

Anti-Asian Racism at Tufts University in 1982:

Who was Protected?

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On Friday, March 12, 1982, at Tufts University, sneakers scraped against the asphalt as a stampede of Zeta Psi pledges engaged in a 7 am morning run. Their feet came to a stop in front of the Asian American Cultural House as their mouths let out roars of violence.

“Nuke the Gooks!”

“I love the smell of napalm in the morning!”

These privileged men meant for their vocalized dominance to penetrate the cement walls that failed to protect the students inside. These Zeta Psi pledges were acting on orders from Zeta Psi pledge marshals to scream racist profanities if they wanted to join the fraternity.

The incident was publicly unreported until the Tufts Daily and the Tufts Observer published Zeta Psi’s apology letter a week after the incident. The students of the Asian American Cultural House requested the letter in a private conversation between themselves and the members of Zeta Psi. After the letter was published, these Asian students hoped to place the matters of assigning punishment to that of the Tufts administration.

The brothers of Zeta Psi defended themselves by claiming their intent was to “humiliate the pledges”¹ and asked for “positive punishment”.² In the letter they wrote:

It occurred during Race Awareness Week, which was designed to sensitize the Tufts community to racial issues: it also occurred one week after the Vietnam Forum which reminded the community of Asians suffering during the war... The brothers of Zeta Psi would like to extend a formal apology to the Asian community at Tufts for this unfortunate incident. Zeta Psi has prided itself on its diversity and integration. This incident, and others which may have occurred in the past, in no way reflects the true feelings of Zeta Psi, a fraternity which counts Asian brothers among its membership...

¹ Tufts Observer, 1969 - 2019. Tufts Observer 1982-03-24. 35571. UP055.
UP055.013.013.00023. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA. 1.

² Tufts Observer, 1969 - 2019. Tufts Observer 1982-04-23. 35573. UP055.
UP055.013.013.00035. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA. 6.

Although we believe this occurrence stemmed more from ignorance than malice, we realize the severity and implications of the incident... This incident has proven to us the importance of cultural education and increased racial awareness at Tufts. Zeta Psi hopes to use the lessons learned from this occurrence to foster increased cooperation and understanding within our organization.

The Brothers of Kappa Chapter of Zeta Psi³

The brothers of Zeta Psi publicly described the acts they committed in order to inform the campus of what they did, and as a fraternity, take responsibility. Fortunately, they understood that their words (“nuke the gooks” etc.), having adopted racist rhetoric commonly used during the War in Vietnam, harmed not just those traumatized by the war, but all Asian/Asian American folks. The slur of “gooks” similar to “chinks” was (and continues to be) one of dehumanization, perpetual alienation, violence, and disgust directed and felt by anyone of Asian descent. While on the surface, the letter represented the fraternity’s acceptance of responsibility, when broken down, the brothers took responsibility as an entire fraternity to protect the individuals who instructed the pledges. They also placed some of the responsibility on the university.

The incident at Tufts did not stand alone, it reflected the trends of growing anti-Asian sentiment in the 70-80s. In that time there was a great increase of Asians living in America as a result of the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, which reversed many past policies that restricted those from Asian countries to come to the US. “In the first five years after the bill’s passage, immigration to the U.S. from Asian countries—especially those fleeing war-torn Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Cambodia)—would more than quadruple”.⁴ This rapid increase of

³ Tufts Daily. Tufts Daily, March 19, 1982. 0v838b062. <http://hdl.handle.net/10427/2749>. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA. 3.

⁴ History.com Editors. “U.S. Immigration Since 1965.” History.com. A&E Television Networks, March 5, 2010. <https://www.history.com/topics/immigration/us-immigration-since-1965>.

Asian immigrants in the US also led to an increase in violence against Asians in America. “A 1986 report by the United States Commission on Civil Rights concluded that ‘anti-Asian activity in the form of violence, harassment, intimidation, and vandalism [had] been reported across the nation’.⁵ One important and well-known incident in 1982 was the brutal murder of 27-year-old Chinese American, Vincent Chin. The men who murdered Chin did not serve any jail time. The murder of Chin and the incident at Tufts in ‘82 were linked in the climate of racist views towards Asians during this time.

