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The Subjectivity and Futurity of the Asian Canadian Woman
La subjectivité et l’avenir de la femme canadienne d’origine asiatique

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See table of contents

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Article abstract

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The Subjectivity and Futurity of the Asian Canadian Woman

by Annie Chau

Abstract: This article asserts that subjectivity and futurity are critical sites of contestation between Asian Canadian women and the nation-state of Canada. It draws on primary research involving Asian Canadian women in the spring of 2022: a participant observation of a Canadian citizenship ceremony held virtually during Asian Heritage Month and an interview with Ellen (pseudonym), a member of the Asian Canadian Women's Alliance. First, in my analysis of the citizenship ceremony, I argue that the figure of the Asian Canadian woman is bound to her allegiance to the nation-state. In the ceremony, discourses of Canadian multiculturalism and the model minority myth are conjoined and pronounced. Second, turning to my interview with Ellen and to instances of resistance by Asian Canadian women during the citizenship ceremony, I argue that Asian Canadian women confront Canadian nation-building and the model minority myth through their articulations and utterances of diversity, feminisms, and decolonization. With Asian Canadian women working to take back their futures from Canada, I propose that possibilities for collective and decolonial futures with Indigenous Peoples can also be imagined.

Keywords: Asian Canadian feminisms; citizenship; decolonization; multiculturalism; model minority myth

Résumé: Cet article soutient que la subjectivité et l'avenir sont d'importants sujets de contestation entre les Canadiennes d'origine asiatique et l'État-nation du Canada. Il s'appuie sur une recherche primaire à laquelle ont participé des Canadiennes d'origine asiatique au printemps 2022 : une observation participante d'une cérémonie de citoyenneté canadienne organisée virtuellement pendant le Mois du patrimoine asiatique et une entrevue avec Ellen (pseudonyme), membre de l'Asian Canadian Women's Alliance. Tout d'abord, dans mon analyse de la cérémonie de citoyenneté, je soutiens que la figure de la Canadienne d'origine asiatique est liée à son allégeance à l'État-nation. Lors de la cérémonie, sont entendus des discours sur le multiculturalisme canadien ainsi que sur le mythe de la minorité modèle. Ensuite, d'après mon entrevue avec Ellen et les exemples de résistance des Canadiennes d'origine asiatique lors de la cérémonie de citoyenneté, je dirai que ces Canadiennes contestent l'édification de la nation canadienne et le mythe de la minorité modèle en évoquant la diversité, le féminisme et la décolonisation. Puisque les Canadiennes d'origine asiatique s'efforcent de reprendre en main leur avenir au Canada, je propose que l'on imagine aussi la possibilité d'un avenir collectif et décolonial avec les peuples autochtones.

Mots clés: féminisme canadien d'origine asiatique; citoyenneté; décolonisation; multiculturalisme; mythe de la minorité modèle

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Introduction

Taking back the future involves a wrestling away of the future from its preordained fate. For Canada, a settler nation that draws upon the ideology of manifest destiny (Robinson 2016), fate is overdetermined by patriarchal, colonial, white supremacist interests. Diaz (2023) remarks:

> The Settler State weaves its ideas of future into us—its empire… can only exist in that future, where it keeps its people precarious and urgent *now*, in an emergency only the State's future can solve. I catch myself some days existing only in that future, which doesn't have to be an inevitable blueprint [original emphasis]. (59)

As a critical ethnography, this article concerns the futurity of the Asian Canadian woman and offers "the potential to explore the textured and contradictory space between 'structure' and 'agency'" (Alexander 2004, 148). My approach to subjectivity recognizes oppression but does not concede to the fate of oppression. In Act One, *A Future Made*, I examine the future of the Asian Canadian woman from the point of her inception at citizenship, where a multicultural nationalism is performed and a model minority is formed. It is in this ceremony where the conjoined discourses of Canadian multiculturalism and the model minority myth begin to bind her allegiance to the nation. In Act Two, *Making Her Future*, I turn to how Asian Canadian women confront the model minority myth through their articulations and utterances of diversity, feminisms, and decolonization. With Asian Canadian women taking back their futures, possibilities for collective and decolonial futures with Indigenous Peoples can also be imagined. This article draws on primary research involving Asian Canadian women in the spring of 2022 from two sources: a participant observation of a Canadian citizenship ceremony held virtually during Asian Heritage Month and an interview with Ellen (pseudonym), a member of the Asian Canadian Women's Alliance (ACWA).

