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On Reconciling My Asian-American Identity | spotlight

Julia Lee | staff writer

I hail from a town whose population is strikingly diverse in terms of race, culture, religion, economic status. During my sophomore year of high school, one of my teachers asked us to raise our hands if our native language was one other than English. In a room of 19, every hand shot up but mine. This didn't come as a surprise — I was always known as “the Twinkie”, or “the girl who's Asian but not” — but still, when this happened, I felt myself shrink among my peers.

Given the household and community in which I grew up — my parents are first-generation immigrants from Korea — my Asian-American identity is something that has always been especially difficult to wrestle with and accept. English is the language I was raised with and my comprehension of the Korean language is extremely limited, while my mother's fluency in English is elementary at best. The barrier between us continues to grow as I do, because not only do I lack the capacity and proper words to express my sentiments with her, I am and have been unwilling to learn. Communicating with her is only possible on a basic and superficial level, and after developing a personal resentment towards her early on, I made the decision to keep it that way.

The people I was friends with in high school mostly came down to a matter of who was in my classes and the same clubs as me, so given the variety of factors that came into play, the people I interacted with were always pretty ethnically diverse. It was almost assumed or expected that I was the most “Americanized” and culturally devoid person in those groups, but often times I felt like I was too white for my Asian friends, and too Asian for my white friends. There was always the implied and mutually understood sense that I was similar to them in

some way that united us, but that I was the odd one out — that there was something fundamentally different about who we were that made it nearly impossible to relate to each other entirely.

After coming to a university where the overwhelming majority of the student body is white, I felt an inexplicably pressing urge to revert to my roots for the first time. But then, I realized I didn't know what my roots are to begin with, because my foundations were unstable and nonexistent from the start. I shied away from joining cultural organizations because I didn't think I had the right to be a part of a group dedicated to the customs and values I spent so many years avoiding, rejecting, and looking for excuses to turn away from. I was never comfortable identifying myself as a Korean, because although that's exactly what I am. Calling myself that made me feel like a fraud, undeserving of the label.

In high school, I felt what I now recognize as a sick sense of pride in being the most whitewashed person in the room. But looking back on all the time I spent being hostile towards my culture, I shoulder an incredible amount of guilt for being so unwilling to embrace it. A lot of what held me back was the fact that I considered it impossible to fully unite and reconcile being both Asian and American, without sacrificing some part of one for another part of the other. I never thought I could be both, and believed it was too late to learn about what I'd so deliberately neglected for virtually my entire life.

I'm still working my way through the internal dissonance that ensued, and I'm far from harmonizing it. It's one thing to live with a prolonged conflict that's always existed in the background, and it's another to place it at the forefront where I explicitly and willingly acknowledge it. To be frank, I don't know what I'm going to do from here on out, but bringing this internal conflict to light for the first time has allowed me to come to terms with my circumstances in a way that was never possible when I made every effort to internalize them. There's no magical or right solution to any of this, and whether I'll become more disillusioned or enlightened moving forward is up in the air, but I hope to grow closer to some kind of fulfillment or greater understanding throughout the pursuit of developing my identity. ♦



Illustration by Jungsung Back.

The Fourth Wave

The Fourth Wave is a monthly feminist publication produced by Pitt students. Our goal is to break gender stereotypes, write thoughtful and informative articles, and empower the oppressed through sharing a collection of diverse perspectives. We are answering to a need for a premiere feminist publication on college campuses.

Letter from the President

Serving as an officer of this club for the last few years has been quite an honor and growth experience.

I am most proud of the great feminists who are in the club, and I am very fortunate to spend time on a weekly basis with dedicated, enthusiastic, lovely, intelligent intersectional feminists.

I hope to see that The Fourth Wave will remain vigilant and critical of all institutions and systems of oppression, so that we do not fall into the traps of violence of misogyny, racism, ableism, and oppression that media outlets so often perpetuate.

— Amanda Chan

Feminist Vocab of the Month

epistemology (noun): the study and theory of knowledge and knowledge creation.

The establishment of “truth” and “verified” knowledge is biased. Different institutions have different bodies of knowledge that are each validated by their own group.

For example, if the question were posed, “Is racism real?” A journalist or researcher working for a presumably white-controlled institution might cite a study, sanctioned by a presumably white-controlled school, that suggests yes or no. A person of color simply cites their own life.

