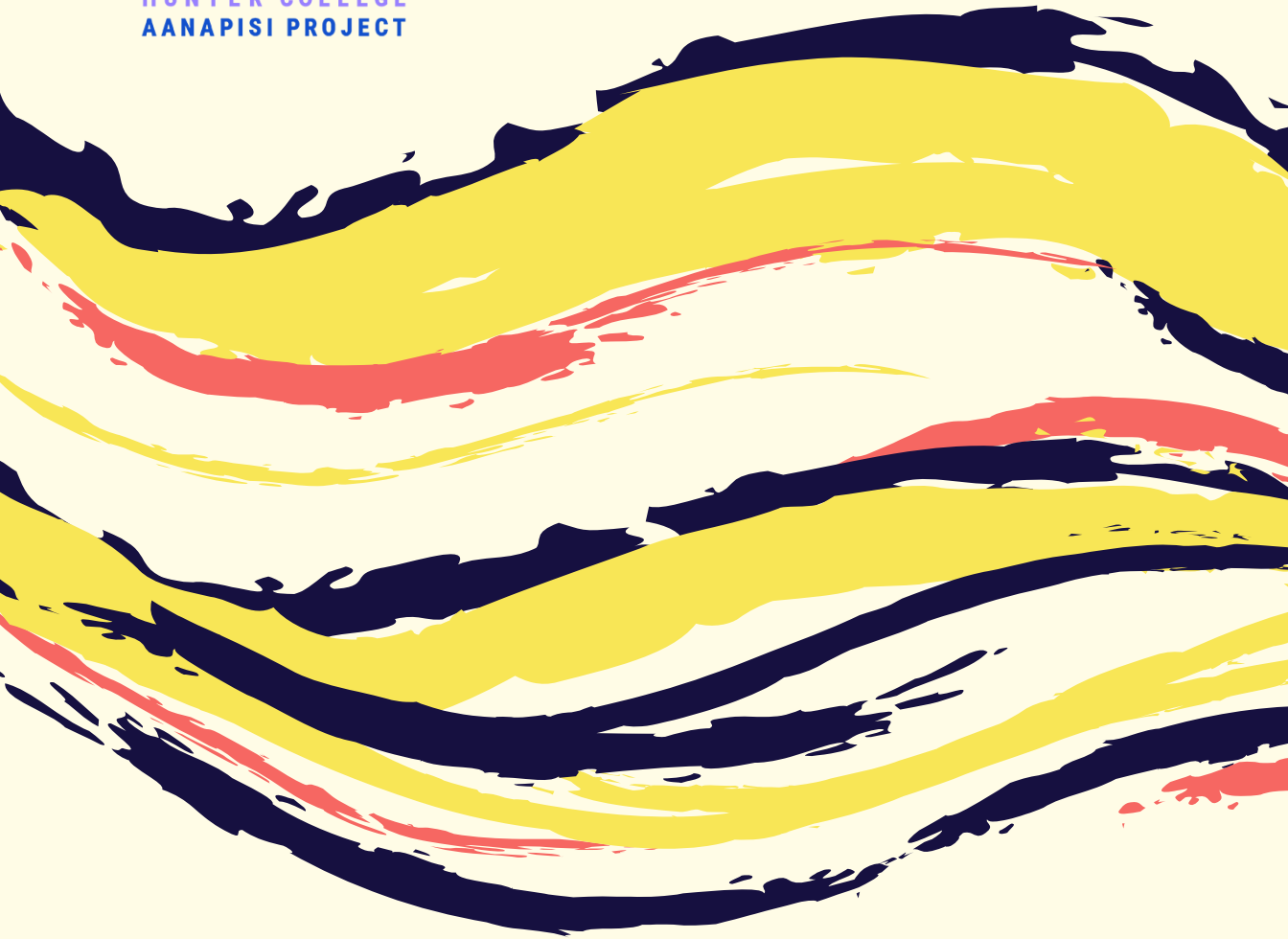




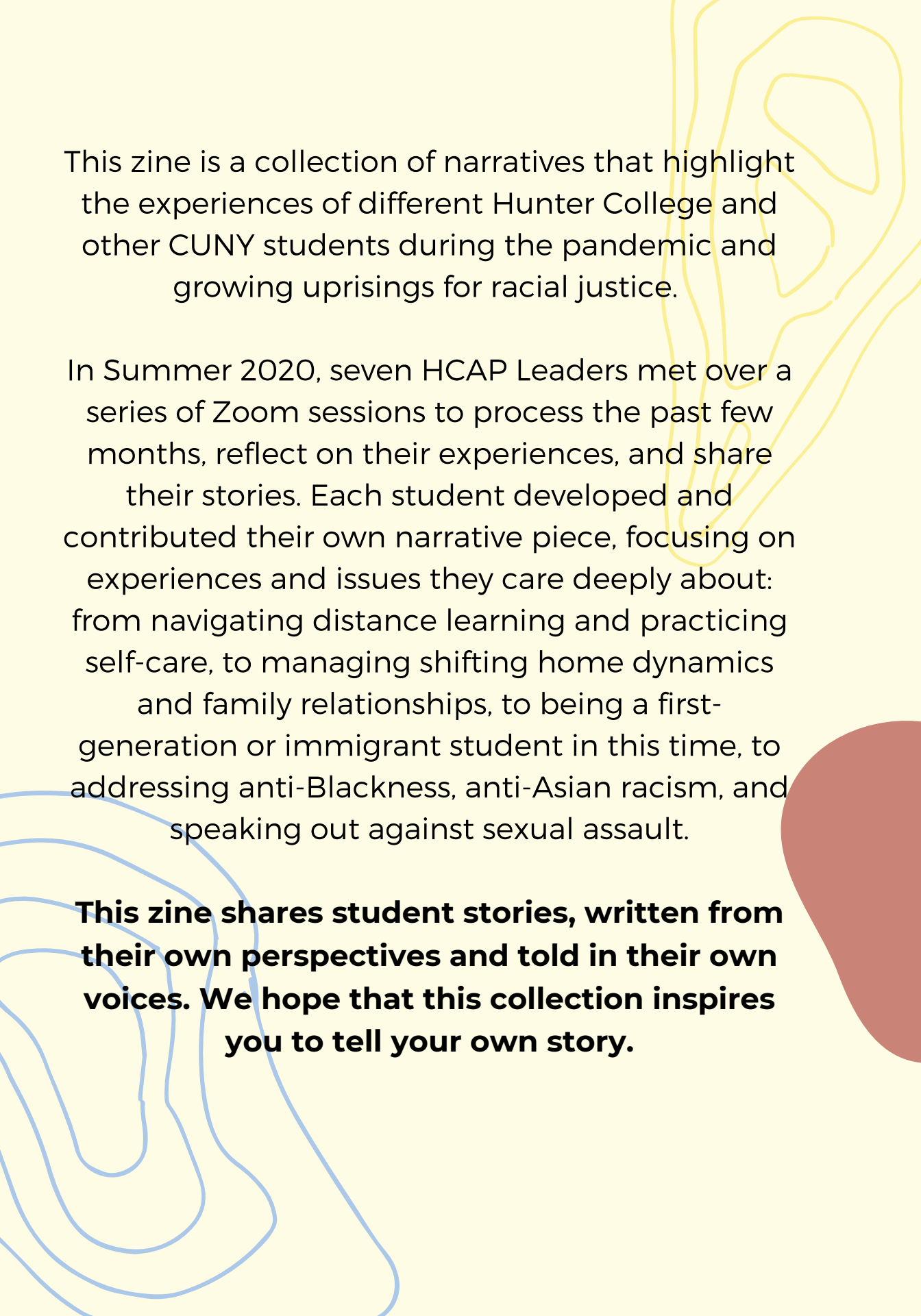
HUNTER COLLEGE  
AANAPISI PROJECT

HCAP PRESENTS



asian american and  
cuny student  
narratives zine

A ZINE MADE BY THE STUDENTS OF HCAP  
VISIT [HUNTERCAP.ORG](http://HUNTERCAP.ORG) FOR MORE



This zine is a collection of narratives that highlight the experiences of different Hunter College and other CUNY students during the pandemic and growing uprisings for racial justice.

In Summer 2020, seven HCAP Leaders met over a series of Zoom sessions to process the past few months, reflect on their experiences, and share their stories. Each student developed and contributed their own narrative piece, focusing on experiences and issues they care deeply about: from navigating distance learning and practicing self-care, to managing shifting home dynamics and family relationships, to being a first-generation or immigrant student in this time, to addressing anti-Blackness, anti-Asian racism, and speaking out against sexual assault.

