung pera mo sa bagay na hindi mo kailangan." "I've only bought books which I'll use for school."

"Anong gusto mo kainin?" "Fish and chips."

As I was writing this typical conversation between my mum

and I, Google Translate was beside me the whole time, assisting me with seemingly grammatically inaccurate sentences. I find this to be a major concern, since language is an important tool for communication and is a symbol of unity and cultural belonging. As my mother tongue is slipping away, that sense of affiliation which I had with my roots when I was young is slipping away with it.

During a trip to the Philippines, eight years after our life-changing move, similar to the feelings of confusion and the unorthodox experiences of Kris Schultz, I felt isolated. The extreme time differences between Britain and the Philippines gave me extreme jet lag, the burning of the tropical sun on my skin made me dizzy and nauseous, and meeting family I'd never met before made me a little uncomfortable. Communicating with people was the most challenging. Although I can understand my cousin's Tagalog perfectly, I, on the other hand,





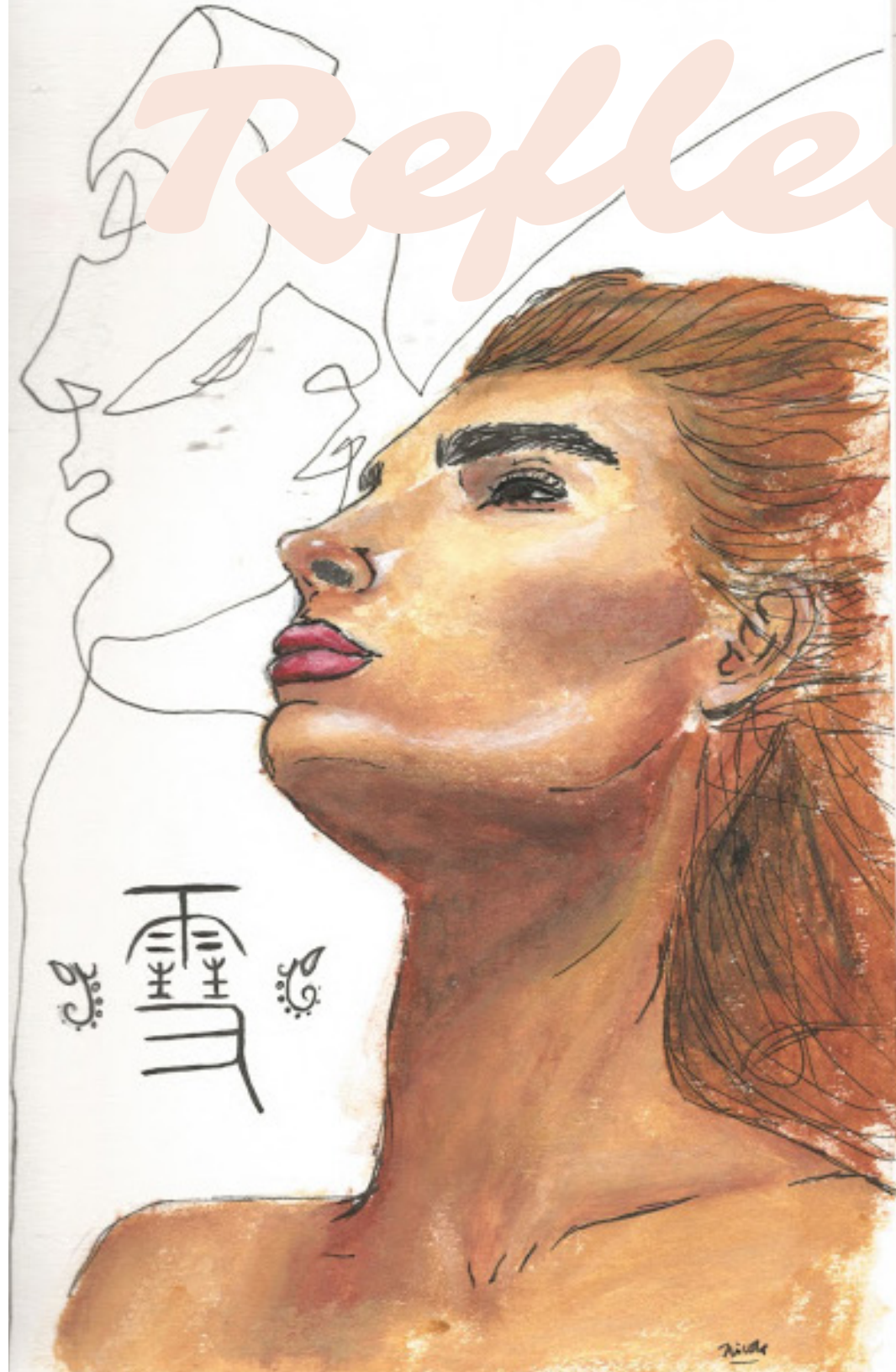
grew up in South East England, I wanted a place to belong in. But, baffled between two cultures I adored and experienced and grew up in, I felt that I stood in the center of the two; I was in the overlap of a Venn diagram. I felt that, with my upbringing in a bicultural environment, I had the mind of a Filipino and an exterior of a Brit.