Both are forms of “knowledge” and “truth” validated in its own way. But how does one determine which side knows the “real” truth?

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Special thanks to Dr. Bishop for supporting our endeavors.

Race and Privilege in Tunisia | personal

Taylor Mulcahey | staff writer



“On the road” by Kate Ter Haar, from Flickr. Creative Commons BY-SA 2.0.

The vendor remembered me, and had the pastry packaged before I could even ask. I handed him two thousand millimes, and I walked to class carrying my pain au chocolat, so close to the Mediterranean Sea, I could smell it. I had my routine, and I finally felt like I was getting used to living in Tunisia. But just as I turned the corner, a group of young men started catcalling me in broken English. “Welcome,” they said. But I’d been welcomed months ago.

Tunisia is a little country tucked between Algeria and Libya. It usually flies under the radar, but has recently gotten a lot of attention for its role in sparking the series of uprisings that spread throughout the Middle East and North Africa in 2011.

Sure, I have all kinds of things to say about my semester — that I really embraced the local culture, ate new foods, learned new languages, met great people and found myself. It’s been said before. What I didn’t realize was how much I would learn about being white.

I look nothing like a Tunisian; the majority of Tunisians are from Arab and Berber descent. Although there’s a great deal of diversity and different shades of color there, my bright blonde hair, green eyes and round, Irish face stood out.

In the United States, especially within the white, middle class areas where I’ve lived, I blend in. In Tunisia, some people stared or spoke to me in French or English, and plenty of men took this as their opportunity to catcall. It was often exhausting. But it wasn’t until I left that I learned what it really means to fit in.

After Tunisia, I spent a week in Germany, and quickly became familiar with “reverse culture shock.” Everything that seemed like it should have been familiar felt uncomfortable or foreign. And among other things, I was blinded by all the white people.

I blended in with the locals, so much so that people often spoke to me in German, and a number of people asked me for directions. Granted, they only received blank stares in response, but nonetheless, I liked the change.

Fitting in is a privilege — we are afforded a number of things by simply looking like we belong. Perhaps most notably, we’re given privacy and independence. When you look like you fit in, people don’t question what you’re up to. They just let you go about what they consider to be your own, private, daily business. When you look like a foreigner, all attention turns to you, and every action is questioned and scrutinized.

When I walked, I looked like just another German student heading to class, carrying out my daily, mundane tasks. I didn’t receive stares, or random calls of “Welcome to our country.” I didn’t receive anything. And after months of constant attention when I walked down the street, the silence felt like a blessing. I became less self-conscious and, in turn, felt more free.

I felt an almost palpable difference in my attitude as a result of how those around me were treating me, but I was ashamed. I was ashamed that I felt so free and was treated so differently, all because of the way I look. The only difference in Germany was that I was surrounded by white, blonde people — I wasn’t any less foreign. In fact, I was probably more foreign, since I only spent a week there, and couldn’t communicate a single word in German. This system is entirely superficial, but the effects of it are not.

I realized that “fitting in” was an amazing privilege that I’d been afforded my entire life, and my time abroad made me understand the flawed system we follow. Even the fact that I’d never felt that type of alienation before attests to my privilege as a white American.

White privilege has no borders, and even in Tunisia, or almost anywhere abroad, being an American comes with its own set of privileges, as well. I can’t

Cont. on pg. 3

Tunisia (cont.)

use my experience to understand the experiences of non-white Americans, and I don't intend to. I do, however, want to share what I consider a blessing — the opportunity to learn about race and identity in a way that I never have before. I've often thought about race, and I've always been aware of it, but I had never been forced to feel it.

Lessons in race are hard, and as white people, we seldom have to ask ourselves what it means to be white. In reality, I have a lot to learn. I can read articles on race, identity and the way white Americans perceive foreigners, but it's experiences like mine in Tunisia that force me to think deeply about race.

I miss Tunisia with all my heart. I miss the pain au chocolats, the stray cats and the coffee. I miss the Mediterranean Sea, the vibrant, civil society, and the some of the most amazing, hopeful, inspiring people I have ever met. I have so many things to be thankful for after my experience abroad, and learning about what it means to be white is one of them. ♦

Learning to Say No | personal

Samantha Garzillo | guest writer — American University

I am incredibly fortunate that I have never said no in a sexual encounter and had someone ignore it.

But for five years, I didn't think saying no was an option.