**This zine shares student stories, written from their own perspectives and told in their own voices. We hope that this collection inspires you to tell your own story.**



## A MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHORS

We hope readers find our zine interesting and helpful.

We hope that in reading these pieces, students see that they're not alone and that their health is more important than grades. We hope that readers can view and understand the struggles of CUNY students.

Although this zine may not encompass all student experiences, we hope that the many aspects that are shared here will resonate with others and help students feel more connected.

By openly talking about stigmatized issues, with no judgment, we hope this can help others understand the important issues at hand. We hope this zine affirms others in knowing that their efforts to fight for justice are supported and we're making changes gradually.

\*\*\*\*

*HCAP's student narratives summer program gained inspiration from the storytelling and training tools of: University of Massachusetts Boston's AANAPISI Digital Storytelling Curriculum, AORTA Collective, & Training for Change*





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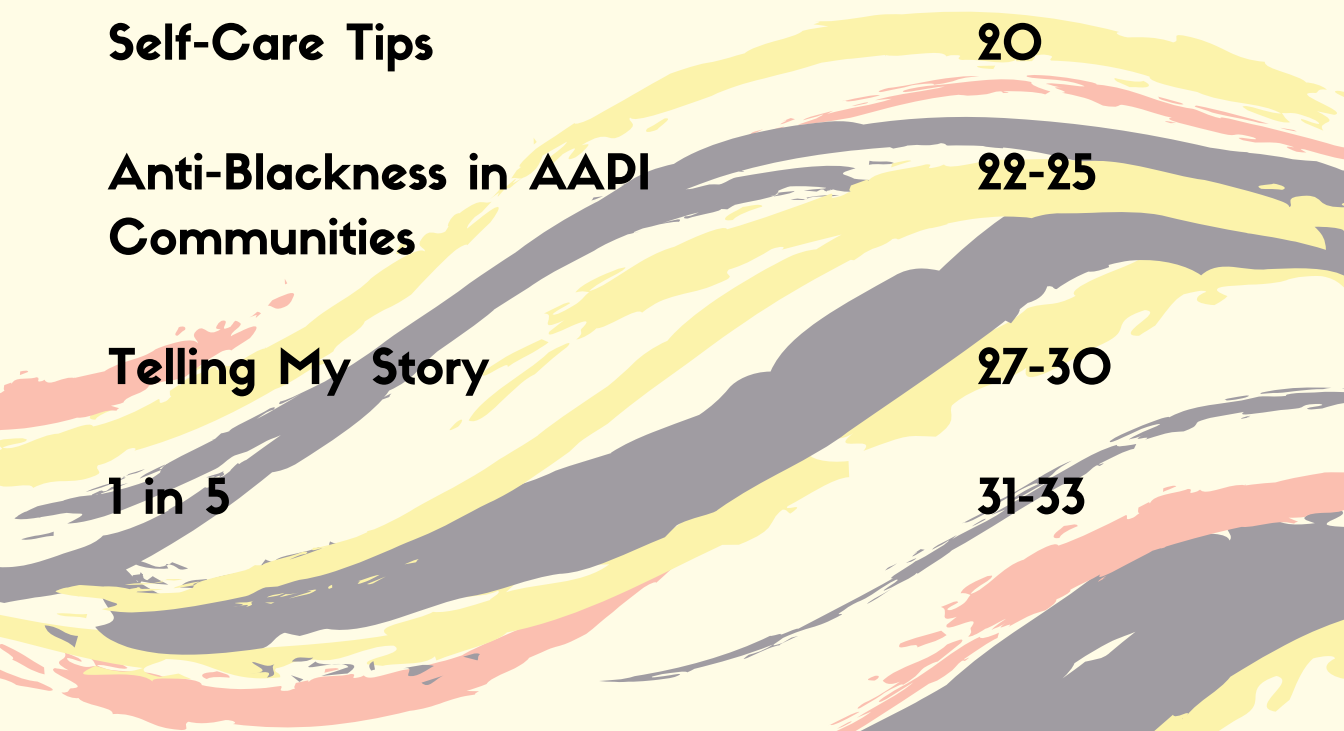
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March 11, 2020. The day all CUNY students received an email that announced that classes were moving online the following day. From this moment on and forward, there is an overwhelming amount of uncertainty and concern for the future. As we continue on to the Fall semester online, this zine serves as a resource to navigating distance-learning and how to practice self-care in this unprecedented time.

# Combatting Distance-Learning Struggles

by sharlene daba-ay

Upon hearing the news that classes were moving online, I was relieved yet concerned. Students and faculty are able to stay home, reducing their risk of coronavirus, but I was concerned for my friends who may encounter financial issues, technological issues, food insecurity, and more. I was also concerned for one of my family members who is at risk due to being a healthcare worker and being the age Covid-19 affects the most. During this time, I constantly checked up on my friends and made sure they had resources that can help them while also carefully disinfecting everything in the house.

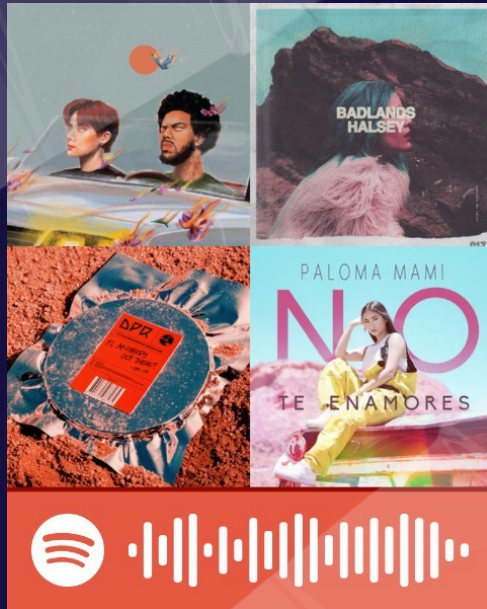
When classes started again after spring break, my professors changed their syllabus. Some of them cut a majority of assignments, giving flexible times to do exams, while some of them had strict time-slots and developed new rules such as using a different device to have a webcam during exams. While I understood the strict rules, I was concerned for those who don't have the privilege to use two devices during exams or have good internet service that support the two devices. I was fortunate to have these, but these made me question how distance-learning will continue --- would these policies continue or would they change? I also lacked study space as my family members would constantly barge into my room to help with chores. I ended the spring semester with an overwhelming amount of stress.

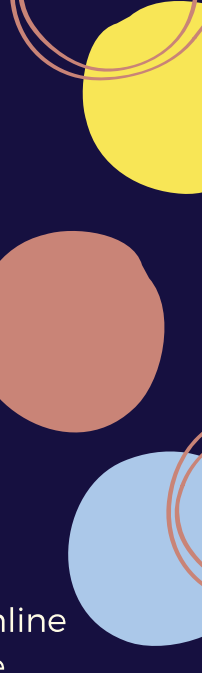
After deciding I would take a summer class, I learned that I needed to communicate with my family about my schedule and emphasize the need for alone time. After spending time doing so, we have changed our habits and worked around our schedules. I also learned that I needed to take some time to practice self-care.

As we continue the fall semester, my feelings of uncertainty and concern still linger, but I am confident in facing issues that may arise.

See pages **20-22** for more self-care tips from Sharlene Dabay as well as the playlist curated by HCAP Leaders

Use your camera on the **Spotify** app to scan the QR code to open the playlist





To gain insight on what other people are experiencing during the pandemic, I interviewed a CUNY student. Before the pandemic, they focused on school and attended tutoring during free time. When the pandemic hit and classes moved online, they struggled to navigate distance-learning and faced many hardships. Here are some highlights from the interview:

“I was happy when classes were announced to be moving online because John Jay was the first known CUNY campus to have confirmed cases and now I know I won’t be at risk and pose a danger to my family ... I was worried because office hours weren’t available online and I needed help with my assignments.”

“Distance-learning has been very difficult. At one point, there was no wifi for two weeks in public housing. During these two weeks, I had midterms. Some of my professors were not receptive and didn’t allow me to make up my assignments and midterm. They told me I have to drop the course and take the class in the summer.”

“When I told my professors my situation, some of them didn’t want to change deadlines and expected group work. Group work was especially hard during this time because some classmates travelled during the spring break since they did not take covid-19 seriously and now they’re stuck at their destination.”