home is a subjective term, having varied and multiple definitions

spoke the language in a grammatically broken way which resulted in embarrassment, confusion and the feeling that I wasn't Filipino enough. I've never hated anything more than being in my own birth country. And growing up within a Filipino household, I felt bad.

This led me to confuse which place I should call my true home: the country I was born in, or the country I was raised in. Like my parents who had an upbringing in the Philippines, and like my friends who

Home is a subjective term, having varied and multiple definitions similar to how each character of Seoul Searching has different views of the original country of their heritage. Sid Park's upbringing repels him from the culture, and Kris Schultz feel she's home but doesn't recognize her roots. I'm still learning about the world and myself, so this isn't the conclusion of my journey to uncovering my cultural identity. This isn't the part where I celebrate my discoveries; it's only just the introduction. The doors of truth and realization have only just opened, and each day opens that door wider by an inch, slowly revealing the light that is myself. Being young and still inexperienced, I have yet to learn and discover.



ctian

I saw my mother,
Travelling from one land to another,
The American dream
Follows. Frozen in my mind was
A picture of you with a cigarette
In your hand, dancing in the snow
your movements painting the sky, palms
Facing up and reaching towards God;
There was a memory in my dreams
When I used to worship God
A practice that prides my mother and
brings her
Joy. Empty clouds rolled by
Through the sky today;
But not a single drop of snow
Touched the land and
Instead reached out to the memories
Of me laying in the snow
Under a bitter sun in an
Empty field covered in a
Thousand snow with the
Hollow sound of bleak winds;
An untouched dream
That I never had.
In that distant dream
I remember I also slow danced
With God, my satin red
Ball gown skirt ploughing
The snow as I swayed to
The song that my mother used
To sing me to sleep but
In a language from a foreign land
That had empty clouds passing by
A colourless, unfamiliar sky.
There was another lone star
That rose from the sky today
It had eight pointy rays that was
the colour of my mother's rosary
But maybe that was just a dream
Since I was only half asleep, where I was
Dreaming of the fantasy land
Where you and I were still lovers
A bouquet of roses and yellow sunflowers
Between our holding hands as we
Stood under the eyes of
God the corner, beside Mother Theresa



Watchful eyes of hatred and resent
Were my mother's.
Her hands were as cold as
The snow that once fell on
my shoulder.
snow snow snow snow snow
Lone frozen raindrops
falling
Like the tears of my mother when
She had a dream of me
Falling from heaven when
I turned away from God,
He's fading
fading
fading
i'm
falling
Through a bleak sky, then coming down on
foreign land how
The snow once fell on my
shoulder.
Like the rice that grew from
My mother's land, the
coldest storm
Of endless snow grew whiter
It's because you don't
believe in God
And the sunless sky grew darker.
There is always an eternal
light
Within a fragmented dream, the
Rainbow in the broken
mirror,
But in my distorted reflection
I couldn't find myself, I
couldn't see
My porcelain skin and flushed cheeks
The body you were always
craving, but
I saw my mother.



OUTCOMES AND CONSEQUENCES OF BICULTURALISM

Raised by Filipino parents in an unfamiliar country that I wasn't born in, I've experienced an almost 'double-life' eating fish and chips on a Friday after school under an umbrella in the typical British weather and then rolling my skirt down to knee-length before entering my home. I greet my mother when I come in, take my shoes off by the door, and eat a small snack such as Skyflakes or

siopao before heading to my room to do some schoolwork.

Living in this bicultural household was tough sometimes the differences between my parents' culture and the culture my sisters and I grew up in often generated arguments caused by frequent disagreements. I remember a particular instance when I talked back to my parents over a misunderstanding of a school

project and, as we were arguing, my parents explicitly pointed out to me that they never talked to their parents like that. One of the many important rules in our culture was respecting elders. Although I was familiar with this tradition, I never really practiced it as much.

The other day, my family and I were in a heated debate because my parents think we've 'grown out' of our culture and have turned into ungrateful, angry brats a common misconception that I believe a lot of Asian parents develop.