We're regularly talking about sexual assault. We're learning that consent is necessary, that a lack of consent can be non-verbal and that not just women are raped. But there's one conversation we aren't having: What are we doing for those who believe they have to consent, those who say yes when they want to say no?

When I was 15, I started dating my first serious boyfriend. We became intimate before I was ready. I didn't speak up about it and gave in to every advance, every time — even when I didn't want to. I asked myself every question in the book: Shouldn't I be attracted to him? Don't I have to be intimate with the people I date? Wouldn't it be insulting to him if I said I didn't want to? Isn't it mean to "blue ball" someone? Would he find sexual gratification elsewhere if I said no?

That is, I asked myself every question except, "Is this my body and am I allowed to decide who touches it and when?" I was uncomfortable addressing this, and it led me to nearly three years of hesitant, reluctant, regrettable consent.

Having grown up with a sex education that taught me that sex is painful for women, rather than a discussion on how foreplay can combat this, I don't think this is a surprise. Even when crying after sex became normal for me, we continued sleeping together. My non-verbal behavior showed that I was not consenting, but I insisted we continue

for fear of him finding sexual gratification elsewhere.

Years later, after getting dumped the summer of my freshman year of college, I let my ex-boyfriend use me for sex for an entire semester with the hopes that it would open a door back into his life. It was unloving, impersonal, and, by the end, violent. I did not demand — hell, I did not even meekly request — respect. What started as an active choice became another whirlwind into letting someone else treat me as if I existed for their physical pleasure, and at no point did I protest.

So what do we do? Surely this is a personal problem, right?

While every sexual encounter has been my decision, there are clear reasons why it was difficult to say no.

Media has made female pleasure taboo and dirty, while movies bombard us with scenes of blowjobs.

We've romanticized the idea of an unwilling woman being convinced by a persistent man. Men and women base their worth so heavily on approval from sexual partners — saying no seems to translate to, "I am not attracted to you," or, "I don't enjoy being physical with you." We're unwilling to tell partners no for fear of insulting them.

In America, women are regularly taught that their bodies exist for men. How they dress and act can make them believe they're beautiful, but any exposure of women's skin is considered sexual, as shown by dress codes that consider women's knees and shoulders problematic. Without being empowered to take ownership of your own body, and recognizing that it is not inherently and unavoidably sexual, it is harder to say that your body is not there for someone else's pleasure.

While I cannot speak on the experience of men, I cannot imagine the pressure they feel to lose their virginity and have many sexual partners, neither of which they may desire or feel ready for. We regularly present the idea of men's rampant libidos, painting the false picture that men don't say no because they always want sex. No matter who you are pursuing, it is important to never assume what they want.

But surely all burden cannot fall on ourselves to be empowered to say no. We also have to be good partners. If someone is showing hesitation or discomfort, check in with them, even if they've verbally agreed. There are many ways to make consent a conversation that both partners can and should engage in. For instance,

"Is this okay?"

"Do you like this?"

"Do you want to do this later instead?"

"You're allowed to stop me."

Saying no is difficult. No matter how many people we've slept with, how in love we are with who we're dating, or if we've been willing every time before, each time, we have the right to say no. It's a learning process, but nothing has been more liberating than reclaiming my body and finding those that honor that ownership. ♦



Photo by Leo Reynolds.

Dear Timothy Nerozzi | opinion

Amanda Chan | contributing officer

Dear Timothy Nerozzi,

My name is Amanda. We've met before. In fall 2014, I visited a Pitt College Republicans' meeting to stage an inquiry about your club's exhibition of the film "The Interview." I was wondering if your club was conducting an act of patriotism in the wake of North Korea's Sony hacking, and I mentioned that this film shamelessly exploited the promiscuous-Asian-woman trope. I remember you telling me that Republicans do not like the stereotype that they are racists and misogynists, and that your club would be open to suggestions on improving on that front.

I am sorry to see that your club's hosting of Milo Yiannopoulos — a self-proclaimed free speech activist, according to Vox — on February 29 indicates otherwise. As you may have deduced from the student body's reaction, many were extremely hurt by Yiannopoulos' speech. The Pitt News reported that you defended the lecture by stating that it was in the interest of free speech. The premise of the lecture, according to its title, "Free Speech in Crisis," was that free speech is in danger and, apparently, that it should be protected by spouting offensive, horrific, and hurtful rhetoric to emphasize that it is still legal. Milo said in his lecture, "I've taken it upon myself to go through life as offensively as possible."