**When thinking about the fall semester, my interviewee thought it’s a great idea to continue distance learning for the safety of faculty and students, but are concerned. They hoped that CUNY faculty reflected on the spring semester and acknowledged that they should be more flexible as many students face many hardships in this unprecedented time.**

## **TIPS: TALKING TO YOUR PROFESSORS DURING A PANDEMIC**

**In the beginning of quarantine, one of my family members tested positive for coronavirus. About three days later, I**

**developed coronavirus symptoms and had to self-quarantine for about 2 weeks. At first, I was hesitant to email my professors about the situation since I had very little symptoms that affect my academic performance. However, I later developed worse symptoms and I had to face the fact that I need to prioritize my health rather than my academics. To my luck, all of my professors were understanding and gave me flexible deadlines. Here are some tips I used when I had to email my professors about my situation!**

- Talk to your professors as soon as you know you will miss a class or assignment(s). Letting professors know your situation earlier will make them more accommodating and willing to work with you.
- Share what you are comfortable disclosing. Stick to the relevant facts that led you to fall behind the course load.
  - “I had a family emergency and I was unable to attend class/hand in an assignment on time.”
  - “My mental health has been declining and it affected my productivity in your class”
- Ask for what you are seeking for in a clear and concise way.
  - “I would like an extension on an assignment until [date]”
- Be willing to negotiate and compromise. Your professor may decline your request, so be prepared to offer alternatives.



# A Guide to Surviving Zoom/Hunter College

by  
hanteng li

In the spring of 2020, almost all school systems in the US converted to distance learning. In this piece, I will tell a story about my experience in distance learning, from the beginning to the end, with some tips for navigating remote learning. I hope my story will be entertaining and a new way to look at online learning.

## Moving to Distance Learning

Thursday, March 19th: I remember the day very clearly. On Thursdays, I usually did not attend classes, and that was my last day in my laboratory. The day earlier, all of my classes ended abruptly, with professors urging us to go home.

At the last in-person lab meeting, people were scared. Some said that COVID-19 is a political hoax, some said that volunteers should not be allowed to work in the lab, all of us were in the unknown.

Walking in the subway station, having my last hangout with my friends in Koreatown, I didn't know that life was going to change so drastically, everything was unexpected.

Then, online learning began. The experience was new for professors, the college, and students. To give everyone more time to adjust to online learning, the college administered breaks that are typically not given during the usual semester.

## Communicating with Professors and Navigating Online Labs

There were no more in-person office hours; however, most of my professors were able to offer a virtual experience that was as equally meaningful.

All of my labs were conducted online, and doing online labs was a pain because you don't get the hands-on experience, and online simulations are harder to manage. I tried to get started well before the deadline.






### **Taking Exams While Online**

Every professor had their own preference for giving exams online. For example, for one of my science classes, I had to turn on my camera while taking the exam. I have heard experiences from other people having to take pictures of their workspace before and after the exam, and be recorded when being proctored through Zoom. While it felt intimidating while being proctored, it was a process that took time getting used to.



### **Petitioning for Things**

Because there were many changes made to our syllabi, many students in the same class that I was in wrote petitions to professors to request things like a fairer grading structure, and more time for reading the exam questions. While I felt that some exams were conducted in a way that would disadvantage students, I also found that most professors have tried to make it as comfortable as possible. A few of my professors were open to considering our petitions and making some changes, and provided us a response via email. Signing petitions during this time was a key highlight of distance learning, because it was amazing to see how all of us as students can come together, even though we're not physically "together."





## Dealing with Family

While giving a comment in class, one of my family members walked into my room unknowingly, and now the whole class knows who she is. In addition, even while wearing headphones, it was hard to concentrate, especially when I had to balance being with family 24/7 and online learning.

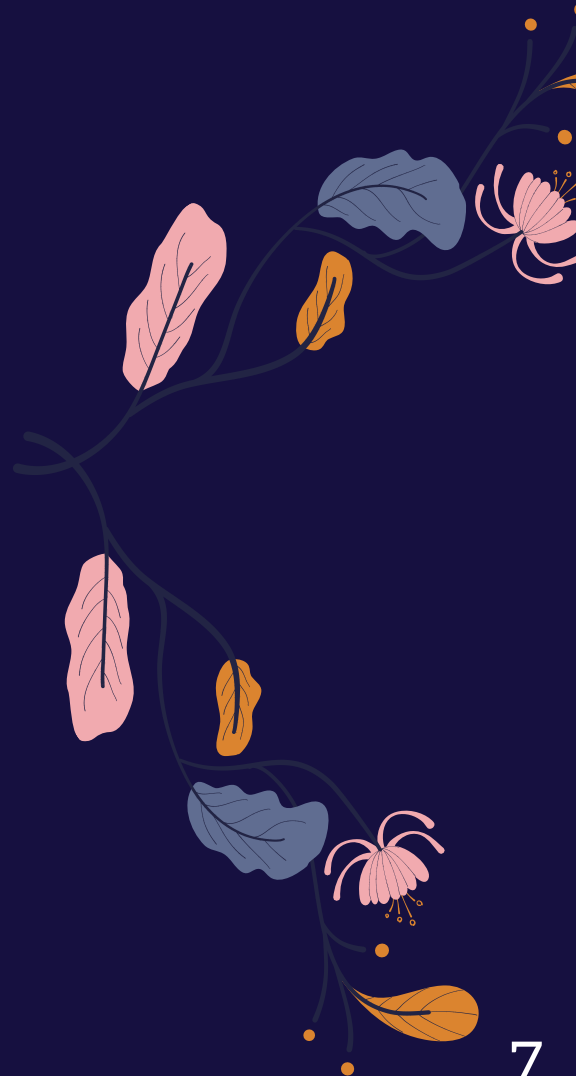
This was a stressful experience, but my family members eventually learned to respect personal spaces, especially during exam seasons. Openly talking to my family members about my requests had bettered my learning experience as well.

## Tips for Practicing Self-Care

I found my interest in baking and cooking during this pandemic. I like to do it when I'm stressed from classes. If you'd like, take this time to discover some interests that you have never thought of before.

No matter what your situation is, please know that you are in the middle of the pandemic. Making decisions during a time of uncertainty can be difficult, and it is totally okay to be unsure. You can be unsure about school, about family, and anything in life, because we are all unsure. If you feel stressed, reach out to someone that you trust in, and always remember that the Counseling and Wellness Services is available. You can learn more at:

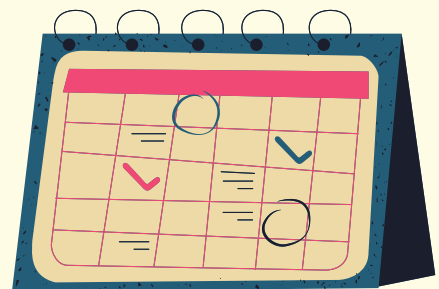
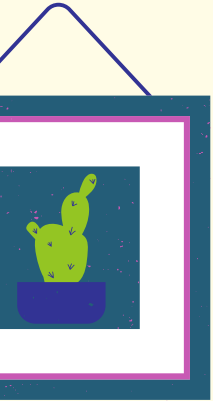
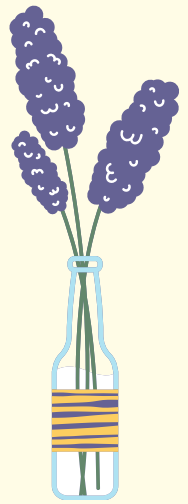
<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/cws>





## Tips for Studying during the Pandemic:

- Online classes are confusing to navigate, so make sure you take time to **review all the information** posted on Blackboard or other platforms that your professor may use
- **Use a calendar!** It is such a useful resource, even not during the pandemic. Staying organized is a key to achieve academic success, especially during this time. Mark your exam dates, assignment deadlines, any links to online meetings that you need to attend.
- Please remember to **set alarms!** As someone who had to attend 8am classes, I missed lecture twice because of how comfortable my bed was. Set multiple alarms if you're a heavy sleeper. The pandemic can also mess up your sleep schedule because you're not going outside, so try sticking to your original agenda. **Writing down the agenda will help you assess your day as well.**
- Lastly, **take breaks.** Taking classes online is definitely not the same. Your family may be interfering, or you might feel eye strains from staring at the screen for too long. Take a break, sip a cup of tea, or just sit and do nothing. **Taking breaks not only will help you get back on track, it can also prevent burnout.**