Background

I attended a special virtual citizenship ceremony on May 27, 2022, hosted by the Institute for Canadian Citizenship (ICC), a non-profit "[whose] programs and special projects inspire inclusion, celebrate newcomers, and encourage active citizenship" (ICC Our Approach 2022, para. 1). The organization encourages all people, especially Canadian-born citizens, to attend a citizenship ceremony. Being the only one in my immediate family to have received Canadian citizenship simply due to being Canadian-born, I felt compelled to observe a ceremony to better understand this definitive event of naturalization. My family emigrated from Vietnam to Canada as refugees in 1979. I was born two years later. A year after my birth, my family became Canadian citizens. The ceremony I attended was an especially auspicious one, held during Citizenship Week (May 23-29) and Asian Heritage Month (May), both federally observed occasions. The guests in this ceremony include a community activist, a Guzheng (ancient Chinese plucked instrument) musician, and an anthem singer, all who identify as Asian Canadian women.

During the time of the ceremony, I was also interested in Asian Canadian feminisms. I reached out to the ACWA after coming across their website in an internet search. The alliance is a "progressive, feminist, antioppressive… network that amplifies voices of our communities" (ACWA Mission n.d., para. 1). From my email request for an interview, I was connected with ACWA member Ellen (pseudonym), a 66-year-old Japanese Canadian woman, who agreed to a one-hour interview over Zoom in June of 2022. The interview was conducted upon approval from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Toronto. Ellen was not remunerated for her participation. She was the only member interviewed.

Act One—A Future Made

Commenting on the newly minted Canadians in this citizenship ceremony, Citizenship Judge Marie Senécal-Tremblay says they are "on a new chapter, the shiny new first pages as Canadian citizens." Despite implying a tabula rasa for the new Canadians, their aspirations are inseparable from the nation. Sean Fraser, Minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship, says, "Your future is our future." There is a conflating and co-opting of futures. Senécal-Tremblay reiterates this connection: "Your future is limited only by the size of your dreams. So, dream big! When we welcome, we grow." In this act, I show the Canadian dream, guided by manifest destiny ideology (Robinson 2016), is one that goes unrealized for many Asian Canadian women.

Canadian Citizenship

Drawing on Arendt (2004), Abu-Laban, Tungohan, and Gabriel (2023) assert that "'the right to have rights' remains contingent on political community… specifically on one's membership in a state" (75). Thobani (2017) states: "Citizenship has… long served as the signifier par excellence of membership in the nation-state" (29). Simply, citizenship matters because it has become the predominant way in which people access their human rights. It operates in securing allegiance to the nation. Further, the ceremony itself matters. Thobani (2017) notes the formal and informal rituals and rites of citizenship as "sites where members of the collective perform their own belonging and recognize that of their compatriots" (34). A nation indeed imagines itself as a community (Anderson 1985). Gaztambide-Fernández (2015) argues that observations of highly performative and tightly controlled spaces provide unique insight into systems of power. The citizenship ceremony must be contextualized in larger structures of nation-state oppression. Alcoff (1992) says, "The meaning of the words spoken as well as the meaning of the event… shifts the ontology of meaning from its location in a text or utterance to a larger space… the discursive context" (12). The citizenship ceremony operates legally and discursively to "give birth" to the Asian Canadian woman and then to govern her future, as part and parcel of her initiation into her new nation. The ceremony also illustrates the banality of dominant power; the citizenship candidates who do not sufficiently perform their role face serious repercussions. The clerk of the ceremony reminds the candidates that taking the oath is "the final legal requirement to become a Canadian citizen." She explains, "If there [is] any doubt you have not [repeated the oath], you will not receive your citizenship."