I am confused as to how you and Milo seemingly, based on your club hosting this lecture, feel that your free speech rights are in the potential for violation. Have you ever been arrested for protesting? Have state institutions threatened you for voicing your unpopular opinion? Are public universities denying you funding on the basis that they don't agree with you? I'm sure you already know that others, exercising their First Amendment Rights, are completely within their rights to protest you, criticize you, call you names and attend a Student Government Board meeting detailing exactly why Milo was such a terrible guest to have at Pitt.

But I'm writing to you not because I want to argue with conservatives about critical race and feminist politics. That would be a waste of all of our time. Rather, I would like to make a request for the future activities for the Republicans at Pitt. It would certainly help you with your problem that conservatives are wrongly labelled sexists and racists, which you told me about at the meeting I attended last fall.

Here is my biggest question for you, Tim: Could you have some compassion?

I'm not calling for your arrest or your club's defunding, so don't worry about your free speech rights. Instead, I'm simply asking that, in the future, remember that even if you are perhaps only trying to prove a point, which I can only assume your intentions were when you chose to bring such a raucous conservative to campus, your words and actions can still have a traumatizing effect on others. Please, think of those who weep, cringe, and lose sleep at night because of their sexual assaults, their domestic abuse, their experiences with racism.

If you believe that we are playing the victim card and should get over these negative experiences, trust me, we are doing everything we can do just to move on.

**Trigger Warning:
Milo Yiannopoulos
Violence
Rape Culture**

However, it does not help people with marginalized identities overcome this trauma when speakers like Milo take pride in tearing them down.

Compassion means to be gentle and considerate. It means that it is possible to prove a point without resorting to becoming a source of harm and suffering. You can still make your political statements while not blatantly insulting the existence of others.

Hallmark Republican ideals — like being tough on immigration, rejecting free tuition for colleges, critiquing feminism — are met with destructive, regressive solutions by people like Milo. Being tough on immigration doesn't mean decrying all "illegal aliens" as rapists and an epidemic to this country. Believing that reduced or free college tuition would be detrimental to the education system doesn't warrant endorsing a bigoted politician who openly blames low-income students for their own class status and dubs them as freeloaders or welfare queens.

Your club's Twitter account publicly favorited a tweet in response to one of ours, which said, "if you had anything intelligent to say you'd be debating his points, but you don't do you." You brought a speaker to campus whose followers made rape jokes on Twitter and responded to The Fourth Wave's tweets, telling us to hurt ourselves. Trigger Warning: violence, rape culture, ableism, self-harm. A few included, "Please direct yourself to the nearest fire and stay as long as possible," and, "These crazy hoes need a little rape culture in their lives." The Fourth Wave's layout editor, Emily Perdue, watched members of your club take photos of people at a Student Government Board meeting without their permission — she said many people who spoke at the meeting explicitly asked that nobody take photos of them. It seems to me that the reaction you wanted from this event was simply to hurt us, silence us and make fun of us. That doesn't seem like the attitude of someone who, just over a year ago, told me he was concerned about the negative stereotype of Republicans.

Perhaps, in the future, your club can hold itself accountable for the hurt it caused on campus. I believe you can realize that politics and political statements are not more powerful if they're louder, or if they cause the most controversy. Remember, your words have consequences, and while they seem like the usual political rhetoric to you, they are vicious and wounding for many others.

Sincerely,



Amanda Chan
President and Founder, The Fourth Wave

Sexual Assault Awareness Month | informative

Ashley Johnson | staff writer

Trigger Warning: Sexual Violence Sexual Assault Rape

When it comes to sexual assault, everyone is affected. Anyone can be a perpetrator, anyone can be a victim and anyone can be a survivor.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month in the United States. The campaign's focus changes from year to year — 2016 is the year of prevention. According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, SAAM's goal is, "Raise public awareness about sexual violence and to educate communities on how to prevent it."

