KOREAN AMERICAN CIVIC EMPOWERMENT

New York, New Jersey, Texas

GRASSROOTS

Korean American Civic Empowerment - Grassroots Internship Journal

2023 KACE GRASSROOTS INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

ISSUE No.2

Our Stories
First-hand reflections on the Korean-American experience from our Interns.

Interviews
Stories of the Korean-American experience.

Field Research
A presentation of findings based on independent research conducted by the Interns.

Opinions
The thoughts and concerns from our Interns regarding current events and politics.

The 2023 KACE Grassroots Internship in front of the Supreme Court of the United States in Washington, D.C., July 13, 2023.

The 2023 KACE Grassroots Internship in a meeting with Congressman Andy Kim (New Jersey's 3rd Congressional District).

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About the KACE Grassroots Internship Program: Since its launch in 2004, over 300 high school students throughout New Jersey and New York have joined our annual high school internship program. Our program is open to high school students of all backgrounds that are interested in contributing to our community's civic empowerment in New York, New Jersey, Illinois, and Texas. Through this program, Interns learn the importance of registering new voters, issues facing the Korean American community today, and the process of organizing and mobilizing the Korean American community. Under supervision, Interns research and lead public campaigns to raise awareness of various important issues. Interns also have the opportunity to meet with elected officials and engage with members of the local, state, and federal legislature. Our program is specifically devoted to developing all the inherent skills of our interns as they go out and experience firsthand what it takes to help and support the community. Students with demonstrated interest in public policy, politics, and history are encouraged to apply. To learn more, such as the application process, please visit our website: **https://kace.org/internship/**

About This Journal: Our Interns completed several research and writing assignments throughout the Pre and Main Sessions of the KACE Grassroots Internship Program. This journal contains some of those submissions, and serves as a time capsule of their thoughts and experiences. It is my hope that future Interns and members of the Korean American community will benefit from these different perspectives from all walks of life and circumstances from their formative years in the grand diaspora of our shared heritage, culture, and history. - Richard In, Esq.

OUR STORIES

Visit to Sen. Mazie Hirono's office building - Washington, D.C. [07.13.2023]

Visit to Rep. Grace Meng's office - Washington, D.C. [07.13.2023]

Meeting with NYC Councilwoman Sandra Ung - NY City Hall [08.01.2023]

My Korean America
By Chloe Yim

As I have lived in the United States of America for my entire life, my American identity greatly impacts how I live my life today. I attend a public school in the American education system, I dress in clothes from American companies and eat "American" foods like hamburgers and soda. In my teenage years, American culture guided my decisions and my daily life. However, being Korean American has truly affected my life as well, and it has shaped my experiences growig up in New York in numerous ways.

For me, the meaning of being Korean American heavily involves the culture that I grew up in. While my friends ate dinner around a dining table, my dining table was used for work while my family ate our meals on the floor with a coffee table. The music that I mainly listened to was not Taylor Swift or One Direction, but K-Pop groups like EXO and BIGBANG. Korean culture has been a part of my life in other ways as well, highlighted by the boost in the popularity of Korean social media. For the first time in my life, other people in my middle school knew about K-pop and I could talk about my favorite celebrities with them. Korean food became insanely popular, and I had people who wanted to go to Flushing with me to eat Korean barbeque or get Melona at my local H Mart.

However, before my middle school years, I lived in a community with a very small population of Korean Americans, which definitely has impacted how I view the outside world. In elementary school, I was friends with mostly Persian Jews, as there were little to no Asians in my classes. I would often go to their houses on playdates and be confused by the carpeting on the floors, or the shoes in the house. I would be confused on how I should address the parents of my friends, as I would always call my Korean friend's parents "Aunt" or "Uncle". All of my friends were part of one culture that I did not know of, and it felt as if I was not "in on the joke".

One memory that sticks out to me is the time my friend had offered me salted seaweed as a snack. I remember being so shocked and surprised that she knew of the food that I had grown up with so long, and I wouldn't let go of the topic at the time. I feel that I had clung onto this memory because often I would feel left out because of the foods I had brought to school. I once brought dumplings for lunch, and my friends would refuse to sit near me, saying that it had smelled bad. I remember feeling embarrassed and even offered them some because I just wanted them to know of my culture. At the time I had not even realized that it was teasing, just that I felt upset.