As a public performance, visuals are also important to the meaning-making of the event. "Canadiana" is on full display in the virtual citizenship ceremony, as many of the participants have Canadian flags and red and white on their clothing or in their respective spaces. This is especially visible in Senécal-Tremblay's office, which contains several visual cues in a small space: two Canadian flags, a framed photo of Queen Elizabeth, and a stand-up poster with the text #ImmigrationMatters. The event begins with a video of short clips over sweeping instrumental music that include: the CN tower, horses, icebergs, polar bears, lighthouses, ships, loons, beavers, autumnal trees, solar panels, trains, Parliament, RCMP, Niagara Falls, hockey (multiple times), Indigenous dancers, a pride parade, African drumming, Terry Fox, forts, Queen Elizabeth, highland dancing, and totem poles. Glossing over the white supremacist project of Canada, the diversity and plurality of the nation is proudly asserted in this video. Foucault (1982) describes the totalizing individualism of the modern state "as an entity of a very sophisticated structure, in which individuals can be integrated under one condition" (783). For contemporary Canada, multiculturalism appears to be that one condition.

Multicultural Nationalism

In the citizenship ceremony, Fraser says, "This is my favourite kind of event… Canadians are born all over the world and some take longer to get here." To his own question, "What does it mean to be Canadian?" he replies, "There are 38 million answers," in reference to the nation's population. While there might be 38 million answers to what it means to be Canadian, Fraser's remarks imply that one response covers them all. To be "Canadian" in this sense means to be "multicultural." Fraser comments proudly on Canada's "humanitarian traditions of freedom, equality, and dignity," tenets of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is a particularly Canadian tool for imagining the nation and its ways of governing difference within its national community. "Canada is the place where the term 'multiculturalism' was coined" (Abu-Laban and Bakan 2020, 12). On the 50th anniversary of Canada's much-lauded multiculturalism policy, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (2021) stated:

> Multiculturalism [became] an official government policy – the first of its kind in the world – to recognize the contribution of cultural diversity and multicultural citizenship to the Canadian social fabric. The diversity of Canadians is a fundamental characteristic of our heritage and identity. For generations, newcomers from all over the world, of all backgrounds, ethnicities, faiths, cultures, and languages, have been coming to Canada with the hopes of making it their home. Today, in addition to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, people from more than 250 ethnic groups call Canada home and celebrate their cultural heritage with pride – they are at the heart of our success as a vibrant, prosperous, and progressive country. (paras. 1-2)

Ultimately, multiculturalism functions to disguise the racialized, gendered, and classed nature of Canadian citizenship.

Birthing the Asian Canadian Woman

The Asian Canadian woman comes into existence during the citizenship ceremony. However, legal citizenship is just one facet of a negotiated belonging (Stasiulis and Bakan 2013). Full substantive citizenship remains elusive for the gendered and sexualized other (Volpp 2017) and the racialized other (FitzGerald 2017). Thobani (2007) theorizes a divisive, triangulated, hierarchical subject formation unique to settler colonial states in which "the national remains at the centre of the state's (stated) commitment to enhance national wellbeing, the immigrant receives a tenuous and conditional inclusion, and the Aboriginal continues to be marked for loss of sovereignty" (18). In this highly racialized citizenship regime, the white male national is "exalted above all others as the embodiment of the quintessential characteristics of the nation and the personification of its values, ethics, and civilizational mores" (Thobani 2017, 3). He is entitled to all the rights and privileges of the state, as he most purely represents and is represented by the nation (Thobani 2017). While the non-white immigrant woman is invited in some measure into Canada, she remains a conditional, "hyphenated" Canadian (Miki 2004), an Asian Canadian woman. Her struggle for a more fulsome belonging is highly productive for the nation.