For the past several years, Pitt's Sexual Harassment and Assault Response and Education has held Sexual Assault Awareness Week, which takes place from April 3-9 this year, according to their website. In conjunction with the Pitt chapter of the American Association of University Women and the Pitt Police, the week is sponsored by Campus Women's Organization. Here are some highlights of the week's events:

- **Wednesday, April 6:** Self Defense Awareness Familiarization Exchange Self-Defense Training, with members of the University of Pittsburgh Police Department. These training sessions are available for free several times throughout the school year, for any Pitt student. The class is at 4pm in the Baierl multipurpose room within the Petersen Events Center. To register, email Officer Camp at HLC33@pitt.edu
- **Sexual Assault Survivors Candlelight Vigil**
- **AAUW's "Red Cup Project"**
- **Screening of *The Invisible War*.** This 2012 documentary focuses on the overwhelming number of assaults that take place within the U.S. military.
- **Friday, April 15th at 4 p.m.:** Pittsburgh SlutWalk, Meet in front of the Cathedral of Learning

For more information on these events, check out the Facebook pages for CWO, SHARE, and the Pittsburgh chapter of AAUW.

In addition to SHARE's awareness week, Vice President Joe Biden will be speaking at the Petersen Events Center lobby on Tuesday, April 5. He'll be promoting the Obama administration's "It's On Us" campaign to fight sexual assault by putting the responsibility on ALL of us. The doors open at 10:15 am. If you get a ticket, make sure to get there early! ♦

The Do-Good Delusion | opinion

Zoe Kovacs | contributing officer



Jose, 42
Yale University
8 kilometers away

Adventurous traveler who loves to explore the world, maintains an active lifestyle, loves all types of dance!

Please visit humanitariansoftinder.tumblr.com for more of these photos.

wealthy Americans entering a foreign space to "save" the locals not only paints the all too common White Savior image, but can also take away from the very community they aim to help. Indeed, because voluntourism reinforces existing inequalities and has the capacity to create dependency, it has been likened to a new form of colonialism.

In many cases, foreign volunteers are not needed. Flying in a group of students to build a school, for example, is not only unwarranted but counterintuitive. It's unlikely that something built by people with no construction skills will amount to a sturdy, safe building. More importantly, it is absurd to suggest that there is no one among the local community capable of doing that job. Of course, if a community is trying to build a gravitational water supply system, they will need someone with expertise on how to do that. Maybe in that case, flying a group of engineers to finish that process isn't so bad — but even then, there might be engineers living in the area who are perfectly capable of the job. Too often voluntourism puts unequipped foreigners in spaces where their aid is unnecessary and intrusive, as expressed in one case by South African locals who received unwanted "aid" from foreign volunteers. It also deprives communities of the economic benefits that would result from local workers completing the job, and at worst can create dependency on foreign aid.

Voluntourism treats developing communities like learning experiences. A group of college students goes to a poor area in a third-world country, they use outdoor plumbing for a few days, they return home gushing with how aware they now are of their privilege. Not only is it immoral to learn about one's privilege at the expense of impoverished populations, but too often the "life-changing-ness" is nothing more than a wakeup call with no payoff. If the volunteers don't go home and make efforts to change the conditions that were so shocking to them, their epiphanies are useless.

It is not wrong to want to learn about and experience other cultures. It is not wrong, either, to want to help others. But perhaps before we hop on a plane to a different continent, it's worth considering who we're really going for, and whether our contributions will be positive in the long run. In reality, while volunteering abroad might at best have short-lived positive effects, if we want to cause any real change, we should focus our efforts on the harmful and unequal global economic systems that allow the impoverished conditions of the Third World to arise in the first place. ♦

Picking up toilet paper | poem

Emily Perdue | contributing officer

A worried look
A hurried pace
Head on a swivel

An owl, hunted.

Glance down the alley
–Don't look for too long–
Look in front, look behind
Stay alert or you're next.

In one pocket, my phone
Ready to dial
The other, my knife
Clutching too tight.

It's just three blocks, only three!
I'll be fine, I reason
Slow steps from afar have my mind on edge
Larger steps, *swivel-swivel-clutch.*

“One bag or two?”
Think first, then decide
One bag, please
I need my hands free to fight.

Thump thump, thump thump
Can these strangers hear my heartbeat?
A broken street lamp
Walking in darkness.

I heard it happened down the street
I think it happened in the dark
I don't actually know the details
I could be next.

Avoid eye contact
But still be aware
Be prepared, be prepared
Hurry up, don't look back!

It often happens down the street
It often happens in the dark
Do the details even matter?
It could be happening right now.

Back in the light
Safe and sound, I'm *alright*
All this panic...
For a pack of toilet paper?

— Emily P., Alive and wellOkay

Sources

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“I believe that women in power is absolutely essential, and that women in power is absolutely not enough.”

- Kimberlé Chrenshaw