Although Korean American life had come with hardships as a young child in the public school system, the rich culture that this community holds is truly something that I have greatly (and proudly) learned to embrace and love. I can now cherish the many memories that I share with my Korean American friends and family, but also an amazing part of having this culture is teaching it to others who do not know of it. I love to share so much of my culture to my non-Korean friends, be it the latest and most popular K-RnB album or a trending K-Beauty skincare item that many people are raving about online. I am able to foster pride for who I am and where my family is from, because of how spectacular Korean culture is. Being Korean American is so far from just being from a "foreign" country; it is a celebration of my history.

My Heritage
By Ian Lim

Living in the United States as a Korean American means that I have a unique experience that includes a special fusion of cultural heritage and the difficulties of juggling two very different identities. Living in the United States, I think it is important to appreciate and embrace both my Korean heritage and the opportunities and ideals of American culture. This requires me to strike a balance between the two cultures, which could cause some to feel like an outsider to both. However, experiencing this dichotomy has been both helpful and difficult because it necessitates ongoing cultural adaptation.

Growing up, I struggled with my identity. There were times I felt obligated to downplay and suppress my Korean heritage to blend in and avoid standing out. I frequently felt conflicted between adapting to either my American or Korean background. When I was younger, my white friends occasionally insinuated that I join them in celebrating an American celebration rather than a Korean tradition that fell on the same day. In order to blend in, I felt obligated to suppress my Korean heritage and chose to go hang out with my friends.

The intergenerational gap in my family also presented challenges. I grew up influenced by American culture and values. In contrast, my parents were born and raised in Korea before emigrating to the United States and upheld rigorous Korean customs and expectations, such as studying hard in school. This cultural gap has frequently resulted in miscommunications and disputes.

I also experienced racism and stereotypes as a Korean American. People would frequently assume things or make offensive remarks about being Korean. These incidents of discrimination made me feel like an outsider. But it was through these experiences that I was able to confront, come to terms with, and finally embrace my Korean-American identity.

As I became older, I started to understand the depth and richness of my Korean-American identity. I realized that it was more important to accept and be true to who I am, including my heritage, than it was to try to fit in by meeting expectations set by others. Facing these identity challenges prompted a change in my perspective. I came to realize that trying to blend in by hiding or downplaying my ancestry made me feel unfulfilled and unauthentic. Eventually, I realized that having a Korean-American ancestry gave me strength and fortitude, and I started to take pride in it. I decided to actively embrace my background rather than hide it, educating others about my heritage and advocating for diversity and inclusion. Furthermore, by recognizing who I am, I was able to connect with other Korean-American kids who have grown to be a source of confidence.

I can without a doubt say that my Korean American identity and culture have influenced who I am now. My strong sense of discipline and perseverance were ingrained in me by my Korean identity, which gave me a strong work ethic and the drive to strive for success and overcome challenges. Additionally, having experienced two cultures while growing up has given me a sense of adaptability and empathy that has enabled me to respect and experience different perspectives. Overall, I came to the conclusion that I should be proud of my identity as a Korean American. This pride is something I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

OUR STORIES

That's Not How You Say My Name

By Eungman Joo

My name is Eungman Joo. When I meet people for the first time, they always have difficulty pronouncing my name. Some take up to five tries to get it right; that includes other Koreans. The reason why is because it has very uncommon combinations of the consonants and vowels of the Korean alphabet, as well as being nonexistent in the English alphabet. It has been this way with me since childhood, and it will continue to be a part of me forever.

In second grade, I made a nickname to help others since I felt bad for them struggling to get it right. However, I soon discontinued using the nickname because it didn't fit right with me. By fifth grade, I found it hilarious when people mispronounced my name, and would always let out a smirk or a laugh before I corrected them. In sixth grade, a friend suggested introducing myself through my initials, which I have kept since then. By eighth grade, more people knew me by my initials than my first name. Funnily enough, when asked for my full name, some of my friends referred to me as "Ej Joo" on occasion. By ninth grade, the humor had saturated and subsided, and now feels like a chore.