We were sitting around our rounded table under the dim light of our small chandelier, a cardboard bucket with empty chicken drumsticks and napkins sitting messily under the light. Our dad told my sister and me, "You're forgetting the culture you were brought in." I agree that there are certain aspects of Filipino traditions and values missing from our lives however, it's not like we're intentionally leaving them behind. I countered his statement, exclaiming, "We're not forgetting

it, we're just learning new things." I told my parents that this was one of the consequences of immigrating to a foreign land; the development of an independent and free-spirited mind may be inevitable in a child who is raised in a progressive first-world country.

As our discussion became more turbulent, my family members' upset inflamed, and I saw sadness in my parents' faces. It was then that I realized every parent's fear: their children growing up. As children grow up, their minds are stretched and broadened by new experiences, people, and knowledge. Since my parents grew up in a third-world country during the darkest era of Philippine economic and politics, they didn't have the same accessibility to or awareness of social changes in Western society. Rather than being open to the ideas of sex, feminism, and the economical struggles of millennials,

embedded into their minds are conservative, religious, and traditional Filipino values. These customs include respecting elders, the concept of shame (hiya), having the nuclear family as the center of a social structure, the traditional role of the woman and the wife, and, of course, excessive hospitality.

Some of these values (i.e. having a supportive and close-knit family who we can always rely on, and our friendly, hospitable attitude towards others) are what make me proud of my heritage. However, there were some values I resented while growing up with wild-child best friends, such as the aforementioned idea of hiya. This cultural philosophical concept is linked to the Filipino values of social acceptance and societal conformity and belonging in a group are central in Filipino values.

I grew up as an introvert and would



*biculturalism is
important in our
society.*

oftentimes voluntarily spend my time alone, so I personally viewed social conformity as a bother and almost always did whatever I wanted to without thinking. My parents, aunties, uncles, and grandmother, on the other hand, have other people's opinions and perception of them constantly on their minds; their dependency to be socially accepted creates this innate obligation to put others' needs and satisfaction before their own. When they do otherwise, shame and embarrassment and sometimes guilt overtake their self-esteem. Although this characteristic is considered a virtue, it made me suffer from low confidence and prevented me from taking opportunities I wanted.

To come to a conclusion, people living biculturally have many ups and downs, all of which are important to the evolution of something unique. Filipino culture having already been shaped and influenced by numerous countries and regions such as Spain, China, America, and the Middle East is already unique, making it just one-of-a-kind. Although there are negative outcomes of biculturalism (such as the confusion of identity, cultural conflicts, and, perhaps in some cases, racism), this concept represents unity amongst different cultures. In a world where racism, discrimination, and hatred still exist and function, biculturalism is important in our society.

バスガス爆発
ブスバスガイド

WALKING IN A GALLERY WITH A WHITE MAN

*A poem by
Franchette "RJ" Zamudio*

We stumble upon a pretentious art gallery
Showing off prints of Picasso and Haring, no less
But the people in it act as if they have the real things

I went to all the artsy schools
From artsy summer camps, after school programs, to the
specialized arts high school in New York. Now: The New
School
I don't say all this to brag,
I find comfort in what these institutions have given me:
some type of validity, some type of superficial safety
Some way for me to be able to say, "See, I belong here.
See, I am good enough."
You studied communications in New Jersey.

But walking inside this gallery
Where one might think I'd feel at home as an artist
Inside this white gallery
A white woman immediately follows us
And deep down I feel she meant to follow me

"Are you looking for anything specific?" she
asks
I take a deep breath
The same breath I take when employees
follow me around in retail stores
The same breath of "I didn't do anything.
But I have morena skin so they don't think I
belong."
The same breath of walking out my door and
wondering if I'll end up like that Filipino
man slashed in the face,
The same breath of walking out my door





and wondering if today I'll get
murdered like the 6 Asian women in
Atlanta

The same breath of wondering if I'll
end up like the Asian woman my age
who was punched two blocks away
from my job on 34th street

The same breath of worrying about my
mom after reading about the 65 year
old woman who was brutally attacked
near Times Square

The same breath of wondering
The same breath of worrying
The same breath of suppressing

"Well, I'm looking at art!" you say to
the white woman sassily.

You say this immediately.

No hesitation.

No inner questioning of whether you
belonged to this place.

Whether you've proven yourself
enough as an artist.

Whether you worked hard enough to
deserve to be here.

Whether you deserve to be in this
country or not.

Whether you deserve to be.