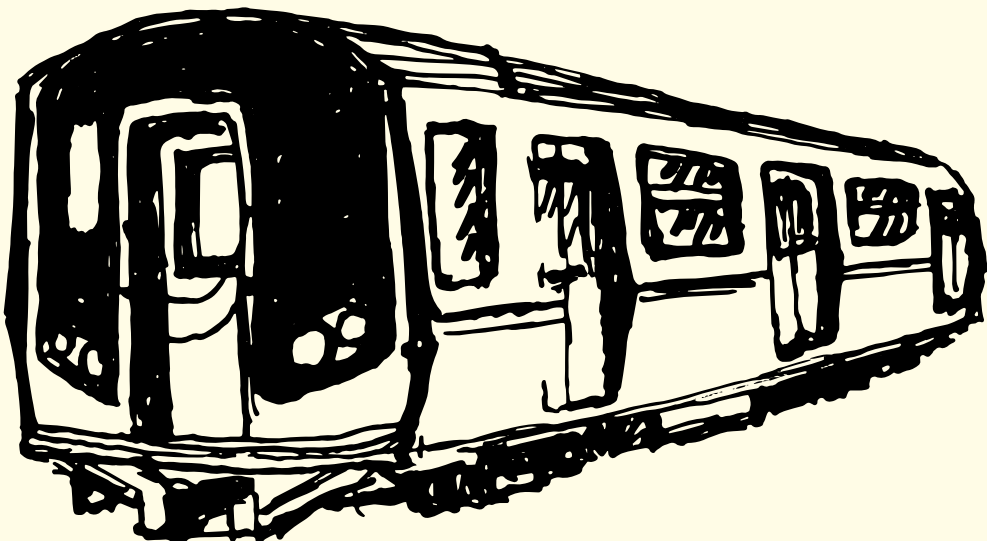


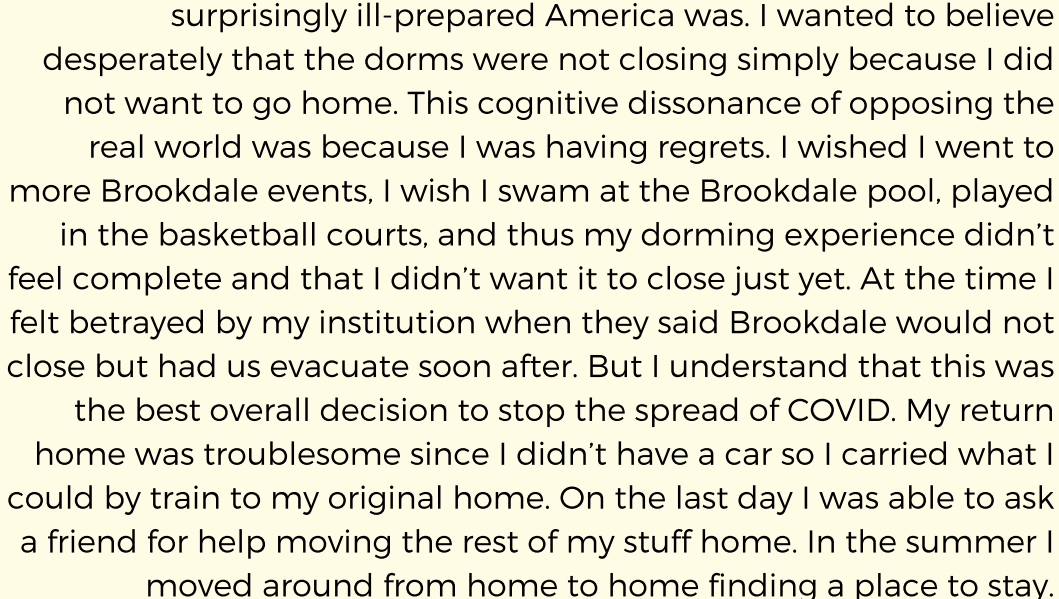
Gen Z students are fighting a pandemic, protesting racism on the streets, navigating online learning, and ruining non-socially distance compliant Trump rallies. Yet, said students tend to get the lower end of the stick. The City University of New York was sacrificed to receive massive budget cuts as New York state lost funding due to the COVID-19 pandemic; affecting CUNY's financially vulnerable student population. Hunter College students offer a unique perspective that challenges the typical college student's story. Being students in New York City during the pandemic, having worked during and on the frontlines as nurses for some, the stories of these students must be shared. Massive inequalities in broadband internet was prevalent during the pandemic.

# Hunter COVID Stories

by jeffry guerrero

Hunter College offers affordable single bed dorms in the lower east side that houses 600 students. For me, it only made complete sense to dorm at Brookdale. I longed to see my Hunter friends more since I couldn't in a strict household, many of whom dormed. A year before I dormed, I had been doing biomaterial research at NYU across the street from Brookdale. I desperately needed to leave my house. I found a safe space at the Brookdale dorms and was able to focus more on my studies, my internships, and athletics. Being in the city saved me time as work and school were at most a 20-minute commute.

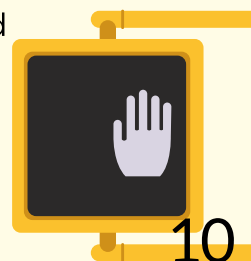


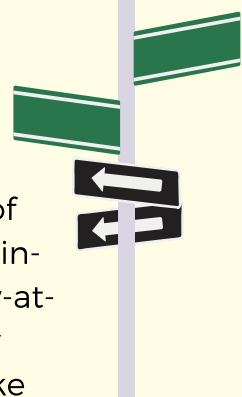


Since December I was frankly watching this COVID-19 pandemic become worse than what scientists anticipated. It disturbed me that others did not take the illness as serious as it was and how surprisingly ill-prepared America was. I wanted to believe desperately that the dorms were not closing simply because I did not want to go home. This cognitive dissonance of opposing the real world was because I was having regrets. I wished I went to more Brookdale events, I wish I swam at the Brookdale pool, played in the basketball courts, and thus my dorming experience didn't feel complete and that I didn't want it to close just yet. At the time I felt betrayed by my institution when they said Brookdale would not close but had us evacuate soon after. But I understand that this was the best overall decision to stop the spread of COVID. My return home was troublesome since I didn't have a car so I carried what I could by train to my original home. On the last day I was able to ask a friend for help moving the rest of my stuff home. In the summer I moved around from home to home finding a place to stay.

### **About my student interview project:**

Over the summertime I was grateful to have an internship with HCAP (Hunter College AANAPISI Project). HCAP students in this internship aimed to record Hunter student perspectives, how they navigated the pandemic, distance learning, and more. By asking interviewees the same pre-written questions about dorming and online learning, I was able to capture different or similar experiences for the same obstacle. My project focuses on the importance of storytelling after seeing many interviews of students from prestigious, private universities. I noticed the absence of discussion on the types of problems that Hunter students faced, such as the struggle to return to home, working during the pandemic or finding work, and not having adequate broadband internet for online classes. These inequalities are not new but were exacerbated because of the pandemic and unpreparedness of this city.





## Themes from interviewing Hunter Students:

The most common challenges faced by students was the lack of communication. There was no official declaration of the end of in-person activities from Hunter College when the mandatory stay-at-home executive orders were given. Many students felt that they weren't aware about resources available and weren't able to take advantage of them. Students in leadership positions such as RAs, club presidents, and other student leaders still assisted other students despite their disadvantages or hardship. The students interviewed were grateful for their experience and would compare themselves to other students who had a harder time. It was nice that people were aware of their own struggles but also being concerned about others. All students found other Hunter college friends to speak to about their problems.

Most students didn't really have a specific self-care technique or routine, but exercise and writing were the most common. All students, the same reason they wanted to dorm in the first place, miss the unique privacy Brookdale offered and enjoyed the Hunter Brookdale community and students. One student, Diana, talked about how difficult it was to communicate over Zoom. For example, eye contact is difficult to practice at first, speaking in small groups etc. This is something I believe is overlooked but an issue all of my interviewees faced, even those with the greatest public speaking skills. The vast different experiences of this spring are most interesting to me. For some, online learning was a curse or a blessing. For some, the effects of COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement impacted people's families and questioned others' and their own implicit bias.

***I hope these interviews will highlight the unique CUNY student experiences, struggles, concerns, and give a voice within our community. I personally felt that if the administration knew how important it was to communicate with students, many things could've gone differently.***

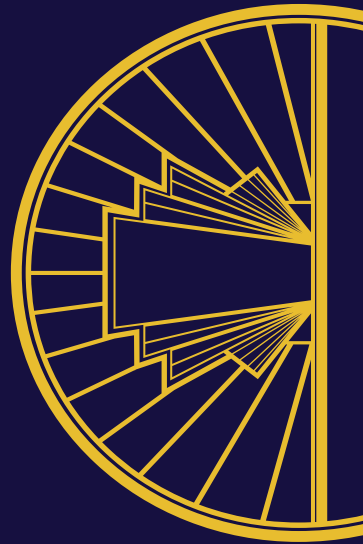


To learn more  
about Jeffrey's  
project, go to  
**huntercap.org!**

# Being the first is not always good: the perspectives of first generation immigrants / college students

by leora zhang

A large proportion of Hunter College students are **students of color** who are first in their family to go to college and/or come from immigrant communities. First generation immigrant college students generally have more **responsibilities** than other students and are in need of support that are unique to their experiences. Being a **first generation immigrant college student** myself, I felt the need to support these students in documenting and sharing their perspectives and experiences, which often are not heard in mainstream media. So for my narrative project, I compiled the stories of Hunter College students during the past few months, focusing on how their **identities** have shaped those experiences. I hope our narratives could be used to inform the Hunter College community in better understanding the unique experiences shared among first generation students during the past few months.