Reflecting the national shift in the Asian American population, Tufts itself had gone from 135 Asian students in the fall of 1977 to more than 250 in the fall of 1982.⁶ To respond to this new growing population on campus, just two days before the incident, Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Elizabeth Ahn Toupin conducted a forum entitled “Racism Against Asians” to “question racism on campus against Asians”.⁷ Although it was unprecedented that Tufts hired an Asian American Dean, the presence of her on campus was not an accurate representation of how the Tufts community valued Asian Americans. Communities like the Asian American Cultural House, the Asian Student Club, and Asian American Studies courses were created by and for Asian/Asian American students on campus in response to the rapid increase of Asian students at the time and those foundations were something to celebrate. However, those communities could only provide so much comfort as they were unable to protect students

⁵ Angelo N. Ancheta, “Neither Black nor White,” in *Asian American Studies Now: A Critical Reader*, ed. Jean Yu-Wu Shen Wu and Thomas C. Chen (Rutgers University Press, 2010), 26.

⁶ Office of the Dean of Arts, Sciences, and Engineering Records. Asian Student Center, 1983-1993. 35775. UA045. UA045.003.28.00001. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.

⁷ Tufts Daily. Tufts Daily, March 16, 1982. 5t34sv95c. <http://hdl.handle.net/10427/9848>. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA. 3.

from hate crimes like Zeta Psi's. Just like the greater country, Tufts faced its case of overt anti-Asian sentiment on the morning of March 12.

After the incident became public news, Ken Hiraki, the President of the Asian House, responded to the incident:

'We believe there was no malicious intent. According to them it was designed to humiliate the pledges. We're giving them the benefit of the doubt. Any restitution relies solely on the deans'... At first the Asian students were outraged and were considering retaliation, but decided to ask for the apology letter and turned the matter over to the administration... 'We don't want to create a situation where people will react negatively. We want to be fair on both sides. Our main purpose is to educate. We want the campus to know this happened and that the Asian students will not take this kind of abuse'.⁸

From this quote it seemed that Hiraki wanted little involvement in deciding disciplinary action, instead, Hiraki looked towards the deans' aid. Hiraki's response also mimicked the model minority myth⁹ in his composed and non-violent response to the crime. While Hiraki mentioned outrage and retaliation, the residents at the Asian House, arguably for their own safety and survival, decided to take a back seat in the university's decision.

President Jean Mayer, on the other hand, responded with a tone of disgust regarding Zeta Psi's behavior:

'I am horrified. It's the first time I've been ashamed of Tufts students. I know that the next time a lot of people are going to be expelled. It involves such stupidity and not understanding what nuclear war is all about. If this fraternity keeps on violating the rules we'll see that it is closed down.'¹⁰

⁸ Tufts Observer, 1969 - 2019. Tufts Observer 1982-03-24.1.

⁹ Asian Americans have been boxed into the model minority myth ever since the January 9, 1966 edition of *The New York Times* where White sociologist William Peterson coined the term to describe the seeming "success" of Asian immigrants in America. This narrative of the model minority places Asian Americans as a people who study hard, don't complain, and stay in their lane.

¹⁰ Tufts Observer, 1969 - 2019. Tufts Observer 1982-03-24. 1.

As President of the university, Mayer had the ability to set a precedent in how the University would respond to this behavior. Mayer did so by stating that he would not tolerate this kind of behavior in the future. However, there were a few things wrong with Mayer's statements.

While it was clear that Mayer did not agree with the brothers' actions, Mayer did not directly address the incident as a hate crime. President Mayer also said Zeta Psi had "done a dumb thing, we've all been in that position, but usually we've been six years old".¹¹ Firstly, Mayer, through his word choice, stripped the reality of the pain it had caused across campus by having labeled this incident as an act of "stupidity" and a "dumb thing". Secondly, when Mayer said, "we've all been in that position" he falsely represented "we"; Mayer spoke as "we" meaning White people. People of color were (and continue to be) systematically on the receiving end; people of color were (and continue to be) the ones pinned at a young age (earlier than six) to realize they were not like their White peers. Lastly, by having said Zeta Psi's words were one of a "six years old," Mayer denied the reality that there were racist people everywhere of all ages. An anonymous student even wrote in the Daily that, "Mayer's lack of knowledge and sensitivity concerning minority issues are an embarrassment to the Tufts Administration and entire university".¹² Zeta Psi's actions weren't an act of immaturity but an act of violence.