For racialized immigrants, their degree of "Canadianness" depends on their willingness to aspire, labour, and sacrifice for the nation (Thobani 2007). Allegiance is first performed and pronounced at the citizenship ceremony but it becomes an unremitting duty for Asian Canadians. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Conservative Member of Parliament Derek Sloan's criticism of Dr. Theresa Tam, Canada's Chief Public Health Officer, provoked alarm concerning Asian Canadians' loyalty to Canada. He asked "rhetorically" whether she works "for Canada or for China" (Boutilier 2020, subheading). Responsibility as a payment or a debt to citizenship (Day 2016) is demonstrated in the citizenship ceremony. Senécal-Tremblay harnesses a militaristic tone in calling for citizen participation: "Your active involvement is the key to the ongoing good health of Canadian democracy. We will be counting on you." She draws on former Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier's words: "Canada is free, and freedom is its nationality." She says, the "idea of freedom, living without fear… does not walk alone." In her articulation, freedom is not a right but a privilege with substantial duties. It is not exactly a reciprocal relationship: the nation does for the citizen what the citizen does for the nation. Returning to the example of Dr. Tam, racialized citizens are especially criticized as disloyal; their allegiance is particularly scrutinized. The burden of responsibility is carried by the citizen, specifically the racialized immigrant who is persistently marked as new in "White Canada" (Ward 2002). With the intertwining of the "ideological designation[s] [of] immigrants, newcomers, new Canadians, and visible minorities" (Thobani 2017, 32), those racialized as non-white continue to be estranged despite generations of residency in Canada.

Forming the Model Minority

Another subjectivity formed through the citizenship ceremony is the "model minority." Literature on the model minority focuses on narratives of bootstrapping and stereotypes of Asian immigrant subjects who are obedient, subservient, grateful, and insular (Kimoto 2018, Roshanravan 2018, Wu 2018). These stereotypes are also highly gendered, as evidenced in the feminization of Asian men and their labour. The 1902 Royal Commission on Asian Immigration into British Columbia depicted Chinese men as "members of a 'servile' and 'effete' civilization," fitting only in the "female" occupations of food preparation and laundry service (Backhouse 1996, 336). Asian immigrant subjects are expected to work hard to achieve fuller recognition, while working hard is attributed to their innate "cultural" qualities. Their hard work does not go unrecognized, as Nguyen (2013) states:

> [The] model minority… is able to achieve educational, economic, and social success with no or very little assistance from the state… [Because of this,] model minorities are made visible as exemplary ethnic citizens and as disciplinary cases marginalizing other, less compliant minorities who speak out against racism and classism. (23)

Race logics are important to the model minority myth. Ong (2003) asserts that the model minority was invented to position Asian Americans against a so-called underclass, a label denigrating Blacks experiencing poverty in the US. The highly visibilized "success" of the Asian Canadian woman functions to divide her from other non-white women (e.g., Black and Indigenous women) and to secure her submission to the citizenship regime, so that she might attain some semblance of inclusion. The model minority myth compels Asian immigrants "to equate themselves with their oppressors to remedy the conditions of their subordination. [This] shows white supremacist ideology at work, reproducing and reinforcing the ideology that [Asians are] actually struggling to resist" (Kim 2001, 100). Similarly, Coloma (2017) cautions against ethno-nationalist discourses of belonging present in some Asian Canadian activisms. While the socio-economic mobility for some Asian immigrants "proves" that "success" is possible for those racialized as non-white (Kim 2001), full belonging continues to elude them, as they are reminded of their non-whiteness in "White Canada" (Ward 2002). This was evident in the rise of anti-Asian hate in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic (Project 1907, 2022).

Considering the Model Minority Woman

The model minority is not only a racialized concept but also a gendered one. Stasiulis and Bakan's (2013) work on the negotiated citizenship of non-white, foreign domestic workers shows that many non-white, migrant women workers remain excluded from Canadian citizenship. Ng's (1988) analysis of the "immigrant woman worker" as a labour-market category to supply low-waged and precarious jobs in Canada reveals that Asian Canadian women are produced by national politico-economic forces. Certainly, Asian Canadian women's experiences of the model minority myth are complicated by a history of control of their migration to the nation. Asian women were presumed to have the

> potential to disrupt the 'biological reproduction of the white nation'… Chinese women who were in Canada [were assumed to work] as sex workers [possessing] a different moral character than that attributed to white women. Consequently, the 1885 Chinese Immigration Act specifically stated the exclusion of sex workers to prevent the entry of most Chinese women. (Violence Against Women Learning Network 2021, 4)

When they were finally included, their inclusion continued to be predicated on men. Asian women were first granted entry because of white fear of miscegenation between Asian men and white women in Canada. Despite the removal of explicit racism and sexism in Canadian immigration policies upon introduction of the merit-based points system in 1967, other policies persisted to challenge the inclusion of non-white, migrant women, notably those employed under the Live-In-Caregiver program (Abu-Laban, Tungohan, and Gabriel 2023, 48). Finally, the increase in anti-Asian hate in Canada throughout the COVID-19 pandemic was disproportionately directed at women, indicating the endurance of racist misogyny against Asian women's inclusion in the nation (Project 1907, 2022).

