

Building Safe Communities: Empowering Young Asian American Women as Agents of Social Change

Boston, MA, USA

Denison University

Joan Do-Truong

May-August 2022

Background: With Asians as the fastest-growing racial group in Boston (one in ten Boston residents are Asian¹), this project's urgency stems from the rise of overt anti-Asian violence. This includes the Atlanta shooting in March 2021 of six Asian women and over 9,000 instances of anti-Asian violence reported nationally since the pandemic. The traumatic effects of violence aimed at our Asian communities are felt across age, gender, class, and ethnic background. However, narratives such as the Model Minority Myth have perpetuated stereotypes in which Asian experiences with violence such as displacement, immigration, or hypersexualization are invisibilized and silenced². Within this project, peace is defined as working towards racial justice by creating a safer community for Asian-identifying young women. A safe community can provide a space for those who share marginalized identities to feel confident and celebrate themselves. A safe community is also held by its members to co-create healing-centered environments where the wounds and trauma the Asian community has faced can become the knowledge and wisdom that invites us to build said community. To further the vision of having safer communities, I will co-create a summer program workshop series with local Asian American organizations in the Boston area to build a sense of racial identity and for youth participants to recognize themselves as community members who are also agents of social change.

Project Description and Goals: Few youth programs in the Greater Boston area center and support Asian American young women. This project will create a space for participants (ages 14-18) who not only identify as women on the basis of their given gender at birth, but also transgender, intersex and gender non-conforming young people as their gender identity is also heavily discriminated. In our application process, we will have a confidential questionnaire section in which young people will be invited to identify themselves in regards to their sex and gender identity.

The three goals of the program (detailed below) are to promote individual and collective empowerment, healing, and community building. The project will run for 8 weeks, meeting on Saturdays, starting July 9 at the Viet-AID, a Vietnamese community center in Boston. If there is a high risk of COVID-19 for in-person programming, I will utilize the video conferencing platform, Zoom.

1. The first goal is for Asian American young women to leave our program empowered and knowledgeable on Asian American history and local Boston Asian-centered movements; this consists of popular education workshops to be led for the first five weeks (July 9-August 6) of programming. The curriculum is discussion-based and involves interactive activities for young people to explore through specific topics: "Asian American Identity" (July 9), "Issues in Asian American History" (July 16), "Intersectional Solidarities and Allyship" (July 23), "Addressing Justice and Peace when Asian Communities Face Harm and Violence" (July 30), and "Introduction to Transformative Justice" (August 6). For example, in "Issues in Asian American History," I will create an interactive timeline of crucial events in Asian American history, as well as provide collective readings from Edward Said's *Orientalism* and Omi and Winant's *Racial Formation* to understand how Asians have been racialized.
2. The second goal is for Asian American young women to leave feeling confident in their bodies and comfortable to discuss their challenges and vulnerabilities. I am partnering with Mai Du of Wah Lum Kung Fu and Tai Chi Academy in the sixth week of programming, "Community Care, Self Defense" (August 13th). We've decided to implement self-defense workshops alongside our curriculum to acknowledge the rise in unprecedented anti-Asian physical attacks as well as the staggering rate at which nearly 55% of Asian women have reported being survivors of domestic violence. Her self-defense workshops are tailored for participants to open up and discuss their mental well-being and

¹ Anne Calef and Luc Schuster, "[Building AAPI Power: A Profile of AAPI Communities in Greater Boston](#)". Boston, 2017

² Hartlep, Nicholas D. *The Model Minority Stereotype: Demystifying Asian American Success*. Information Age Pub., Inc, Charlotte, NC, 2013.

visions and create a safe space to discuss vulnerabilities and challenges Asian young women face in their daily lives. The goal is for our young people to be prepared and confident in their bodily autonomy.

3. Finally, our last goal is to provide Asian young women resources and space which will empower them to seek leadership roles in their communities as discerning moral agents. We will host a panel and celebration in the last two weeks (August 20 & 27) of programming. During the panel, we will be centering Asian American elders who were active in organizing and building programs for the Asian American community in the Greater Boston area as a means to build intergenerational and communal relationships. Towards the end of programming, we also aim to provide Asian young women with leadership opportunities they can utilize to promote social change and envision a peaceful world free from racial violence.

In summary, we aim for our program to help participants form an understanding of Asian American history, and specifically, Asian-centered movements in Boston; build confidence in their bodies as racialized and gendered people; and find a space with resources to cultivate leadership skills. Through these goals, we hope participants will be able to situate themselves within local and national Asian-centered movements and have the tools to create their own safe spaces to navigate discussions regarding personal challenges, vulnerabilities, and identity.