Mayer's response received more flack than Hiraki's even when Mayer's response seemed harsher towards Zeta Psi's actions. This dynamic was due to their difference in power. Hiraki was an Asian American senior who was just verbally attacked and risked being the target for potential future violence by having his name published in the newspapers. Hiraki's safety was at stake if he chose to confront Zeta Psi's actions with violence and/or harsher words. On

¹¹ Tufts Observer, 1969 - 2019. Tufts Observer 1982-04-23. 8.

¹² Tufts Daily. Tufts Daily, March 18, 1982. wd376713j. <http://hdl.handle.net/10427/10865>. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA. 2.

the other hand, Mayer was a White man and held one of the most powerful positions at the University. The severity in how he spoke about expulsion, however, was not reflected in the outcome of the incident.

The administration was unable to carry out a swift punishment for Zeta Psi. Dean of Students, Bobbie Knable met with the fraternity and had three business days to attempt to get individuals to step forward as “individuals should accept the responsibility for their individual actions”.¹³ In a letter sent to Zeta Psi, President George Economou, Dean Knable articulated the choices each pledge marshal had if they came forward:

A) Deferred suspension from the University through graduation (this action becomes part of the student’s record); no participation in commencement ceremonies. (OR) B) Disciplinary probation through graduation (this action does not appear on a student’s record); no participation in commencement exercises; no participation or presence on campus, including housing; through graduation, except academic obligations.¹⁴

At the same time that Dean Knable was trying to persuade Zeta Psi members to step forward, the Committee on Student Life (CSL), a student and faculty board run by Professor Don Klein, stated that if the fraternity members failed to come forward the following repercussions, conducted by the CSL, would take place:

Zeta Psi Fraternity 1) is placed on disciplinary probation from now through the 1982-83 academic year, and on social probation (to include pledging) for the same period; 2) shall during the fall semester 1982 engage in some campuswide racial awareness educational activity in cooperation with the Dean of Students Office; and 3) shall conduct a major campus service project in cooperation with the Dean of Students Office.¹⁵

¹³ Tufts Observer, 1969 - 2019. Tufts Observer 1982-04-16. 35572. UP 055. UP055.013.013.00024. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA. 24.

¹⁴ Tufts Observer, 1969 - 2019. Tufts Observer 1982-04-16. 24.

¹⁵ Tufts Observer, 1969 - 2019. Tufts Observer 1982-04-16. 24.

After the CSL published this punishment, the Tufts Community Union (TCU) Senate, a student group, had approved a notion that the CSL's "punishment for the Zeta Psi Fraternity was 'unduly harsh,'"¹⁶ referring to the aspect of one full year of probation. The TCU expressed concern that the punishment would threaten the fraternity's future existence. The bias of the TCU was questionable given that its Vice President, Seth Bilazarian was a member of Zeta Psi as was its Secretary Chris Silva. Both members pushed for "positive" and "constructive punishment".¹⁷ However, other TCU members like Senator Steve Atlas, who when interviewed with the Observer staff went against Bilazarian's words by openly admitting that "one year probation is adequate- it is not unduly harsh".¹⁸

In the end, Zeta Psi held onto its initial response. Instead of any members coming forward, Zeta Psi strategically decided to take the responsibility as an entire fraternity, which not only protected the pledge marshalls' anonymity, but the CSL would've assigned a lesser punishment than Knable's. The members of Zeta Psi and their eight pledges who screamed violence were protected in anonymity and any sufficient repercussions for their racism.

While CSL's original steps were published, the CSL retracted said punishment. Chairman Klein even "admitted the [original] penalty was set up in an effort to flush out the two students,"¹⁹ instead of protecting the Asian American students. In the end, the CSL voted on Monday, April 19th to reduce Zeta Psi's punishment to only one-semester probation and to require the fraternity to engage in "racial awareness educational activity and [to] conduct a

¹⁶ Tufts Observer, 1969 - 2019. Tufts Observer 1982-04-23. 6.

¹⁷ Tufts Observer, 1969 - 2019. Tufts Observer 1982-04-23. 6.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Tufts Observer, 1969 - 2019. Tufts Observer 1982-04-23.8.

service project”.²⁰ Asian American student, Kelvin Ing, a member of the CSL was asked “not to participate in the CSL vote because he was Asian”.²¹

After the CSL’s final decision was published, Chairman Klein took it upon himself to call Hiraki asking for him to “write letters to the Observer and the Daily coming out in favor of a lenient punishment for Zeta Psi”.²² Klein must have believed his actions were appropriate based on Hiraki’s original statement. Since Hiraki seemed to be taking a conciliatory approach, Klein believed Hiraki would write this letter in favor of the CSL’s decision to lessen the fraternity’s punishment in order to calm the tensions that transpired on campus after the CSL’s revised decision. Klein attempted to take advantage of Hiraki as well as his position as Chairman of the CSL to try and manipulate the situation in order to ease campus tensions. At the end of the semester, fellow members of the CSL called for Klein’s resignation as his communication with Hiraki was not agreed upon by the entire committee. By calling Hiraki, Klein overstepped, as the CSL was a democratic committee that functioned as a group and not as individuals.