Why do I keep my name and persevere? It is because my name is important to me. Translated into English, my name roughly means "followed by 10,000." The name itself holds the hopes and dreams of my family, and its roots in the Korean language only strengthen the bond between my family and heritage to myself. My name reminds me of my history and childhood, the difficulties of being Korean-American, and my own significance in the world.

It seems that wherever I go, I will be explaining myself, my name, and my heritage. Nonetheless, I am still proud of my name, my family, and my heritage. They are not going anywhere, and neither is my name: Eungman Joo.

Gratitude and Spite

By Yerin Song

Being a Korean American is being grateful. Grateful that I live in a country that gives me second chances. Grateful that the "American Dream" can come true if I work hard enough. Grateful that I get opportunities my cousins in Korea crave for. Grateful for my mother who goes through a lonely path, with her only guide as her hopes for her children. I know I am fortunate. I am one of the millions of ethnic Koreans that have the opportunity to live away from the harsh norm. I am reminded everyday that I am lucky that I am fortunate to not be part of the grueling Korean education system; the system that my cousins go through and makes up a dark, taboo part of Korea. I am grateful I do not live in a country where singular tests define you as an individual. While I have always wanted to go back to my motherland, over time I realized that I already assimilated to the culture of New York and I can no longer go back. I am too free-spirited, rebellious, and controversial to fit in what I perceive to be a conservative country.

Being a Korean-American is being spiteful. Spiteful you are seen as an outsider to both sides. Spiteful that you are truly, never part of your Korean family. Spiteful that you fade away from who you were born as. The struggles to speak the native language that flows through my bloodline. I see my brother unable to communicate with my immigrant mother in Korean. I see my future in him. It is a sense of shame that comes to mind when I try to express myself Korean with the words stuck on the tip of my tongue. I know I will never relate to my family in Korea and never be as close as they already are. It's the little things that catch up to you. The sense of being "out of place" in America due to my race and continuing to be the minority in your "homeland". In Korea, I look the same as everyone else. But as for how clay is shaped, I am not the end result as everyone else.

Being Korean American means wanting two different things but never being able to achieve what you want. It's an endless run towards two different directions, but I am happy to be who I am. It is always a struggle and a benefit to be Korean-American but it is who I am. It doesn't define me as a person but adds to who I am. It doesn't stop my endless "what ifs". While I long for something more in the back of my mind, I know I can never abandon America as my "home" and I am grateful.

NY KACE Coordinator, College Intern, and High School Interns [06.28.2023]

NJ KACE Coordinator and High School Interns [07.26.2023]

TX KACEL Coordinator and Interns [08.15.2023]

OUR STORIES

Voter Registration Drive - New York [08.04.2023]

Voter Registration Drive - New Jersey [08.05.2023]

Voter Registration Drive - Texas [08.062023]

I Do Not Have an Accent

By Hannah Yang

I am Korean American, and I do not have an "accent". I speak fluent English and I also speak Korean. English is not the only language in the world.

I was born in America. I am American, and I am "really" and "originally" from America. I am not a STEM oriented student. My brother is not a member of BTS. I am not from North Korea, I am not Chinese, and I cannot speak Japanese. I do not know how to fake an "Asian accent". Opportunities to interact with my motherland were rare, yet my friends question me about why my nose is flat; hidden under the glasses covering half my face, my eyes slanted and my tongue too peculiar to fit into what people labeled "American." I have mono eyelids. I do not think it is funny when people pull their eyes to their ears.

I cannot say the world has been the friendliest to those who look like me. At the start of the pandemic my friends have been pushed off the train for their ethnicity, thankfully without any serious injuries. A man yelled to my friend, "I don't need the China virus dirtying my family." The lack of AAPI history has been called out continuously, but has never reached mainstream media far enough before being silenced. A lot of friends have asked me if I am North Korean; I am not. In fact, many of them did not know about the Korean War despite its large impact in American history.

The language I speak at home and my family's customs all influence my perspective of the world. It's not uncommon for children of immigrant parents to constantly feel stuck fighting in-between two worlds. I remember my dad sighing, "They're her grandchildren, but they talk little on the occasional calls to home." I remember thinking not feeling like my own grandmother's granddaughter. I knew too little Korean colloquialism to laugh candidly with my cousins.