Reading the responses to the survey, I noticed a common theme in the experiences of first generation immigrants and/or college students: **family responsibilities**. On top of **schoolwork**, first generation immigrants and/or college students are also responsible for helping our family members, which makes the experiences during the past few months more challenging. Also, the **intersectionality** definitely adds more burden to our shoulders. One strategy widely used to address these challenges was relying on a **supportive network**.

Special thanks to the Hunter College students/alumni who took their time to fill out my survey and are willing to share their personal experiences anonymously. The responses are from three Hunter graduates, three current Hunter juniors, and four seniors. Six of these students are first generation college students and immigrants, and one of them is a second generation immigrant. Highlights of the responses were reorganized in a new format.

## During the past few months, what kinds of responsibilities did you have as a first generation immigrant and/or first generation college student?

- “Having to help with family tasks at all times”
- “I helped my father apply for unemployment benefits (and claim benefits weekly), helped my grandmother apply for Home Delivered Meals for Seniors (per month), accompanied mom to the doctor (Not for language barrier, but for moral support.”
- “paying rent, filing paperwork, cleaning and cooking for others (I usually don’t have to)”
- “Translating government letters to my parents with my limited Korean.”
- “As a both first generation immigrant and college student, I have a lot of responsibilities during these months. My parents are both essential workers and if they stop working, we wouldn’t be able to pay rent and groceries. I’ve been trying to find jobs so that I could help out with my family’s finances. While they are working, I also have to stay home and set up remote learning for both my sister and me. “
- “Filing unemployment for my family and other families, setting up mortgage payments, applying for loans for my family.”





**For the past few months, what challenges have you faced, if any, as a first generation immigrant and/or first generation college student?**

“Not being able to ask anyone about questions regarding classes”

“Balancing school work/internships with family responsibilities while taking care of my mental health.”

“Having to deal with family while struggling with school”

“As a first generation college student, I have to admit I felt a little bit alone in navigating graduation. I was very worried...unsure of whom to reach...In applying for my master's program, I was stressed preparing for group interviews by myself.”

“My mother depends entirely on me when it comes to my sister. She expects me to cook and help her with class work. If I fail to do those tasks, she'd be angry with me.”

## What strategies have you used to address the challenges you've faced?

"Meditation and ranting to friends... drinking alcohol"

"Science Center"

"I talked to my parents about my boundaries. One strategy I have used is, if verbal confirmation does not work, I would print out my schedule and work times and have them see my schedule, so that they'd understand I'm busy at certain times."

"Doing yoga, communicating with friends, and creating to-do lists."

"To address and release my anxieties and fears toward being a fresh graduate, I've come to rely on praying to God (I'm Christian), listening to positive music that can motivate me again, texting friends, crying a lot into my pillow, and watching YouTube or dramas that sends message of hope, that you're not alone, and to persevere."

"Communication with my family was a key in order to make them understand why I may not be free sometimes to help them out and how it is an extra burden for me to take care of their friends as well. Another strategy I used was to give myself enough "self-care" time, during which I could have my own space and time to think through things and try not to get overwhelmed by the situation. Also, I tried to keep my routine by allocating time for exercise and reading books so that I don't lose track of time."



How did your other identities (e.g. gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, age, religion, occupation, etc.) shape your experience during the past few months?

“I’ve been trying to claim unemployment but do not qualify as a **federal work study student**”

“As a **bisexual woman with depression**, it has been difficult to move back home because of my parents’ and brother’s conservative views on the LGBTQ+ community and on mental illness.”

“Being a **Chinese American**...Chinese culture often roots collectivism within our family and society. If you are an older sister, then you are bound to help out your parents with taking care of your younger siblings.”

“Amid the rising anti-Asian climate during the past few months, my identity as an **Asian young woman** especially made me and my family vulnerable. Even though I didn’t directly experience the hate crime, my parents were constantly informed about the more and more prevalent racist assaults targeting Asians. As a result, I definitely felt more anxious whenever I needed to go out.”

“In terms of BLM, of course I’ve been reflecting and processing how **Asians** fit into the conversation, as well as having the conversation with my parents...I just feel helpless towards the movement, not knowing enough about the practical things that I can do (like emailing local government officials and keeping them accountable)”

What has been a source of support to you in this time?

"The internships I am doing provided good distraction and my friendships provided a source of emotional support."

"Friends who share the same experiences as I do. In fact, my younger sister is growing very understanding of me."

"Network of friends"

"God, friends, and technology"

"My friends"

"Even though I occasionally had conflicts with my family, having them be with me and to talk to prevented me from getting depressed during this quarantine. I can't imagine being isolated at home alone for several months, without anyone to rely on. My professors also tried to be a source of support for the students by understanding that not all students have the capacity to adopt the distance learning mode and providing them resources they could find helpful."

## What resources do you need the most to better navigate through this crisis as a first generation immigrant and/or first generation college student?

“Supportive network”

“Money and funding from Hunter so that I can pay tuition and focus on my studies. It would be great if I could go back to dorming.”

“I think I’d need more institutional support as in maybe professors would be more understanding of this situation or providing flexibility to students.”

“I wish that there were more financial resources for college students as we were not eligible for stimulus check and not even unemployment benefits if we don’t work. Also, I hope that Hunter makes more student services available online.”

“Scholarships, more virtual job fairs/virtual skill set trainings, any way I can give back to the community remotely”

## What advice would you give to an incoming college student who is a first generation immigrant/first generation college student?

"Choose the path that will make you happy without having any regret."

"Have trust in yourself and know your boundaries."

"Be patient with whatever is going on, it takes a lot of time to adjust to this mode of learning."

"I'd like to inform incoming college students to take advantage of the school resources as much as possible. Especially as a first gen college and/or immigrants, there are very limited resources available, so try your best to get to know your advisor, meet a mentor, and ask classmates for help. Also, don't underestimate yourself! You are more capable than you think you are, so dream big!"

"There are many resources available to you; it's never too late to look for them and get the help you need"

"Try new things and take risks. There is really no better time to fail than right now. If possible, challenge yourself to take courses/jobs/internships that you haven't done before or may have an interest in, rather than just going for something only because you have confidence that you will do well. Make sure you invest in yourself. The effort you put into your own growth, you will see the results. If you don't do anything, you won't grow. The most painful experiences or embarrassing moments are the moments where we learn the most. You'll only be failing in the ways you need in order to push yourself to be better. Don't be afraid, be bold."

"I'd say communicate with your family and set up a daily schedule with times articulated for your family and yourself. You need time to yourself. It is okay to take a mental health day."

# Self-Care Tips by sharlene daba-ay

In a time where we are navigating distance learning and fighting for racial equity, we can get so caught up in the situation and forget to take care of ourselves. I have been guilty of doing this. After recovering from coronavirus, I had to catch up on several assignments and study for finals while witnessing injustice. With the feelings of stress and frustration, I neglected my hygiene and went very long hours without food. I am very lucky to have a friend who caught on to my behavior and constantly reminded me to eat and let me vent out to them. I learned that I need to take care of myself more and began doing mindfulness activities such as yoga and watching my favorite shows. Here are more mindfulness activities you can do!

## Mindfulness activities:

- **Journaling.** You can write down about anything that is on your mind at the moment, career life, a memory, your concerns, your health, etc.
  - Journal prompts
    - Write down your current thoughts for 5 minutes
    - Today I am most grateful for \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
    - How am I taking care of myself right now?
- **Mindful breathing** - set a timer for 5 minutes and take deep breaths. During this time focus only on your breathing and avoid incoming thoughts
- Fill out a **coloring book page** (see page 21)
- Create your own **dream pillow**. A dream pillow is a small pillow full of aromatic herbs that provide aromatherapy. Alternatively, you can create an **eye pillow**, which are weighted aromatic pillows that relieve pressure on your eyes.
- **Listen to your favorite playlist.** If you would like song suggestions, listen to our playlist as seen on page 22.