Act Two—Making Her Future

I have discussed the relationship between the Asian Canadian woman and the confining identity of the model minority. However, she, like all marginalized people, is exemplary of a "doubled" subjectivity: one who "subject[s] to someone else by control and dependence [and one who subjects herself] by a conscience and self-knowledge" (Foucault 1982, 781). Against the nation's construction, how might the Asian Canadian woman make her own future? In this Act, I turn to how individual Asian Canadian women in my ethnographic research have articulated and expanded on diversity, feminisms, and decolonization to confront the model minority myth and make their own futures. I predominately draw on my interview with Ellen (pseudonym), a member of the ACWA. In the interview, Ellen shares that her parents, grandparents, and great grandparents experienced internment, relocation, and disenfranchisement as Japanese Canadians of the World War Two era. Her activist work is informed by her family's histories.

The Diversity of Asian Canada

One way to address the model minority myth is to centre the diversity of Asian Canada, disrupting the notion that the Asian Canadian community is a monolith. Nguyen (2013) argues "for a more nuanced consideration of the complexity and heterogeneity of Asian North American subjectivities, particularly those borne out of the violence of empire" (19). Ellen notes the diversity of Asian Canada, positioning herself both in relation to her ethnic origin and to the length of time her family has resided in Canada. She is a Japanese Canadian with deep roots in Canada. The interview begins with her stating, "I should say that I'm a three and [a] half generation kind of Japanese Canadian…. As you know, there are so many different Asian experiences in Canada." She enquires about my own heritage, stopping not only at my parents' histories as Vietnamese refugees but also inquiring into my ethnic Chinese heritage. Throughout the interview, Ellen comments extensively on the multiplicity of the Asian Canadian experience, repeating the words *different* and *diversity* 19 times. Of course, while "Asian Canadian" is evoked by the nation-state to secure its regime of citizenship, it is also harnessed by those who are identified as "Asian" for community-building and resistance (Zhou 2003). Citing the lack of Japanese in Montreal (the city in which she grew up), Ellen says, "I think I felt more Asian than Japanese Canadian… .To be honest, I think we were called slur names for Chinese, as opposed to Japanese, more often. So, we could identify with [that]."

Regarding the objectives of the ACWA, Ellen remarks on Asian Canadian solidarity and diasporic responsibility. She says that the ACWA wanted a "uniquely Canadian" way of bridging different issues: the "atomic bombings in Japan," "comfort women," and the "Nanjing massacre." Ellen shares both the importance of coalition and the uniqueness of position, which trouble the depoliticized multiculturalism used by Canada. She suggests a multiculturalism from the ground up; one that is grounded in the specific histories and lived experiences of those living in the margins of difference. But Ellen concedes that "[the ACWA didn't] really want to get into the sort of politics of our ancestral countries," recognizing that, to the members of the ACWA, activism that challenges the Canadian state is perhaps even more important than activism directed at other and ancestral nations. "Our family's been here since like 1900…. If you're in Asia, these things are issues, but we're in Canada, and many of us [have] been in Canada." While acknowledging Japan's atrocities against women, Ellen also seeks justice concerning Canada's treatment of Japanese people. She discusses at length the injustices her family have faced in Canada. "For those of us who went through the internment, the last thing on our mind[s] is what happened in Japan during the war. I mean, basically, we were the victims of Japanese militarism." She comments on the incarceration as well as the displacement of Canadian citizens of Japanese descent:

> Japanese Canadians of our generation were scattered across Canada…. You're kicked out of BC and then nobody else wants to take you…. The city of Toronto had an actual ban and quotas. So, my parents, my grandparents, and my great grandparents had to move to Quebec, where they didn't speak the language.