Over the years I learned to be proud of my Asian heritage. I bow to adults as a way of greeting them. I root for South Korea in the Olympics. I listen to Korean music. I use chopsticks in every meal. I like Korean food the most. I cannot eat spicy food too well (unfortunately), but I have kimchi in practically every meal. I do not have a separate kimchi fridge anymore. I have 떡국 (tteokguk) every time my family flips the calendar to a new year.

I am proud that I can speak Korean. I do not have an accent.

I'm Not the Only One

By Joonwoo Lee

My experiences as a first-generation immigrant during the pandemic gave me a unique perspective. Compared to the bustling streets filled with private education facilities in Daejeon, suburban Georgia was simply laid-back. I no longer had to worry about endless homework or the overly competitive and strict nature of Korean schools. I suddenly had the luxury of enjoying my free time with relaxing activities, such as walking in the park. I had a lot planned for the upcoming semester – I was going to make new friends, join the soccer team, join the orchestra, and much more.

However, just a few weeks after the move to the U.S., I found myself in the middle of a worldwide pandemic. I was a twelve-year-old in a completely foreign environment, surrounded by people who feared or despised me. The initial excitement of the move quickly faded, and instead, the feeling of homesickness slowly crept up on me.

Next to our new home was a small park where our neighbors often went on a morning run, played baseball, or biked with friends. I went to the park to go on my walks. But at some point, I found the park becoming emptier by the week. When I saw someone, they would put on their mask and turn their head away from me as soon as I was in their sight. Some even stopped to go around and avoid me as much as possible. After a few months, I stopped going to the park altogether.

During this period of global chaos, many Asian Americans faced numerous challenges. In early 2021, the Atlanta spa shootings took place. Only about an hour from where I lived, six Asian Americans were brutally murdered in three separate shootings. The news reports of Asian hate crimes kept me indoors, and I slowly lost the motivation to do simple things as going for a walk at the park.

Though such hate crimes terrified the local Asian-American communities, they gathered to resolve the issue. Asian Americans from across the nation began to organize protests and demonstrations in the name of "Stopping Asian Hate," sending a firm and nonviolent message to the public. Prior to the Stop Asian Hate movement, I was unaware of the presence of Korean-American communities in the U.S. This sense of community gave me the courage to overcome my fears and go outside without being intimidated. I got back the courage to return to the park.

Today, I am less homesick and am more resilient and capable of adjusting to different environments and solving issues that may arise. Most importantly, I learned about the capabilities of this community. When Asian Americans come together to express their voices firmly, they can make a meaningful difference. My experiences with immigration and the pandemic changed me, and I hope to keep growing as an active member of the Korean American community.

INTERVIEWS

홍익 - "Hongik"

By Ian Chung

Interview with interviewer's mother.

Q. What kind of challenges did you face when you immigrated to America?
A. Definitely the language barrier. Even now, it's still difficult for me. Because of this, social issues that people faced didn't immediately jump at me. Instead, I had to resort to Korean channels like KBS or MBC that covered American stories. This made me feel like a foreigner, having to resort to watching Korean based new channels. Sometimes it didn't feel like I was a true American, only like a legal alien. Also, the system itself was very slow. Even getting a green card took years, and becoming a citizen was even longer.

Q. Have you experienced forms of racism or Asian hate in the last few years?
A. At a Sayville fundraiser by high school and middle school kids, they were doing a car wash so I had to drive slowly. Then one of the kids screamed, "Get your car washed Chinese!" I contacted school officials. If it's like this at a public space, then what about at schools? It got me worried and filled me with fear. But maybe if there weren't news about Asian-Hate, then maybe he wouldn't have yelled at us. Maybe I wouldn't be so bothered.

Q. What part of Korean heritage do you think should be kept and taught to our youth to preserve Korean traditions?
A. I think that the message about the creation of Korea should be kept and passed. The creation of Korea is called "Hongik", and it means "wide-spread benefit". It is very rare that countries have a history that is for the people. Most countries would want "benefits" for the people at the top of a hierarchy. For instance, India has a hierarchy where the people at the top have the most benefits and most of the people don't have as much. Yet Korea is unique in that the power is for all and for the people. They didn't invade anyone and only defended against other countries. If there were any problems, the people would also come together. In 1998, Korea had National Debt owed to the IMF. Somehow, they were able to pay off the debt in only two years. This was due to the incredible efforts of the people.

