**Honors Project Proposal**

**Project Overview**

I will be doing a two semester Honors Project that will begin during Fall semester 2020 and conclude at the end of Spring semester 2021. News started circulating in early December 2019 from Wuhan, China that a highly virulent disease later named “Covid-19” was infecting many of its citizens. When COVID-19 first began to surface in the United States (U.S.) in January 2020, and began spreading in March, a panicked frenzy emerged as people began to wear masks and became much more cautious in public. However, that panicked frenzy that some experienced was not from the virus itself, but rather about the location of where the virus originated. With the virus having connections to China, there was an increase in discrimination among Asian Americans amid the outbreak. In fact, according to the Pew Research Center, “Asian and Black Americans (were) more likely than other groups to report negative experiences because of their race or ethnicity since the coronavirus outbreak” (Ruiz, Horowitz, and Tamir, 2020). The discrimination ranged from people acting as if they were uncomfortable around them, having been subjected to slurs or jokes, and/or being threatened or physically attacked. As being someone who identifies as Asian-American, specifically Korean American, I, as well as my family members, have been a witness and a victim to this. Thus, I really wanted my Honors Project to address and support Asian-Americans during this time by implementing a support space, where individuals could de-stress and engage in conversations with both students and staff members. Another aspect of my project is to compile supporting resources.

Some of the key courses that will be informing my work include the class I took in Spring 2019 with Professor John Voto called “Hate Crime”. With the facts that I learned in that class, I will apply those concepts to my project and connect it with the surge in anti-Asian hate crimes that appear to have increased since the onset of COVID-19. This disease really highlighted the inequities that are currently present such as racism, national insecurity, fear of foreigners, and general xenophobia (Gover, Harper, and Langton, 2020). When there is a situation involving those identifying as a person of color (POC), society tends to find a scapegoat. In this situation, the scapegoat involved is Asian-Americans. Another course that will be supporting my Honors Project is CRIM 4900: Research Seminar – CJ by my Honors Mentor, Dr. Cathy Levey. I will be using this time to develop a literature review and have bi-monthly consultations to ask questions related to my topic and to ensure that my project is on task. In the Spring of 2021, I will be doing a specific Honor Service-Learning Directed Study with Dr. Rae Mansfield to continue my work with researching and assisting Asian-American students during this time.

My Honors Project will be to design and develop a support space for students who identify as Asian Americans. Through my time working closely with the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) here at UMass Lowell, I will be getting hands-on experience, and behind the scenes work with program planning, as well as being part of OMA’s initiatives. For instance, I will be a peer liaison working closely with various cultural student organizations on campus. I will also be attending meeting with OMA staff, as well as helping gather feedback from current students on any projects their office is currently conducting for the first half of the year. Then, the second half of the year, I will be using the tools I learned with my time serving with the OMA to implement my own support space and creating topics and resources based on my research which will be conducted during both semesters.

**Project Rationale/Justification**

As mentioned, I identify as Korean American. That is a crucial part of my identity. I grew up in a predominately white neighborhood where I received some ignorant comments from several of my peers. However, the comments and looks I would receive during this time of COVID-19 made me feel more unsettled than ever before. My top fear with COVID-19 was not the fact that I was going to become sick, but rather I was fearful of my own personal safety from others. After speaking with some of my friends who identify as Asian Americans, they also shared the same sentiments. Therefore, when I was given the opportunity to do an Honors Project that is relevant in terms of current events, and relevant to those I love, I knew that I wanted it to involve service-learning.

**Format of Honors Project Presentation**

I will be doing a PowerPoint presentation to discuss my experiences working with the Office of Multicultural Affairs from an administrative/staff behind the scenes perspective, as well as my experience facilitating a virtual support space with the skills that I learned from the first half of the year. In addition, I will be taking the time to reflect, and do a “birds-eye-view” of how everything is interconnected.

**Format of Archivable Components of Honors Project**

Along with my PowerPoint presentation, I will be creating an e-portfolio using Digication to hold my archivable components. My archivable components will include my reflection paper for my service-learning project and my PowerPoint presentation. The e-portfolio will have different parts, including the following: Introduction, Weekly Reflections, Site Overview, Key Incident(s), Outcome Study Findings, Lessons Learned, Innovations/Future Work, Acknowledgements, Resources, and a Gallery. I will also be assembling these reflection materials and my PowerPoint presentation into a bound document for the Honors College library.

**Timeline**

***2020-2021 Academic year:***

1. Complete a literature review, including the Columbia University support group from which this project is being modeled
2. Help to design, research, and implement a curriculum for a virtual support space with Asian/Asian-American identifying student organizations
3. Create a list of resources that address mental health for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), more specifically the Asian American community, articles that look into COVID-19 fueling anti-Asian racism and xenophobia
4. Serve as a liaison between the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs for Equity & Inclusion, Leslie Wong and Senior Associate Director, Amy Liss
   1. Attend weekly meetings with OMA staff (discuss experience behind the scene – administration/program planning)
5. Serve as a personal liaison to cultural organization within the Office of Multicultural Affairs
6. Engage in research and assessment of current initiatives
   1. Gather feedback from current students from focus groups, surveys and informal conversations
7. Complete the e-Portfolio, PowerPoint, and service-learning reflection paper

**Working Bibliography**

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