Following the news, Knable wrote an open letter to the Tufts Community through the Observer and Daily. Knable, an African American woman, opened the letter by addressing the reality of different racial identities at Tufts: “We are a multicultural, multi-racial community... [and] more often than we like to think, we lead our lives on parallel tracks, with too few connecting links”.²³ In the end, Knable offered to answer any questions during specially arranged office hours. Knable aimed to provide some help since she was unable to take charge of the case.

²⁰ Tufts Observer, 1969 - 2019. Tufts Observer 1982-04-23.1.

²¹ Ibid. 22.

²² Ibid. 8.

²³ Tufts Observer, 1969 - 2019. Tufts Observer 1982-04-30. 35574. UP055. UP055.013.013.00026. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA. 6.

During the thirty-eight days that transpired between the hateful incident and its disciplinary resolution, student voices emerged, expressing increasingly strong opinions about the situation or none at all. While studying in the Tufts Library, Ing had received an anonymous note which mirrored the actions of Zeta Psi. The Observer published the note:

Dear Asian Asshole:

I could care less if they nuke all the gooks or napalm all the niggers on campus!

FUCK YOU!

- A concerned student²⁴

Ing spoke with the Observer staff and was quoted after this personal attack:

'People won't admit there's racial tension at Tufts. People should open their eyes. How many more incidents do we need? Do we need a cross burning?'²⁵

The note left on Ing's desk carried the same violent rhetoric with that of the Zeta Psi pledges. It also signified Ing's concern that racist speech existed outside of Zeta Psi.

As a voice for the Greek chapters at Tufts, the Interfraternity Council (IFC) at Tufts wrote a letter to the Observer which remained silent about the incident. Allan Eva, President of IFC wrote:

Contrary to what may at first glance appear elitist, fraternity and sorority organizations are quite diverse. Fraternities and sororities are a rare source of racial harmony on college campuses. Unlike most Culture houses which normally feature exclusive membership of one nationality... Tufts Greek organizations, comprised of ambitious and outgoing men and women, are a credit to the University and to student life; we believe it would be prejudicial to think otherwise.²⁶

²⁴ Tufts Observer, 1969 - 2019. Tufts Observer 1982-04-23. 19.

²⁵ Tufts Observer, 1969 - 2019. Tufts Observer 1982-04-23. 22.

²⁶ Tufts Observer, 1969 - 2019. Tufts Observer 1982-04-16. 11.

Eva's letter boasted the positive aspects of Greek life specifically to race relations on campus. In poor taste, Eva completely disregarded the Zeta Psi incident even though the topic remained on the front page of the Observer throughout the month. Speaking on behalf of all of the greek chapters on Tufts campus, the letter was disrespectful to the Asian students on campus by turning a blind eye to their hurt. If Eva was right, then this Zeta Psi action must've not represented all of Greek life if "Greeks" according to Eva were "extraordinarily diversified".²⁷ The silence of the IFC read as complacency and their dig at culture houses lacked an understanding of the necessity for POC spaces.

However, the IFC and the anonymous writer did not represent the views of the majority of students. There were incidents of Zeta Psi having received "threatening phone calls, and their basement flooded and gotten their cars egged".²⁸ Students wrote op-eds and letters to the Tufts Observer and the Tufts Daily complaining that Tufts wasn't taking the matter seriously enough and calling for Zeta Psi's suspension. Most letters were in direct response to Tufts administration, the CSL ruling, as well as TCU's involvement. Many students were confused and angered by the TCU Senate's involvement in releasing such a statement, especially when it didn't seem like those words spoke for all of the members. Junior Bob Cohen wrote to the Observer:

Senate President Kevin Thurm, in stating his opposition to the CSL's punishment, argued that the fraternity has been of service to the community and it would be a great loss to Tufts if the punishment forced it to close down.