Regarding Japanese Canadians who have such histories of systemic racism in Canada, she says, "I find it really hard to totally apply [the model minority concept] to Japanese Canadians…. There's a whole period where that model minority thing is…. You can't even begin to talk about it…. When you're the most despised group in Canada." She asserts that working against poverty to secure educational and employment opportunities is not about being a model minority. "For Japanese Canadians, just to be able to be accepted was a matter of survival, right?" The model minority myth then is undermined by material concerns: "You want a job, right?"; "[you] work twice as hard as other people; "[you] put food on the table." Ellen also notes a "universal" struggle of parents to create "a better life for their kids." After generations of struggle, Ellen grew up "middle-class... [My parents] were happy when their kids were able to get the education that they didn't get and to be accepted and employed." She contends, "You [can't] really hold [those aspirations] against people, especially Japanese Canadians." She subverts the concept of success. Success must not only be thought of as a productive ideal for the nation but also conceived of and remembered as a form of resistance against oppression. That non-white women can exist and survive in a context of patriarchal, white supremacy suggests such resistance. Ellen bursts myths of the monolith Asian Canadian and the model minority Asian Canadian in her elaborations on the Asian Canadian experience as diverse and complex.

The model minority myth has different implications across the diversity of Asian Canada. She says, "There are so many different Asian experiences in Canada" and it's "hard to compare the model minority experience." Ellen suggests class as a defining factor of the experience. There are not only national and cultural differences but also class differences that must be reckoned with among Asians in Canada. The future looks very different depending on one's material reality on arrival. To Ellen, what resources Asians bring to Canada in terms of schooling and money have significant implications for their capacity to belong.

"Someone who comes from an Asian country already educated… already upper class, upper-middle class, [they fit in]." She recalls her experience of working as a union steward in a hotel, where an Asian man worked as a dishwasher. Pondering what has happened to him, Ellen acknowledges that for many Asian Canadians cycles of poverty endure.

Finally, there are generational differences in understanding the Asian Canadian experience. Referring to the upsurge in anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 pandemic, Ellen was shocked to know that younger generations of Asians were experiencing racism for the first time. They have no memories of racism of their own and/or have lost memories of their family's histories. Ellen says, "It was sort of shocking to me when all this anti-Asian racism came up, especially when younger people [felt] like it's sort of new. They haven't experienced it before." For her, "it's not new." Ellen illuminates the variations in Asian Canadian histories and trajectories. It is imperative to ask, then, what are the possibilities in seeking Asian Canadian solidarity? For this question, I turn to instances and expressions of feminist resistance by Asian Canadian women.

Asian Canadian Feminisms

One way to confront the model minority myth is to centre "unmodel" acts made by Asian Canadians. Ellen comments on the infantilizing expectations of the model minority to stay silent. She states: "Asian people are treated kind of like children…. This idea of not speaking up and being obedient… is expected of us." The assumption of Asian silence is contradicted by her own lived experience. She is from a long line of people and women who spoke out. Ellen shares, "My parents and grandparents were a little unique. I'm kind of an outlier in a way. Because my grandparents were quite active in the community." Both her grandmother and grandfather were leaders in the redress movement for Japanese Canadians. Ellen provides a story of the resistance of her mother. She recalls her mother paying a visit to her school's office to criticize the school for "collecting money for children in Africa but [not teaching] the kids about racism [here]." She notes that "in some ways I guess I'm not a good example [of the model minority Asian]… because my parents weren't afraid to speak up. I think a lot of people, the majority of Asians, are." She recalls attending anti-apartheid marches with her parents as a child and that they were frequently the only Asians present.

Concerning her engagement with feminist theory, Ellen recounts taking a post-secondary women's studies course and reading classic feminist literature. She says, "It was really an eyeopener because certainly we could relate to everything. I think I was like 17 or 18 when I took it. [It] definitely gave me some kind of orientation in terms of gender." Ellen comments specifically on the significance of Black women as "starting… second wave feminism." She gestures to how Black feminists simultaneously identified patriarchy within Black communities and racism within women's movements, leading the way for other non-white feminists. Ellen remarks that she often "was the only Asian person" in attendance in pro-choice and International Women's Day marches and in many other social justice circles.