You start to walk around,

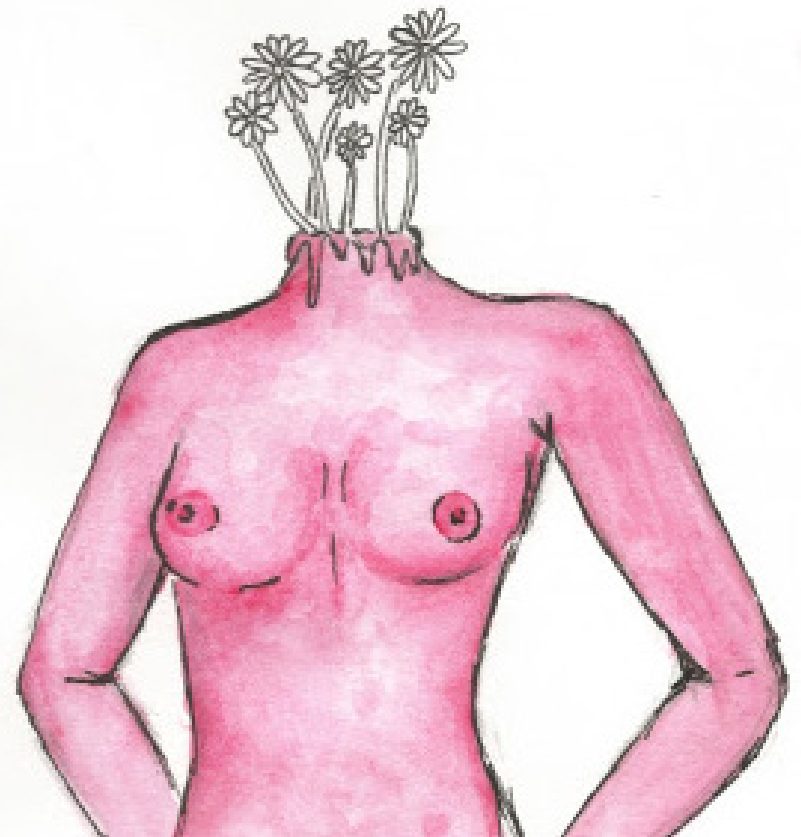
The confident walk

Of a white man in a gallery

"They're playing Radiohead!" you say
in glee

Of course they are

I felt her love like
The sun's burning heat, scorching
me like burned paper.





Rising Wave of **ANTI-ASIAN** **HATE CRIMES**

is Outrageous and Upsetting, New School Community Members Say

Students and faculty at The New School are upset and outraged over the rising violence against people of Asian descent.

Christine Ro, a literary studies major at Lang, said the wave of violence makes her worried when she goes out. “[It’s] like ‘Oh, I’m Asian’, and people are gonna look at me. They might look at me and see a reason to act out.” Ro said.

In the past year, people of Asian descent have been victims of several violent attacks in cities across the country, including New York, San Francisco, and Atlanta, where a white man shot and killed eight people, six of them Asian women, in a spa.

In February 2020, a New School student of Asian descent was attacked outside the campus. New School officials at the time said that the student’s attacker “disparaged her Asian identity and referenced coronavirus.”

New School President Dwight McBride and Interim Provost Stephanie Browner addressed the recent wave of attacks in an email on March 2, telling students that “we recognize the stress, fear, and anguish that these attacks have caused the Asian and Asian American community and we proclaim that The New School community stands in solidarity.”

But students say they are still

worried. Ro said the email felt like a band-aid, saying: “It was basically like, ‘we want you to feel safe’.

[But] I was like well what are you gonna do about it?”

“I feel very dismissive about [the email] because I don’t know the true intention [behind] it,” added Kristi Yang, a third year student at Parsons.

Dr. Lei Ping, a Professor of China Studies and Co-Chair of the faculty council at the School of Public Engagement, agreed with the students, adding “personally, I would say it’s a little late in the game.” and that “we could have seen this coming, some time last year.”

Some students say they have felt uncomfortable to have a conversation about the issue. During the Black Lives Movement protests that took to the streets last year, Yang said she expressed her allyship through social media activism where she posted “a hundred things about it” on her Snapchat and Instagram stories. However, when it comes to the recent

incidents involving the Asian community, she’s hesitant about speaking up.

“It was almost most comfortable being an ally.”

“I just feel weird about posting to support a group I identify with,” Yang said. “It was almost most comfortable being an ally.”