But if this opportunity to get tough on racism is passed up, it will be an even greater loss to the community. There is a price to pay for justice, and if, in this case the price is the

²⁷ Tufts Observer, 1969 - 2019. Tufts Observer 1982-04-16. 11.

²⁸ Tufts Observer, 1969 - 2019. Tufts Observer 1982-04-23. 22.

demise of Zeta Psi, so be it. After all, it is our responsibility to see that those responsible for racist actions, no matter how ignorant, pay dearly.²⁹

Cohen highlighted the fault in both the TCU Senate and the CSL's prioritized commitment to protect Zeta Psi's future. By lessening the punishment, the CSL focused on ensuring the survival of the first fraternity on campus³⁰ instead of the survival of Asian American students. This loyalty perfectly showed who the CSL wished to protect between the Zeta Psi members and the Asian/Asian American students on campus. How could Asian students go on knowing Tufts chose to value the protection of racist men over themselves?

Junior Alicia Hsu, emphasized that this incident wasn't solely felt by those residing in the Asian American Cultural House, but of all Asian/Asian American students. Hsu sent a letter to the Observer in which she wrote:

All members of the Tufts community are directly affected by, and hence 'directly involved' in, this racial incident... Racism is painful and scarring to all who have experienced it. It has a history and a future. I ask each Tufts community member to recognize his-her direct involvement in the discrimination which occurs on campus. We must all face the challenge to extinguish the future of racism and encourage mutual understanding and respect.³¹

Another student, angered by the duration of the punishment, Le Jen Chen Jackson wrote to the Observer:

The Tufts Community has a right to be informed immediately of what happened, and what the university is going to do about it... If they are not punished, how will they understand that their actions were wrong? Racial incidents such as this are serious

²⁹ Tufts Observer, 1969 - 2019. Tufts Observer 1982-04-23. 8.

³⁰ *The first Greek-letter social fraternity to arrive had been Zeta Psi, established on campus in 1855, only a year after the college opened. See: Miller, Russel E. Light on the Hill Volume II: A History of Tufts University Since 1952. Mass Market Books, 1986. 207.*

³¹ Tufts Observer, 1969 - 2019. Tufts Observer 1982-04-16. 8.

enough to call for swift actions to be taken by the administration. If no action is taken, what guarantees does the Tufts Community have that it will not happen again?³²

These Asian American students, not residing in the Asian American Cultural House, were clearly upset that they didn't know about the incident until Zeta Psi's letter (the week after it happened) and wanted more from the administration. Another Asian American student not residing in the cultural house, Bonnie Liu, sent a letter to the Daily demanding this incident to "be a lesson to the Tufts community -- racial discrimination does exist on this campus and we must try harder to understand and respect each other".³³

Cohen, Hsu, Chen Jackson, and Liu were some of the visible students who outwardly critiqued the way everything was being conducted by the administration, the CSL, and the TCU. Student Ron Lee had a comic of his published in the Observer where he perfectly laid out the majority of the students' anger:



³² Tufts Observer, 1969 - 2019. Tufts Observer 1982-03-24. 2.

³³ Tufts Daily. Tufts Daily, March 22, 1982. r430f834. <http://hdl.handle.net/10427/11131>. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA. 6.

Lee's comic laid out the many flaws in the reactions on campus to the incident. Lee placed Zeta Psi members, Chairman Klein, TCU Senate, and the racist student who left the note on Ing's desk in the same comic to show how they all played a role in "looking bad". All of these people/groups referred to in the comic expressed that they prioritized Zeta Psi members over the Asian students on campus. The complacency of everyone on campus was displayed by the winner in Lee's comic having been "the whole Tufts community for not learning a thing".

While these letters and comics gave voice to many students on campus, some students like Kelvin Ing were angered by the letters as he believed they "worsened the situation[;]" it was his fear that "it would look like a confrontation".³⁴ Ing said, "We were not trying to screw Zeta Psi. We didn't have anything to do with the punishment. It's the Asian students and Zeta Psi that understand. The racial tension came from people who didn't know".³⁵ Voices like Hsu, Chen Jackson, Liu, and Lee clearly wanted a harsh punishment for Zeta Psi members and more transparency from the Tufts administration begging to question that when Ing spoke for "Asian students" if he only spoke about those living in the House. Asian Americans were (*and are still*) not a monolithic group. Ing clearly did not speak for all Asian students on campus, and this misrepresentation may have pushed Asian students like Hsu, Chen Jackson, Liu, and Lee to send their works to the papers in order to show that the voices of Ing and Hiraki did not represent their own. The model minority aspect of Asian Americans not complaining and being silent is one Hsu, Chen Jackson, Liu, Lee, and other Asian American students on campus clearly worked to debunk.