What might be possible if solidarity among diverse Asian women was fostered? The ACWA is a feminist community of Asian Canadian women. Ellen names "some very important Asian Canadian women involved in [its] founding," including the activist Go sisters, journalist Jan Wong, and politician Olivia Chow. Ellen suggests that I interview other members as she comments, "We're all so different." Because the COVID-19 pandemic drained members' energies and demanded many members respond to the increase in anti-Asian racism, the ACWA became more like a "network…. We check-in with each other because people are really connected to their own communities…. Every now and then something comes up." Though this alliance explicitly communicates its feminist approach, Asian feminism remains in doubt. Ellen says, "To talk specifically about Asian women's feminism.... I don't know if that's actually a thing."

Lee (2006) ponders, "For whom does the term 'Asian Canadian feminisms' (acf) resonate? What is at stake in asserting this name?" (21). In her wrestling with this term, Lee (2006) says she refuses to capitalize the acronym, believing it to be an underdeveloped concept. She questions her very search for Asian Canadian feminisms, wondering if her inquiry is a kind of inclusion-seeking that is, in fact, exclusionary. Lee (2006) notes that acf might be questioned by Black and Indigenous feminists as theory that distracts from rather than contributes to the struggles of those communities. But to ask *why* Asian Canadian feminisms invites the question: *why not* Asian Canadian feminisms. Lee (2006) lists issues that might be important to acf: "refugee [rights]; reproductive technologies and sexist oppression; immigrant settlement and exclusion; violence in communities; sexuality and health; representation; exploitative working conditions in factories, farms, and service jobs" (31). Conceding that Asian Canadian feminisms exist, even if not predominantly understood as such, she surmises that "Asian feminisms are hybrid, complex, divided, and multiply accented" (43). Lee (2006) calls for more theoretical writing on Asian Canadian feminisms, asserting that "without Asian Canadian feminist writings, we have no memory of the past and no legacy for the future" (38). Similarly, Kwak (2017) posits that Asian Canadian feminisms are a critical intervention in Asian Canadian theorizing. The doubt that surrounds Asian Canadian feminisms might be best understood through recognizing similar critiques made by other non-white women concerning feminism. As Ellen suggests, Black women have concurrently critiqued and expanded dominant, mainstream feminism. Ng (1982) suggests for us to "abandon our commitment to a theoretical framework and simply focus on what women actually do" (116). Ng (1982) insists on a "groundedness" in Asian Canadian feminisms.

Lastly, Ellen mentions allyship as important to activism. Allyship can be forged in contexts where people are marginalized. Ellen notes that Montreal was "not a very welcoming city. I did end up having a lot of gay friends at the time because, you know, you kind of stick together.... When others are marginalized, you gravitate towards each other." She shares that her first boyfriend was Jewish and, as a result, she was exposed to "issues of anti-Semitism." Further, Ellen talks about her support of AIDS orphans in Ethiopia and Syrian refugees as an adult. Critical of colonial futures, Diaz (2023) proposes that allyship can be a practice of decolonization, asking, "When we seek possibility, when we seek our future, whose should it align with or be alongside?" (59).

Decolonizing Canada

In addition to Asian Canadian feminisms, Kwak (2017) suggests three other interventions in theorizing Asian Canada: relational racialization (connected to issues of Canadian multiculturalism), Asian Canadian politics (connected to issues of political representation), and settler colonialism. Settler colonialism relates to Indigenous sovereignty, especially relevant in the contemporary politics of Canada. Razack, Smith, and Thobani (2010) remark on the complicity of new settlers to settler colonialism. For immigrants, Canadian citizenship is the "final" summit to climb in achieving "full" belonging. For Indigenous Peoples, it is the terminal act of assimilation. What is the future of the Asian Canadian woman when tied to the Indigenous woman's erasure in Canada?