You Are Not Alone

By Yerin Song

Interview with a friend from church.

Q: How did you become a Korean American? (Brief Family history on how you came to live in America)
A: My great aunt moved to the West Coast in the 1920s. In 1985, my dad's family got an invitation to come to the United States, so they accepted the invitation and moved.

Q: What are some experiences as a Korean American you faced at home?
A: As a Korean American, I practice Korean traditions at home, such as eating 떡국 ("tteokguk") on Korean New Year. I also eat Korean food on a daily basis at home. I also speak in Korean to my family.

Q: What are some experiences as a Korean American you faced in school?
A: As a Korean American, I have had some difficult experiences at school. Although I go to a diverse school, the Korean American population is practically non-existent. Because of this, I've always felt like an outsider and that I would never fit in with other kids at my school. I've also faced issues such as discrimination and verbal abuse from my peers, and in certain cases even from my teachers and coaches. Needless to say, it has not been easy for me as a Korean American at school.

Q: How has being a Korean American shaped who you are?
A: Being a Korean American shaped who I am today. Although I like to think of myself as a kind, caring, and athletic individual, I have noticed that I am quite reserved and timid compared to others in my age group. I believe this timidity came from the discrimination I faced at school. Growing up I always felt like an outsider for being a Korean American.

Q: Do you have any final words/ advice you would give to other Korean Americans / Asian Americans?
A:If you are a Korean American and feel like an outsider, don't. You're not alone. There are more of us out there than you think, and there are plenty of us that feel just how you feel. Just keep it pushing, ignore the haters.

105th Annual Strawberry Festival [06.04.2023]

Juneteenth Cultural Chalk Art Event [06.19.2023]

NJ Interns [07.26.2023]

INTERVIEWS

Zoom meeting with Professor Ji-Yeon Yuh [06.09.2023]

NY Internship Debates [06.29.2023]

TX KACEL Coordinator and Interns [08.15.2023]

Never an Outsider

By Boreum Kim

Interview with interviewer's mother.

Q: Do you think that Korea has different societal standards than America? What do you think about those societal standards?
A: Yes, there is a lot of elitism in Korea. Everybody wants to go to college even if you don't need to and don't want to. But in America it's more practical. Education is not the only way for a successful life. In America there are things such as trade school. There are school dropouts who become entrepreneurs and live a successful life. But in Korea, this culture of elitism is too strong because education is considered everything. In Korea the competition is too high and you feel like you have to go to the top-rated school. I don't like that elitism. I believe that you don't need to attend the number one school, number one job or number one company. What is most important is your personal satisfaction.

Q: Did you prefer going to school in America or Korea, and why?
A: I prefer America because there are more opportunities for those who study hard. In Korea you need money to go to college and there are not many opportunities for scholarships. But in America if you work hard you can get a scholarship. America is the land of opportunities, there are more opportunities for jobs, schools, majors, and such.

Q: Did you feel like an outsider when you came to America? Do you think you have assimilated into America? What do you think makes an American citizen?
A: No, I didn't feel anything like that, because I had my family, and when I went to college there were lots of Asian people who also didn't speak English. So I never felt like an outsider. Yes I think I have assimilated into American culture, it wasn't that hard. I am good at adapting to different situations. I believe that what makes an American citizen is the right to vote. It's important to vote as an Korean American; so I can raise my voice and fight for my rights.

We Are Unique and Special

By Claire Yoon

Interview with interviewer's mother.

Q: What was it like to immigrate to a new country without your parents or guardians?
A: When I came to the US, I didn't have my parents to rely on so it was extremely tough. For the first few years, I got homesick and that was extremely difficult for me. I had to work 6 days a week to support myself. Registering for visas, SSI, and citizenship was also difficult. I had a cultural disconnection, language barrier, and it was all very new and scary to me.