Roles and Planning: I will direct the program. With my established network connections, I will recruit 3-4 facilitators and 15-20 Asian self-identifying young women so that individual and close relationships can be established. I will collaborate with members from the Asian American Resource Workshop (AARW), an Asian American political organizing group in Boston, MA, whose work from the past 40 years centers on Asian Americans facing displacement, deportations, and political education. I will also work with Asian Coalition MA (ACMA), a grassroots advocacy collective of Asian American identifying youth across Massachusetts, which will promote the program to other young people involved and Asian youth who may be interested. I will also partner with Mai Du, who is the owner of Wah Lum Kung Fu and Tai Chi Academy and has taught self-defense classes for more than 20 years.

I will use my networks with AARW, ACMA, and Wah Lum Kung Fu Academy to promote the program via social media (Instagram, Facebook) and by word of mouth. While promoting the program, a link to the application process will be made available. The application will consist of questions regarding their identities, geographic location and definition of Asian American identity, leadership, and community. Participants will answer questions, "What does AAPI leadership look like to you?" and "What experience, if any, do you have with youth leadership programs?" I will then evaluate the answers and determine which applicants will be accepted based on their motivation and interests to explore Asian American identity.

I will work with AARW, ACMA as well as Mai to solidify final logistics, including dates and times, recruitment methods, and curriculum in mid-May to June. Pre-registration will be required for interested youth and workshops will be in accordance with social distancing and mask requirements. My collaboration efforts with AARW and ACMA will then tailor the workshop curriculum to be accessible via an online platform.

Outcomes and Project Sustainability: Utilizing pre-and post-workshop surveys to assess the youth's knowledge and understanding of Asian American history, movements, transformative justice, and empowerment will help me understand and collaborate with other members to solidify a workshop curriculum that can center the needs of Asian American young people. I hope this project will build momentum for young Asian participants to engage with ongoing issues in their communities and build their leadership skills even after programming ends. Additionally, I envision this initiative to become a yearly program to empower young Asian women.

Background and Qualifications: My experience with this community stems from my identity as a low-income, Vietnamese woman in the Boston area in which I struggled to find spaces that would support my growth as a leader. This is also an extension of my ongoing work with ACMA, which I founded in April 2021 as a virtual space for young Asian American youth across the Massachusetts Commonwealth to gather and discuss their experiences as Asian Americans. We hope that this project will support our future goals of leading political education workshops for young people and community-wide events.

Name: Joan Do-Truong					Note: all funds in US dollars.				
Project Name: Building Safe Communities: Empowering Asian American Young Women as Agents of Social Change									
School: Denison University					TOTAL FUNDS REMAINING:				
					\$ -				
Projects for Peace grant:		\$ 10,000.00							
Additional Funding, if any:					TOTAL EXPENDITURES:				
Total funding available:		\$ 10,000.00			\$ 10,000.00				
Student Expenses					Project Expenses				
Travel (Including Airfare)	Lodging	Communications	Food (Biweekly)	Miscellaneous	Non-Student Travel and Lodging	Direct Equipment and Supplies	Marketing and Event Support	Staffing Costs	Miscellaneous
250	520	360	250		3600	100	250	3000	
270					800	150		450	
Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
\$ 520.00	\$ 520.00	\$ 360.00	\$ 250.00	\$ -	\$ 4,400.00	\$ 250.00	\$ 250.00	\$ 3,450.00	\$ -
Total Student Expenses: \$ 1,650.00					Total Project Expenses: \$ 8,350.00				

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Budget Narrative

I am proposing for this project to be completed in the summer of 2022 from May to August. The need for this project is approximately \$10,000 which will support my lodging, travel, and food fees as well as project fees.

Budget Justification

Student Expenses

The student expenses will account for my travel expenses, lodging, communications, and food. I will use \$250 for airfare for my flight to Boston and an additional \$270 for a monthly (\$90/month) transportation pass in order to travel to Viet-AID Community Center (the host site for the program). I will also use \$520 for lodging expenses (sublet and laundry costs) as well as supporting communication costs (internet, phone expenses). Finally, I will use \$250 to support my food and grocery needs.

Project Expenses

Lodging and Transportation

The total cost to rent the Viet-AID Community Center's Great Hall Space is \$3600 for \$450/day. Programming will meet there once a week for eight weeks. In addition, I will provide transportation passes to participants who live more than 2 miles from the Viet-AID and need transportation support (\$800).

Direct Equipment and Supplies

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, I will need personal protective equipment (PPE) in order to ensure the safety of myself and participants for in-person programming. As a result, \$100 will be used towards purchasing PPE such as masks, hand sanitizer, and disinfectant wipes. With \$150, I will provide snacks and water as it can get very humid during the summer, and participants will need protein and energy bars to re-energize during the self-defense workshop (August 13th).

Marketing and Event Support

Towards the end of programming, \$250 will be used for a celebratory close-out celebration. This will provide catered food and celebration materials such as banners, tablecloths, utensils, and cardstock certificates to participants who have completed the program.

Staffing

With this program, I am recruiting 3 more facilitators to help me develop the curriculum and also support in running the program. Because of the extensive time commitment and work that will be produced, each facilitator will be compensated \$1000/each for their work. In addition, I will stipend Mai, who will run our self-defense workshop for \$450/session as this is the rate she has provided.