SHASTA DAISY

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PLAYLIST

# a self care playlist by HCAP...

wind down and listen to this playlist!  
hope you enjoy it :) - Sharlene,  
Dorothy, Leora, and Jeffry

Sharlene • 25 songs, 1 hr 30 min



**No Te Enamores**  
Paloma Mami

**GERONIMO!**  
DPR LIVE

**Colors**  
Halsey

**Need to Know**  
ELHAE, I.M

**MIA (feat. Drake)**  
Bad Bunny, Drake

**LOVE?**  
PENOMELO, ELO, ..

**Fantasy**  
Alina Baraz, Galimat.

**Lights Down Low**  
MAX

**Rêverie**  
Claude Debussy, Al...



**Debussy - Claire ...**  
Martin Bloch

**Ungodly Hour**  
Chloe x Halle

**Stay Tonight**  
CHUNG HA

**My Time**  
BTS

**Rose-Colored Boy**  
Paramore

**365247**  
DAY6

**HAPPY WITHOU...**  
Monsta X

**Who (feat. BTS)**  
Lauv, BTS

**Spring Day**  
BTS

**Hopeless**  
Khalid

**No Different**  
Epik High, Yuna

**How'm I Doing**  
Eric Nam

**Head In The Clou...**  
88rising, Joji

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DAY6

**Crimes**  
Gallant

# Anti-Blackness in AAPI Communities

by samuel dilawari

Following the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery, many were seen protesting across the United States to fight for justice. Over the years, I have grown to realize that there remains a certain extent of rejection surrounding the Black Lives Matter movement in the Asian American community. This is a reflection piece about the anti-Blackness that exists in Asian American communities and about how I helped educate my mother on the topic.

Family is an essential component of my mother's identity. My mother was born in Pakistan during the 1970s. Her parents passed away at a young age, and the family that remained was her sense of community and belonging. For this reason, she never opposed their requests nor went against their opinions because they were the only form of comfort my mother had left. My mother soon married and immigrated to the United States in hopes of more opportunities for her family and future child.



However, the United States was different from her home country of Pakistan. For one, living in New York City, she interacted with people from different races, cultures, and religions from her own. She had little experience with this before migrating to America. At the same time, she was alone in navigating this experience as a recent immigrant. My mother relied on her family and the education she received for her opinions on the world around her. As a new immigrant, she wanted to ensure she was surrounding herself with other people she felt comfortable with, who had found their success in America. By being close to these people, she believed that she would also learn how to find success in this country.



However, the education system in Pakistan created gaps in knowledge about the Western world. Although the United States is a world power, Pakistan is concerned with teaching its history first. Oftentimes, Pakistan would import outdated textbooks from the United States, which were filled with misinformation about America's history and specifically created a grim depiction of Black people and other minority groups in history. Therefore, my mother and other Pakistani people alike believed that to succeed in the United States, they had to stray away from Black people.



I recall a time when I was little, my mother pulled me away from my Black friends because she feared these children to be dangerous. I was distraught because I had known these friends for some time and I could never see them as being the slightest dangerous. At that age, I had always trusted my mother's intimations and saw her intentions to be genuine, but I couldn't understand her rationale for such an assumption. She was trying to feed the same narrative that she was taught, creating a vicious cycle of taught racism. At the time, I obliged to her demands because I believed she was an adult and therefore knew better than I did. However, looking back at it, I feel such an intense guilt for leaving my friends behind.



Recently, my mother was speaking with an older cousin from Pakistan over the phone about the Black Lives Matter protests. My cousin expressed disbelief in the need to protest over the death of a single person and saw the cause to be pointless. He remarked the police as being a vital component in a functioning society and saw no reason for opposition. My mother spoke in agreement. However, before I could even think, I was already trying to explain to my cousin about the history of police brutality and systems of inequality in America. However, I was quickly shot down and called disrespectful by my cousin because he was my elder. He stated that I didn't need to educate him because he firmly believed in his opinion and became outraged with my attempt. He turned this frustration towards my mother, who sided with him and accepted the blame for speaking out against him. Before he hung up, he expressed that he couldn't understand why I would side with Black people, who were nothing like us. Although I could see his perspective, I refused to apologize and believed my reason for fighting was just.

Over the next few days, my mother and I refused to talk to one another. Although I wanted to allow the situation to cool down, I was still eager to talk to my mom. However, there was a language barrier present because I wanted to explain complex thoughts and ideas, but I was afraid that translating this into my mother's native language of Urdu might lose some of its initial meaning. Therefore, I planned and believed I should brush up on my knowledge of police brutality and the mistreatment of Black people in America. I also thought it would be important to better understand my mother's perspective. Her anti-Black ideals weren't her fault, but instead a product of the environment she grew up in and I was going to challenge her entire way of thinking. Initially, it was very difficult to talk to her about anti-Blackness because there were many things that I believed she had to unlearn. For instance, my mother believed that challenging the status quo of America as South Asian immigrants would ultimately lead to our demise. She also believed that as immigrants, our role was to assimilate and blend in with the rest of white America to be successful. There were times when my mother left me at a lack of words, but I never stopped trying. Some conversations were productive, while others resulted in arguments. It is important to continue having these conversations to assist the previous generation in unlearning their anti-Black beliefs and breaking the cycle of taught racism.

### **THOUGHTS I FOUND HELPFUL WHEN APPROACHING MY FAMILY ABOUT ANTI-BLACKNESS:**

- **IT'S IMPORTANT TO MAINTAIN COMPOSURE AND PREVENT YOUR EMOTIONS FROM OVERWHELMING YOU**
- **KNOW YOUR HISTORY AND BE PREPARED TO FACT-CHECK**
- **KNOW YOUR OWN LIMITS AND TAKE BREAKS WHEN NECESSARY**
- **TAKE THEIR PERSPECTIVE**
- **UNDERSTAND THIS WILL TAKE TIME AND MANY FUTURE CONVERSATIONS ARE REQUIRED**







# Telling My Story



by danying guan

## Me, myself and I

These are truly views of my own about what's been happening. These are the things that I have been going through as an immigrant, woman, and Chinese American. I wrote this piece as a way to process my experiences and learnings about the AAPI and Black communities. Understanding the struggles of both communities and connecting them together is a very long and bitter process. I unlearned a lot of misbeliefs that I used to have about the Black community and I think it is important for my family to do that too.

I am an immigrant and first generation college student at Hunter College. I went to school in China until I was a freshman in high school. From then on, I started attending school here in the U.S. China is not a racially diverse country compared to the US. When I came here, I saw a lot that I never encountered before in China, including sociological aspects of race, sexuality, political systems, government, culture and gender orientation. I had a very basic American dream: education and opportunities. To achieve this dream, my family and I had to abandon everything we had back home and say goodbye to our family and friends. My grandma, who raised me in China, told me to go to school so that I don't end up like her as a farmer. It is cliché to say that our definition of success is to go to school and get a good job, but nobody in my family has ever gone to high school and college. This is what drives me to achieve this American dream.



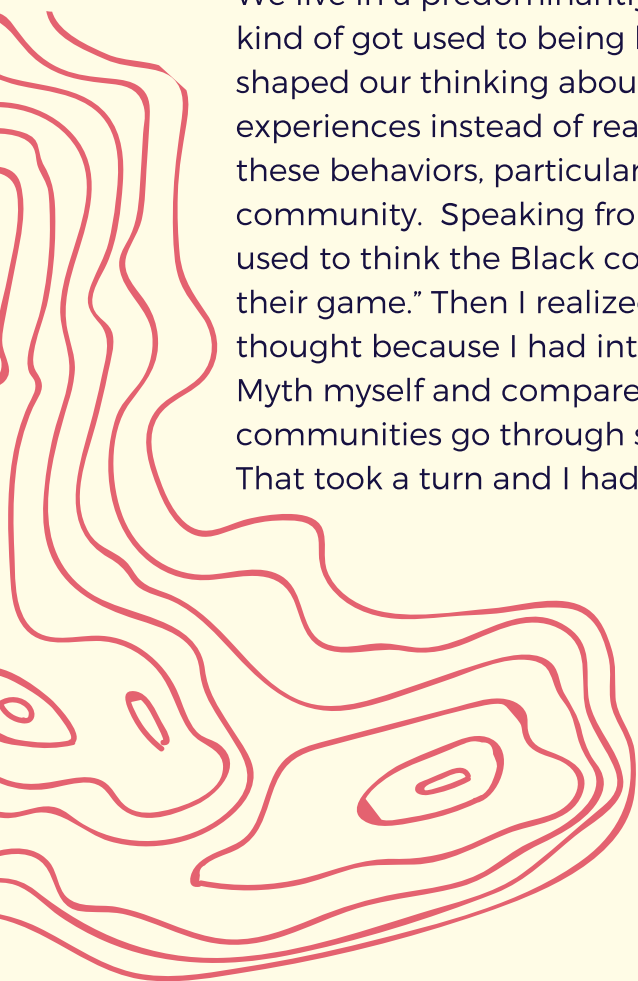
## “Chinese Virus”