Q: How did you overcome the challenges that came with building a new life in a new country?
A: Honestly, I just visited Korea once in a while which provided some healing. My parents also came to the US several times to support me and my sisters. Life is tough but I had to grow up and become independent. I guess time just helped me adjust to this new environment. I went through a period of depression because I had to restart my life here; like learning a new language and building a stable life. But overall, I just learned to adapt to my surroundings and it turned out okay.

Q: Why do you think it is important to carry your Asian roots to the next generation? Why do you think it's important to share with your kids?
A: Because Asians are different from Americans. We have different cultures, languages, and looks. It's important to remember where we came from. We cannot camouflage ourselves to them. We have our own characteristics and that makes us special. It's best to have our own background. It can empower us because we are different, and different doesn't mean worse. It just means we are unique in our own way. We should embrace that and we shouldn't be ashamed of our culture. We can never be real "Americans" in my opinion. We have our own roots and we look different. I think that makes a huge difference. So that's why we should pass that down to the next generations. We can understand where we are from by continuing our traditions. It gives us motivation to keep our culture alive in a place where our culture can be unusual.

Lower Manhattan

By Chloe Yim, Hannah Kim, Eungman Joo, and Seeun Lee

Many cities around the world are known for their expansion and power. New York City is undoubtedly one that stands out. Often regarded as the center of the world in politics and finance, New York City is famous for its financial district and civic center.

The Financial District

The financial district houses the stock market, many large businesses, and popular tourist destinations. There is the World Trade Center, where the devastation of 9/11 occurred. A large memorial is placed in remembrance of the people who passed away that day, their names etched in stone surrounding a hole the size of the two buildings, with water pouring all the way to the bottom which we cannot see. There is also Wall Street, renowned for its influence on the world's economy. The name "Wall Street" refers to the wall that used to split Manhattan into two areas as the Dutch settlers in the 17th century would protect themselves from pirates and the British. Wall Street is also the location of the New York Stock exchange.

The center of economic movement, the financial district also houses statues, monuments, and other tourist destinations. The Fearless Girl is a recently erected statue, representing the hardships women have faced throughout history, so that many young girls today can face the world's challenges with bravery. The Charging Bull is another famous statue, always surrounded by many tourists. It is said to represent optimism and growth, as the state of the economy should never be still or expectant. The financial district was the filming site of multiple famous movies, such as DC's The Joker, Gotham, and The Godfather.

The Civic Center

To the north of the Financial District and at the center of Lower Manhattan is the Civic Center. It is called the "heart" of Lower Manhattan. This area originally belonged to the Lenape Native Americans, but it became a civic hub after British rule was extended to Manhattan. Historic landmarks and buildings such as the New York State Supreme Court, African Burial Ground National Monument, the 9/11 Memorial and Museum, Municipal Building, and the Tweed Courthouse were built in Civic Center, not to mention City Hall's construction in 1802. The Civic Center is also the location of governmental buildings, such as New York City Hall, The David D. Dinkins Manhattan Municipal Building, and 1 Police Plaza, the New York County Courthouse, the Manhattan Criminal Courthouse, the New York City Civil Court, and the New York City Family Court.

The African Burial Ground Monument

Another prominent landmark is the African Burial Ground Monument, considered one of the most important archaeological discoveries of the 20th century. The Monument was a burial ground for over 15,000 Africans, both free and enslaved, and was lost until 1991 when the land was excavated for a federal government office building. It is believed that Africans used this burial ground due to a ban prohibiting Africans from burying their dead in New York's primary burial ground. These Africans were granted freedom by the Dutch in the 1640's and developed their own community and culture about a mile away from Manhattan. The African Burial Ground Monument was made a National Historic Landmark in 1993 by the Secretary of the Interior, with the opening of the museum and visitor center following in 2010.

