

# Not Enough: Voices of Second-Generation Asian American Immigrants

## Project

**Host Site:** Samuel E. Kelly Ethnic Cultural Center (ECC)

**Committee:** Meena Selvakumar, Lane Eagles, & Nate Panelo

**An exhibit, created with and for the Asian second-generation immigrant community, that tells the unique experiences of this community through objects and stories.**

## Problem

**The lack of representation & recognition of the second-generation East Asian immigrant community within exhibits and cultural institutions at large.**

- The benefits of representation within public institutions: greater connection to one's self & community, higher self-esteem, & better mental well-being (Caswell, 2016).
- This community suffers from the negative effects of a lack of cultural representation & inclusion, such as mental illness and low self-esteem (Espinosa, 2020)

## Purpose

**Purpose Statement:** The purpose of this project is to create an exhibit at the ECC about the unique East Asian second-generation immigrant experience in collaboration with the local University of Washington (UW) student community.

**Host Site:** The ECC serves as a communal space for cultural clubs on campus & hosts events that bring in non-community members.

**Audience:** The local East Asian second-generation immigrant community at UW & the larger audience of ECC visitors.

### Outcomes:

- For community members to be able to connect with these stories and feel seen when visiting the cultural center.
- For non-community members to learn about the unique experiences of this community.

## Deliverable

**A physical exhibition at the Samuel E. Kelly Ethnic Cultural Center**

**Exhibit Concept:** The exhibit was designed using community-based exhibit design methods with a small group of community members (12). Through meetings with these members, we collaboratively identified the stories we wished to share and the objects representing them in the exhibit.

**Exhibit Theme:** The overarching theme is how the community is perceived to be both not American enough and not Asian enough. The community members' stories represent moments in which they were faced with this fact. These experiences are sorted into four recurring themes - food, family, language, and appearance.

### Exhibit Content:

- 12 objects of various mediums
- Exhibit texts
- Interactive question & response area



## Process

**Development (Sept. 2023 - Feb. 2024)** = Preliminary research, proposal, securing host site & thesis committee.

**Content Gathering (Feb. 2024 - March 2024)** = Recruiting & meeting with community members, gathering objects.

**Design Phase (March 2024 - May 2024)** = Exhibit plan, feedback & edits.

**Implementation Phase (May 2024 - June 2024)** = Installation & de-installation

## Reflections

**Initial Reflections:** Sharing related experiences & participating in group conversations during the exhibit design process led to connection & healing within the group of community members.

### Implications:

- Community-based exhibit design facilitates healing for underrepresented communities.
- The second-generation immigrant community requires more representation within exhibits.
- Cultural centers provide a unique audience of underrepresented communities, & are undervalued as venues for cultural exhibits.

## References & Acknowledgments

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