³⁴ Tufts Observer, 1969 - 2019. Tufts Observer 1982-04-23.1.

³⁵ Tufts Observer, 1969 - 2019. Tufts Observer 1982-04-23.1.

Hiraki and Ing seemed to play into the model minority role through their cordial appearance and quotes in the papers. Even Chairman Klein fed into the myth when he expected Hiraki to send letters to the papers in favor of the more lenient punishment. However, it could've also been possible that Hiraki and Ing spoke in a non-confrontational way in order to protect themselves. Hiraki and Ing were repeated names on the front pages of both the Daily and the Observer, which, again, made them targets as seen literally played out by Ing receiving a direct White supremacist note in the library. In this survival lens, it did not come as a surprise that Ing would almost defend Zeta Psi saying "we've both been victimized"³⁶. Hiraki and Ing still had to survive on the campus that did not value them equally to the Zeta Psi members.

Re-emphasizing the period between the incident and the punishment, by the time Zeta Psi received its punishment, the spring semester was almost over and finals loomed in the near future. The psychic burdens Ing and Hiraki had to endure throughout the semester were incredibly damaging. While it was not accurate that Hiraki and Ing spoke for the entire Asian community at Tufts, it would not have been fair to look down on Hiraki and Ing for wanting less attention. They were both seniors simply trying to graduate; not to mention them being absolutely mentally and emotionally exhausted from this incident.

Dean Toupin understood the burden these students endured. In her memoir, *Diary of a Dean*, Toupin wrote:

At the end of the year, Ken felt so burnt out and discouraged at the overt racism that he found at Tufts, that he decided to take a year off before continuing law school on the east coast... Ken took 2 courses at Tufts University. He flunked one and got an I in the other. In the fall of 1981 his GPA was 3.3.³⁷

³⁶ Tufts Observer, 1969 - 2019. Tufts Observer 1982-04-23. 1.

³⁷ Elizabeth Ahn Toupin Papers 1935-2013. Asian Students - Zeta Psi 1982-2007. 35355. MS064. MS064.001.001.00034. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.

Chen Jackson had to take a leave of absence for the fall of '83. She "maintained a 3.8 average in the Fall of '81; in the Spring, her GPA dropped down to a 2.0 with 2 I's".³⁸ As Toupin's diary made clear, many Asian Students suffered mentally and emotionally from this hate crime by evidence of their academic performance.

The Asian/Asian American students weren't the only ones enduring mistreatment and pain from the incident and all that had transpired from it. Dean Toupin recalled having been "accused by one of the highest ranking academic officers of writing the letter of concern signed by Ken Hiraki... and Kelvin Ing"³⁹ when in reality Toupin only read a draft (Toupin did not disclose the name of the person she referred to). Toupin was furious:

How dare anyone accuse a fellow administrator on the basis of race? I ignored the implication that an Asian minority administrator was not to work with Asian American students who were being attacked; even though dozens of black administrators had been hired years earlier precisely to support black students. Who else were they supposed to turn to? I was an Asian longer than I had been a dean. Perhaps the issue was that I was no longer to be treated as an invisible minority. But by temperament, I never was.⁴⁰

Toupin also stated that Klein did not only ask Hiraki to write a statement in support of lenient punishment. Rather, Klein asked her and Ken Hall, faculty Advisor to the Asian House to do so as well. Toupin explained, "The chairman's reason? The risk of polarization of the campus. We all declined to write. The issue was twisted; it was now an Asian problem for not understanding and supporting fraternity life".⁴¹ Toupin highlighted how instead of the Asian students as victims, the situation centered the fraternity falling victim to harsh punishment.

³⁸ Elizabeth Ahn Toupin Papers 1935-2013. Asian Students - Zeta Psi 1982-2007.

³⁹ Toupin, Elizabeth Ahn. *Diary of a Dean : Campus Revolution, 1968-1992*. 2016. 224.

⁴⁰ Toupin, Elizabeth Ahn. *Diary of a Dean : Campus Revolution, 1968-1992*. 2016. 225.

⁴¹ Toupin, Elizabeth Ahn. *Diary of a Dean : Campus Revolution, 1968-1992*. 2016. 225.