As a result of Indigenous activism behind the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), I notice a pronounced focus on Indigeneity in the citizenship ceremony. On June 22, 2021 (National Indigenous Peoples Day in Canada), a new citizenship oath was introduced, as part of the 94 calls to action of the TRC (Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants 2021, paras. 1-2). The oath, speaking to the responsibility of Canadian citizens to the Queen of Canada and Indigenous Peoples, states:

I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples, and fulfill my duties as a Canadian citizen. (Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants 2021, para. 3)

Adese and Phung (2021), Indigenous and refugee scholars respectively, offer the concept of genealogical disclosure as a way towards reconciliation between new settlers and Indigenous Peoples. Genealogical disclosure is a storied way of knowing that asks "not just 'who are you' but 'who do you come from' and 'who are you accountable to'" (121). As part of the citizenship ceremony, Kim Wheatley, a traditional Anishinaabe grandmother, offers an Indigenous welcome, an honour song, and a smudging. She reminds the citizenship candidates that they are entering treaty partnerships. She encourages relationship-building and self-led education. "You have so much learning to undertake as a Canadian citizen." Responsibility and duty, then, can bind us not just to the nation-state but to marginalized others. Kristin Fung, the anthem singer for the citizenship ceremony, sings an altered lyric in her rendition of "O Canada." She enunciates the alteration from "our home and native land" (Government of Canada n.d.) to "our home *on* native land." In this utterance, Fung resists being a model minority by recognizing Indigenous sovereignty. Her act of singing these changed lyrics demonstrates a way immigrants can show solidarity with Indigenous peoples, even as they become Canadian citizens.

Community alliances between Indigenous and Asian Canadian people exist. One example is the mask project created by Gwich'in jewelry artist Tania Larsson. The project brought together Indigenous and Asian women artists to collaboratively design masks that speak to how their communities were experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic (Zingel 2020). While anti-Asian hate was on the rise, attacks on Indigenous sovereignty and health persisted through the activities of extractive industries on Indigenous lands during the pandemic (Leonard 2021). Further, Indigenous women continued to be missing and murdered (Zingel 2020). The masks not only represented the backgrounds of the artists but also illustrated how Indigenous and Asian women are frequently silenced (Rodriguez 2021, para. 7). Of the project, Larsson says, "It was about finding our commonalities so that we could support each other and raise our voice louder together, instead of just being silenced by the world" (Zingel 2020, para. 2). Larsson asserts: "Sometimes it feels like we're screaming to the world, but only our community is hearing about it" (Rodriguez 2021, para. 6).

As a post-script to the citizenship ceremony, I wonder how decolonization might be expressed and practiced by Asian women in Canada. Yao (2021) presents an idea in her opinion editorial in the *Toronto Star*. She writes that for many Chinese Canadians, Canada Day, July 1st, "is known as 'Humiliation Day'… [The day] when Canada enacted the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1923" (subheading). This act raised the head tax on Chinese migrants to $500 and restricted nearly all Chinese immigration to Canada (Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 n.d.). Yao (2021) argues that this is not a day to celebrate Canada but to recognize Canada's history of violent oppression against marginalized others, especially those racialized as non-white. She brings up the resurgence of anti-Asian hate during the COVID-19 pandemic as a moment in which Asian Canadians should acknowledge not only their own oppression but also the oppressions of others. Yao (2021) shares one history of solidarity between Indigenous Peoples and Asian Canadians, namely the Xaxli'p First Nations' protection of Chinese railway labourers from white violence. What other histories of solidarity might need to be unearthed to reimagine these futures so invariably intertwined? Yao (2021) encourages a "[refusal] to celebrate Canada Day—a day of grief for all of us" (para. 10). She says, "It is only by standing united that we can heal and build a more just future" (para. 10).

Conclusion

Through a participant observation of a Canadian citizenship ceremony held during Asian Heritage Month and an interview with Ellen (pseudonym), a member of the ACWA, I have shown how Asian Canadian women are created and how their futures are designed according to the model minority myth. I have also demonstrated how Asian Canadian women resist the myth of their "model" futures through the ways that they centre diversity, explore feminisms, and practice decolonization. For the Asian Canadian woman, the future continues to be a critical site of contestation and relation; may the writing of it never be finished.

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