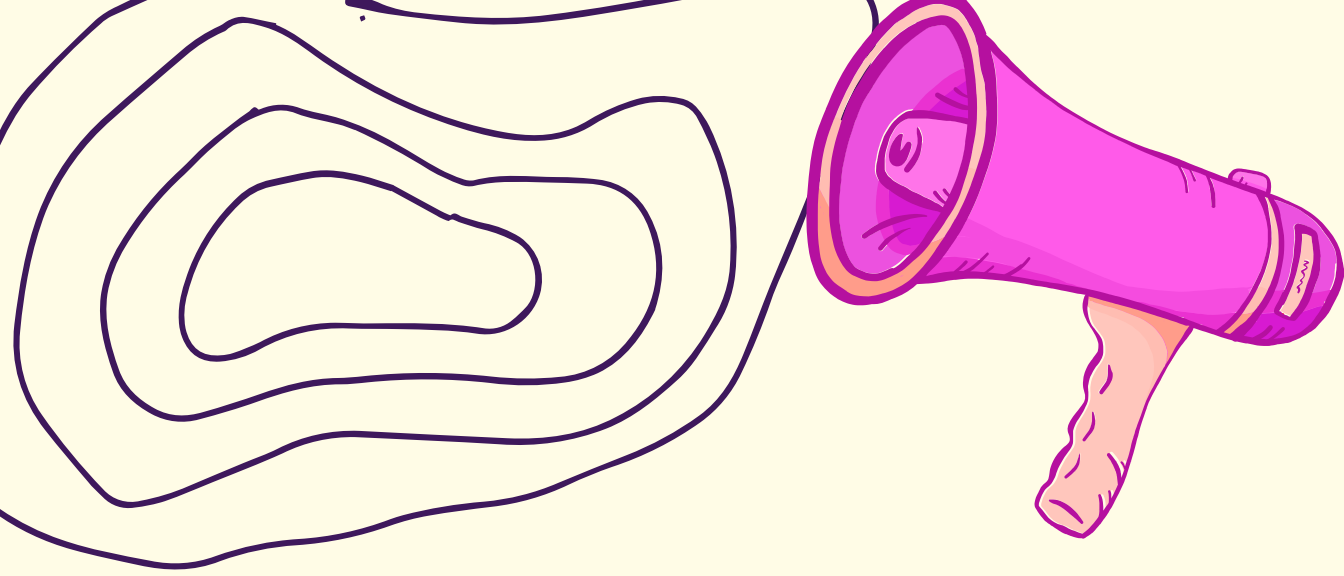
The pandemic is deadly, but I believe the racism Asian Americans face daily is more toxic.

Speaking as one who has been through harassment due to COVID-19, I found myself really angry and helpless at one point.

Most people automatically assume and profile Asian Americans as COVID-19 carriers. During the pandemic/earlier this year, I personally got spat at on the train with my mother. This was not okay but we are very thankful that we are safe and healthy. My parents often experience harassment from people in our community. We live in a predominantly Black neighborhood and we kind of got used to being harassed. This is possibly what shaped our thinking about Black folks from these experiences instead of really deciphering what caused these behaviors, particularly targeted towards the Asian community. Speaking from the bottom of my heart, I used to think the Black community needed to “step up their game.” Then I realized this was a sick and unhealthy thought because I had internalized the Model Minority Myth myself and compared us to them when both of our communities go through struggles.

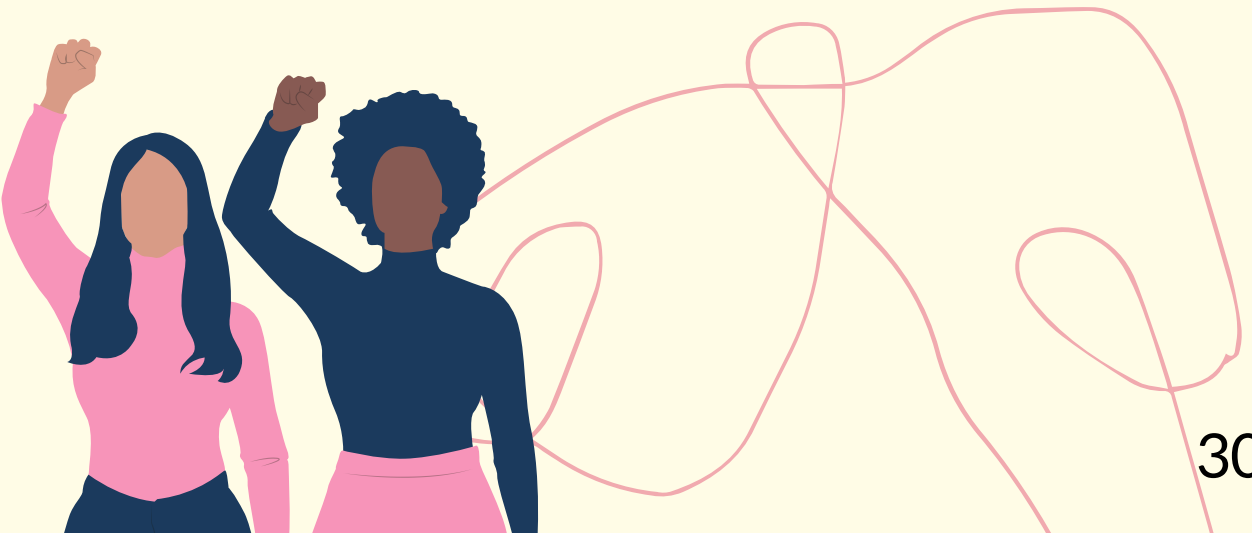
That took a turn and I had to unlearn these things.





### **Murder of George Floyd**

I was scared to watch the video. It was not a month later, I decided to watch the entire video clip of George Floyd's murder. I cried so much because it was heartbreaking and infuriating. I cried with my partner sitting right next to me and asked him with my trembling voice, "Why is this still happening? Why can't we change anything?" I contemplate a lot on the issues that minorities, especially BIPOC communities face. Systemic racism is set up in a way that everything is inaccessible. I see this with my own eyes everyday in the neighborhood, for example, public hospitals are almost old in my neighborhood and they barely have equipment comparable to the private hospitals in Manhattan. The only time that the city takes time and effort to renew certain buildings is when they want to gentrify the neighborhood, which is a really bad thing for communities that are underserved in resources.



## **Relearning along with my family**

My family still thinks certain neighborhoods are dangerous and predominantly Black people live in those neighborhoods. They used to tell me not to walk on this side of the street or don't go to certain neighborhoods because you are a girl and might get hurt. I understood where they were coming from, but I wanted them to realize why lack of resources allocated to these neighborhoods caused detriment to the development of them.

I tried talking to my parents about the history of slavery and how that affected access to resources compared to the white majority and all they said was: "They had all these years to catch up, they are just bad." I tried looping this back to history in China, European countries colonized several cities in China, including Hongkong, Macau, and Shanghai. I shared the history piece with my family because I wanted them to understand the struggles that our ancestors went through and to connect our struggles with those of the Black community. Slavery and racism continues to negatively impact Black communities today with high rates of police brutality and incarceration, which is different from the inequalities that many Asian Americans experience.

I was thrilled when my mother finally asked me, "Why are they killing innocent people?" This is the same question I asked everyone around me and started relearning the definition of inequality rooted in the system, meaning that the Black communities continue experiencing inequalities.

## **Moving forward..**

It is important to continue having these conversations with your family, even though it is traumatizing and difficult. The first step is to acknowledge the struggles that we go through as Asian Americans and also the privileges that we technically uphold-- we are less likely to be targeted or murdered by the police, and we may also experience different forms of racism. Transformative actions are powerful and everything shifts, meaning that everything in society and government continues to change, but we should all take initiatives to reach our goal. Today I started off by teaching my family that anti-Blackness is wrong and we need to stand in solidarity with them when it comes to social injustice.



# 1 in 5

by dorothy liu

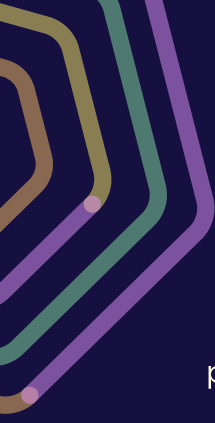
Recently I've seen more and more people come out on instagram with their own personal assault stories over quarantine. By hearing these stories and informing myself on the issue, it's made me realize how serious this issue is and has made me reflect on my own personal experiences. From close female friends to male acquaintances, their stories broke me to the bone, knowing that they have been struggling alone with this pain for years and knowing that their harassers probably did not even realize what they did was wrong. Each story was intimate and graphic, yet necessary to break down the stigma against sexual assault and to protect the next generation. So I felt compelled to write this piece to bring awareness to other Hunter/CUNY students as well as other college students about sexual assault.