At the start of the fall semester of '82, Toupin wrote a letter to Dean Frank Colcord, Dean Knable, and Dean Maxwell in support of the students who by the end of the spring semester requested for the "appointment of a part-time Staff Director with responsibilities to the Asian community"⁴² which would shift the Asian Cultural House into a center. In this letter, Toupin used the evidence of the lack of support for Asian students with the data of Hiraki, Chen Jackson, and other Asian students' poor performance in academics from the incident to display the need for a cultural center for Asian American students.

After some back and forth with her fellow administrators, Toupin persuaded them that someone be hired to run and open up an Asian American Center (AAC) in 1983. The back and forth included the administration not wanting to allocate money for this position even though they previously did for the foundation of the Africana Center in 1969. Initially, the administration only allocated money for a one-third time position with no stability to be reassessed in 3 years to see if the position was necessary. Frustrated, Toupin wrote letters to Dean Knable, President Mayer, and other administrators to stress the importance of this position, and on some letters had other Asian American professors at Tufts write and sign them with her, naming themselves the Asian Caucus.

It was clear from the incident of Zeta Psi that there was not a proper support system for Asian Students; especially if the university was going to allow lenient punishment for anti-Asian hate crimes. Toupin thought that if the university wouldn't value their protection and ensure proper punishment that at least the Asian students should have a stronger support system than just herself and other Asian professors. The debate for a full-time position of an advisor to the AAC was not the only involvement Toupin had in bettering the Tufts community by fighting for Asian Americans; Toupin also created and taught Ex-College courses aimed for Asian American

⁴² Elizabeth Ahn Toupin Papers 1935-2013. Asian Students - Zeta Psi 1982-2007.

students, planned conferences like the “Campus Issues for the New Minority Asian American Students” (January 12-13, 1984), and documented studies on different Asian American students’ performances adjusting to college. Toupin ended her letter to Dean Colcord, Dean Knable, and Dean Maxwell with this sentence, “It seems that Tufts cannot afford another Asian incident in 1982-1983”.⁴³

Toupin expressed the need for more support systems for Asian American students and Mayer said he would not tolerate a similar incident in the future. What they both seemed to understand was that another anti-Asian incident could and most likely would occur again. Toupin understood that the anti-Asian sentiment at Tufts reflected that of the US. Circling back to the incident in the summer of ‘82 when two White automobile factory workers, Ronald Ebens and Michael Nitz, beat up and murdered Vincent Chin on June 23, 1982, in Detroit.⁴⁴ Japanese cars were taking over the market in America during the 70-80s which resulted in a loss of job opportunities for Americans working in car factories. The White men blamed Chin for the “loss of jobs in the automobile industry,” called him a “jap” and followed him outside the bar where they chased and beat him to death with a baseball bat.⁴⁵ While Ebens and Nitz pleaded guilty to manslaughter, both men never served any jail time but instead “received probation and a fine”.⁴⁶

Vincent Chin’s tragic murder was not separate from the incident at Tufts nor was it a coincidence that they occurred only three months apart. They were both linked to the racist rhetoric that Asian Americans were perpetual foreigners- a threat. The sentences for the perpetrators were also not coincidences in their leniency. By drawing connections between the

⁴³ Elizabeth Ahn Toupin Papers 1935-2013. Asian Students - Zeta Psi 1982-2007.

⁴⁴ Angelo N. Ancheta, “Neither Black nor White,” 26.

⁴⁵ Angelo N. Ancheta, “Neither Black nor White,” 26.

⁴⁶ Angelo N. Ancheta, “Neither Black nor White,” 26.

murder of Vincent Chin and the hate crime on the students at the Asian Student House it was clear that the lives of Asian Americans were not taken seriously by those in positions of power. Ultimately, the White perpetrator was protected by receiving a lesser sentence and could continue business as usual. On the other side, the Asian lives were either disrupted massively and forever tainted or their lives were violently taken from them. Business as usual was an unearned privilege that only White men could enjoy off of the pain of these Asian Americans. This privilege was played out and protected by the decisions of the CSL at Tufts and by the judge on the Chin case.

Ultimately, the incident at Tufts brought forth the humanity of Asian students on campus. The Asian students during the '82 hate crime were not monolithic, were not complacent, and were not silent- they wanted change. However, even in all their strength, they were not protected and were not valued. Much like the granted freedom of Ebenz and Nitz, Tufts University allowed the men who screamed, "Nuke the gooks! I love the smell of napalm in the morning!" on the morning of March 12, 1982, to continue to roam around campus, get their degree, and walk past their Asian American peers every day.