Not everyone in the Asian and Asian American community feels the same way. Yuda Li, an international student from China and a first-year student at Parsons, has been very vocal about Asian hate crimes on social media. In his Instagram stories, he has shared his reactions and opinions to raise awareness. “I feel like it is my responsibility, the Asian community’s responsibility, to stand up against the anti-Asian hate crimes we are currently facing,” Li wrote to The New School Free Press via Instagram direct message. “As for right now, this [Instagram activism] is



probably the best way for me personally to be involved in this topic since I’m currently living in [a] suburban area in Virginia, [where] there [are] no rallies nor protests to participate in.”

While concern about these attacks has been growing for over a year within Asian and Asian American communities, it wasn’t until the March 16 Atlanta spa shootings that these crimes against people of Asian descent began to be widely recognized and spoken about. Police said that the alleged shooter, 21-year-old Robert Aaron Long claimed that race

was not the motivation for the shootings, instead blaming his “sex addiction”, USAToday reported, but this has claim has been criticized as dubious by activists and community members.

In New York, 52-year-old Leelee Ching-Yeung was knocked unconscious in February when a man assaulted her outside a bakery in Flushing, Queens. Security footage

shows the alleged attacker Patrick Mateo, 47, throwing a box of spoons at Ching-Yeung before violently shoving her to the ground. Although Mateo was not charged with a hate crime, Ching-Yeung's daughter claimed racial slurs were yelled out by the suspect leading up to the incident, which gained national attention after actress Olivia Munn tweeted about it.

From a homeless man who was robbed in San Francisco to, an 84-year-old man who was killed after being violently shoved in the same city, to a brutal box-cutter attack on a Filipino-American man in the New York City subway, incidents against Asian-Americans continue to rise. According to a 2020 study by the Center of Hate and Extremism, major cities across the U.S. saw a 149% surge in the number of hate crimes against people of Asian descent. Elderly Asians are especially

vulnerable, as they are 13.5% more likely to be physically assaulted than younger people of Asian descent, as stated in data released in February by Stop AAPI Hate.

Safewalks, a New York City based initiative that formed after a woman was attacked in a Brooklyn subway station and that provides people with walking buddies around the city for safety, organized a solidarity march

“They never talk about what the Asian community’s feelings are, you know?”

through Manhattan on Saturday, CBS reported. The Washington Post reported nationwide protests condemning the attacks against the Asian community in the days after the Atlanta shooting, with people holding signs that read “#StopAsianHate” and “Hate is a Virus”.

the Atlanta shooting and showed support to the Asian and Asian-American students. The email, that was sent on March 23, stated “At The New School, we strongly condemn this behavior and are deeply committed to ensuring an academic environment in which every member of our community feels safe, heard, and respected. Anti-Asian rhetoric and violence will not be tolerated and all of us must do our part to help ensure our campus remains a healthy and safe place to learn and work.” The email then lists resources from the New School, including how to report an incident, Campus Safety, and Student Support and Advocacy.

Professor Ping said that one of the factors that may contribute to why the issue hasn't been raised publicly in the past is that Asians are often stereotyped as a “model minority” a myth that typecasts Asians (particularly East Asian) as quiet, studious, and straight-A students. Because of the status as foreign immigrants and the idea that Asian-Americans must

“prove” their Americanness, this has resulted in overlooked and often forgotten racism and inequality, as explained by Viet Than Nguyen in his op-ed for TIME.

From former President Donald Trump’s spewing of slurs such as “China Virus” and “Kung Flu” to refer to COVID-19, Asian-Americans have also faced a history of being the scapegoat where this was used as justification of xenophobia. But because Asians are, as Yang had put it, the “silent population just lurking in the background, often forgotten”, it is difficult for the public to recognize the racism they face.

In early March, two events were hosted at The New School to provide a solidarity space for students in the Asian and Asian-American communities, where students can have a conversation and share their experiences. However, the turnout on both events were not very large.

As the violence has increased, New School students have expressed frustration with the lack of community and solidarity. “They never talk about what the Asian community’s feelings are, you know?” Li said.

SOLIDARITY FOR ASIANS

Resources:

- To see statistics, updates on the Asian community, places to donate and show your support: <https://anti-asianviolenceresources.carrd.co/>
- A free training course on bystander intervention: <https://www.ihollaback.org/bystanderintervention/>
- Report an incident: <https://stopaapihate.org/>
- Report an incident through the school: <https://www.newschool.edu/title-ix/report/>

Student Health Services

- Student support and advocacy: studentsupport@newschool.edu
- International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS): iss@newschool.edu
- Campus safety number who are available 24/7 for emergencies: 212.229.7001
- Residence Hall staff: universityhousing@newschool.edu

Illustrations by Isabella Wang



The New School released another statement that condemned



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