"You don't know me, but you've been inside me, and that's why we're here today." In March 2015, Chanel Miller read these words aloud during the sentencing trial of Brock Turner, the former Stanford College student who had raped her. Addressing Turner directly, she described the severe impact his assault had on her. Her words illustrate the profound reality for rape and sexual assault victims for the past centuries. Although Miller's rapist was guilty of three counts of sexual assault and faced a maximum of 14 years in state prison, he was sentenced to six months in county jail and probation. In fact, the judge explicitly said that he feared a longer sentence would impact Turner's reputation as a champion swimmer with potential to swim in the olympics. This story is the epitome of the thousands of sexual assault cases that occur daily.

## **sources**

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- **Centers for Disease Control,**  
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- **U.S Department of Justice: Bureau of Justice Statistics. 2007 National Crime Victimization Study, 2010-2014 (2015)**
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I think most of us had that talk about sexual assault. When I heard the CDC state that 1 in 5 college women would be sexually assaulted, the first thing I thought was that “it isn’t something that would happen to me. I’m not the type of person that would be assaulted.” If anything, the assaulter would be a crazy random person off the street. I never would have imagined it could be the people I trusted the most: best friends, family members, teachers. In fact during sexual assault seminars, my friends and I would touch each others shoulders and joke that it was sexual assault. I never would have thought that shoulder touching would turn into groping and joking would turn into pleas to stop. To cope, some people say “it could have been worse,” “just pretend it never happened,” or that “it happens to a lot of people,” like sexual assault is not significant and should be treated as a coming of age symbol. Sexual assault is not taken seriously—not in schools and not in police departments.



When many women try to speak up for themselves and their rights, they are often treated as children by society. However, when the same women are raped or sexually assaulted, I have noticed how society may then see them as young women that subconsciously “wanted” it. Others may question: “Why else would they have dressed like that and why else would they have drank that much?” Even when women gather the last bits of courage, become vulnerable and recall that horrific incident, they end up getting called sluts, liars and attention seekers. Instead of support, they are asked what they wore, they’re blamed for going out to the bars and they’re asked for the evidence.



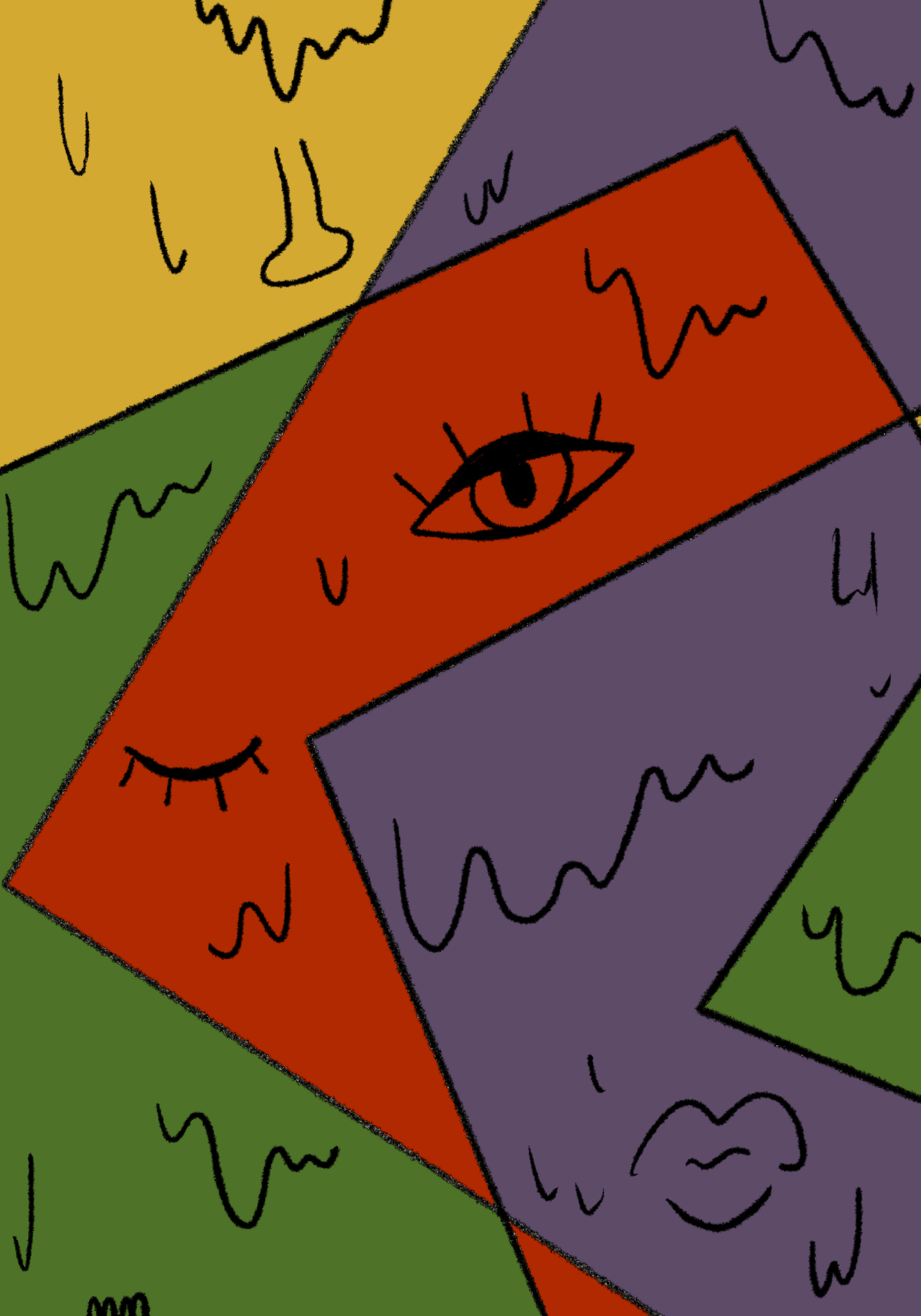


Sexual assault is real and sexual assault is happening now. To put this in perspective, **every 98 seconds another American has been sexually assaulted.** In other words, by the time it takes to boil water, brush your teeth, or to toast bread, another American has been sexually assaulted.

In 2018, approximately 734,630 people were raped (threatened, attempted, or completed) in the U.S. **Even more frightening statistics is that there was a significant decrease in self-reports of rape and sexual assault from 2017 (40%) to 2018 (25%), but there was not a decrease in rape and sexual assault instances.**

How many more mothers, daughters, girl friends or sisters must be raped until action is taken? I may never know the answer to that question, but what I do know is that informing others is the first step to change. **Change comes from voting, teaching others, protests, and among many others, change comes from understanding.**

I believe that informing others through pieces like this is a part of turning the tide on sexual assault.



**Dear Hunter Community, As we enter another school year, we know that with it may come with uncertainty and challenges ahead. We'd like to leave you with some words of encouragement from your fellow students:**

*You can do this!!!! We WILL get through it! 2020 will eventually end. Stay connected with people at Hunter and remind yourself that you are not alone.*

*We feel you! Quarantine might be hard but always remember you have a great HCAP community that has your back. We're always thinking of ways to support you and we would love to connect! As Justin and Ariana says, we're stuck with U.*

*We're here to support you! We believe in you! Your efforts are appreciated! If you could get through this hot mess, you can get through anything!*

*Distance-learning is hard, so don't blame yourself if you need to take a break! Feel free to reach out to us, we're here to support you.*

*Sometimes there is just too much going on in your life, and it's perfectly fine to take a break. Distance learning, social issues, family issues, loss of income, things get real, and they are tough. Give yourself a break, you deserve it!*

*Don't be afraid to reach out for help. Asking questions is the very first step to boost your confidence as a student. Don't be afraid of failures and LEARN from them! Find a study group or a community as y'all struggle through this together. I hope y'all have a great semester!*

*<3,*

*HCAP Leaders: Danying, Dorothy, Jeffry, Han, Leora, Sam, & Sharlene*



**About HCAP:** Hunter College AANAPISI Project (HCAP) is a U.S. Department of Education-funded program that supports the retention, graduation and overall success of Asian American, Pacific Islander and other first-generation goers and students from immigrant families. Through the HCAP Leaders program, HCAP trains undergraduate students in helping their peers to navigate college and build deeper community at Hunter. To learn more about HCAP, visit: [www.huntercap.org](http://www.huntercap.org), instagram: @hcap.hunter, facebook: hcap.hunter.