* * * * *

I'm writing this paper during the COVID-19 pandemic. President Donald Trump continues to call the coronavirus the "Chinese Virus," putting all Asian Americans at risk of violence. Stop AAPI Hate, a community tool made by community members of the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON) went live on March 19, 2020, and already gathered over 1,100 reports within two weeks.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Linda Poon, "What Bigotry Looks Like During Social Distancing." *CityLab*,

I also write this knowing that on April 9, 2009, at Tufts University, a White student named Daniel Foster, wearing a Zeta Psi rush pin verbally attacked a group of Korean Student Association (KSA) members while they were practicing a dance in Lewis Hall for their upcoming culture show. Foster called the Asian students “chinks,” spat at them, and told them to “go back to China”.⁴⁸ Foster also threatened to kill them. Similar to the note left at Kelvin Ing’s desk, alumni and students wrote comments on the Daily regarding the incident saying “this whole thing is making me sick. We can’t let those chinks do what those negroes did”.⁴⁹ The administration, much like in 1982 did not carry out punishment for Foster. On Friday, April 24, the KSA students and Foster came with an agreement outside the university’s administration as nothing was picked up by the administration to carry out a swift consequence. Foster’s punishment included one-semester suspension, substance abuse counseling, refraining the ability to join a fraternity, and to participate in an anti-bias program. KSA Co-President at the time, Tom Moon was quoted in The Tufts Daily:

‘How many of us feel, though he emotionally scarred us for our lives, this is just another incident for him,’ Moon added. ‘I feel like we got the worst of it, because what we’re gaining through this agreement is basically nothing, and this agreement is all about him getting better.’⁵⁰

I also write this as a mixed race Japanese American student on campus involved in the Japanese Culture Club (JCC*). JCC* received a sentence of one-semester probation for the

Bloomberg, 8 Apr. 2020, www.citylab.com/equity/2020/04/coronavirus-racism-hate-crimes-asian-americans-xenophobia/609517/.

⁴⁸ Tufts Daily. Tufts Daily, April 27, 2009. vx021r584. <http://hdl.handle.net/10427/53161>. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA. 20.

⁴⁹ Tufts Daily. Tufts Daily, April 27, 2009. 21.

⁵⁰ Tufts Daily. Tufts Daily, April 27, 2009. 2.

spring semester of 2020 as well as mandatory training by the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) for “[violating] the Tufts University Non-Discrimination Policy”. The OEO received complaints about our club discriminating against White men and agreed that we were discriminating based on nationality and possibly gender. It is painfully insulting to me that I am researching for this paper on the 1982 Zeta Psi hate crime, knowing fully aware of the pain of being verbally attacked for my race, knowing that those fraternity members only received one-semester probation for their crime, and all the while being punished with one-semester probation for trying to engage in a safe space with fellow Asian/Japanese/Japanese American students. What pain is the White student enduring? Why is he upset? Why does he think he needs this community? JCC* is not at all like Zeta Psi and I am deeply hurt that OEO created this pain in my community.

I write these following incidents to emphasize that not much has changed. I had to write this paper in the past tense, but all of it feels like today. While we now have the Asian American Center at Tufts and Asian American Studies courses (amazing advances that should be celebrated), we are still perpetual foreigners (note that the 2009 incident occurred with the presence of the AAC. A center doesn't stop violence, it serves as a space for students to heal with one another in those cases). We are still used as tokens to “diversify” Tufts and when we are attacked, people in power are quiet. People like Trump validate racist rhetoric, Tufts administration protects the White student, and Asian Americans are left to figure out on their own and hopefully with others how to survive through these injustices. I think about the Japanese Americans wrongfully incarcerated during WWII, who repeated the need to 我慢- be patient, strong, endure, and emotionally fight the injustice. How that was in 1942 but has been carried on through intergenerational trauma and Asian American relationality to this day. 我慢.

While it is painful and important to recognize the lack of national and global progress on the views of Asian/Asian Americans, there *is* progress within our communities. We are louder than ever and it is possible that during this pandemic people will finally start to listen. I have hopes, dreams, and fantasies. I believe that we will be heard and our experiences and lives will be validated outside of our communities. What would the world look like if we all listened to one another? If we *really* listened?

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