The Woolworth Building

The Woolworth Building, designed by Cass Gilbert for the millionaire Frank W. Woolworth, was completed in 1913. Set into deep bedrock and building with a 792-foot steel frame, it was designed with the most modern technology of its time and was the world's tallest building until 1930. Woolworth [*continued page 9...*]

New York City Hall - Manhattan, NY [08.01.2023]

Battery Park - Manhattan, NY [07.06.2023]

The Oculus - Manhattan, NY [07.06.2023]

Foley Square - Manhattan, NY [07.06.2023]

Battery Park - Manhattan, NY [07.06.2023]

Federal Hall - Manhattan, NY [07.06.2023]

Lower Manhattan (continued)

By Chloe Yim, Hannah Kim, Eungman Joo, and Seeun Lee

[... *continued from page 8*] became rich by starting a department store that had low costs and respected its employees, making him stand out from the rest of the department store business. The Woolworth Building was the headquarters of the store, and was inspired by Gilbert, the architect, and his vision of medieval Europe, which was also shown in his earlier designs, such as the Brazer Building in Boston.

New York City Hall

One of the most prominent and well-known buildings in Civic Center is likely City Hall, which was completed in 1812 and designed by Joseph Francois Mangin and John McComb Jr, who won a competition for the new City Hall's design. Remarkable events like Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant being laid in states also occurred in the famous building. There are French influences on the building and is in the Federal style. The interior reflects the American-Georgian style, while the exterior reflects the French Renaissance. This design also influenced the designs of the Tweed Courthouse and the Surrogate's Courthouse.

The French Renaissance architecture staples include stone and brick walls, colonnades, and balconies, taking much inspiration from its Italian predecessor, but adding the stylistic French complexity and design. The windows of New York City Hall's facade are ornate and varied in shape, even including columns in front of the entrance. The roof is a balcony, reminiscent of the White House in Washington, District of Columbia. At the center of the roof is an iconic French Renaissance tower balcony, where a statue representing equality, justice, and liberty sits atop. The exterior pays homage to France and its contribution to the United States of America and their alliance against the British Empire in both the American Revolution and in the war of 1812. French Renaissance architecture has also been prominent in other buildings of significance in the United States of America, representing America's origins and alliance with France since 1776.

The interior of the New York City Hall is a much more modern and orderly architecture style that emerged along with the United States of America. Featuring symmetry, proportion, and balanced decor, the American Georgian style of architecture arose out of inspiration from European, especially British, architecture of the time. The New York City Hall itself has a symmetrical structure, making somewhat of a sideways 'C' shape. The window variations are placed exactly the same distance away from the line of symmetry, an exemplary display of balance and order common in United States government buildings. All these reminders through art, and the figurative meanings in the architecture in New York City Hall are highlighted so as to cement New York City's importance, growth, and history throughout the years.

City Hall has been the seat of the New York City government since 1812 for more than two centuries, making it known today as the oldest city hall in the United States. Today, the building is listed as a New York City Landmark and is registered with the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places. It continues to house the office of the Mayor of New York City and the chambers of the New York City Council, a unicameral chamber that makes up the legislative branch of New York's municipal government. The staff of municipal agencies under mayoral control is located in the nearby Manhattan Municipal Building. The "Blue Room", painted blue during Mayor John Lindsay's tenure, is where news conferences, meetings, and receptions for the mayor take place. The Governor's Room functions as both a museum and a reception area, honoring the civic history of New York and the nation.

Seneca Village

By Brandon Kim and Eungman Joo

Seneca Village holds a significant place in history as a thriving African American community that flourished in the mid-19th century within what is now Central Park in New York City. Its existence from the 1820s to the 1850s stands as a testament to the strength, autonomy, and resilience of African Americans during a period marked by widespread racism and discrimination. By exploring the historical accounts and insights provided by various scholars, we can gain a deeper understanding of the rich history, importance, and eventual fate of Seneca Village.

During a time of rapid industrialization and immigration that fueled the growth of New York City, Seneca Village emerged as a predominantly African American settlement. The community attracted a diverse range of individuals, including freed and escaped slaves, as well as Irish and German immigrants. Historical records indicate that the population steadily increased, reaching its peak of approximately 260 residents by 1855.

Seneca Village served as a stark contrast to the prevailing racial oppression and segregation of the era, offering its residents a sense of empowerment, agency, and self-determination. The residents of Seneca Village encompassed a wide spectrum of professions, skills, and trades. The community boasted skilled workers, laborers, small business owners, and professionals such as teachers and ministers. With their collective efforts, they established a prosperous village, complete with homes, churches, and schools. Most residents in Seneca Village were property owners, giving some of them the right to vote. “[T]he State Legislature made voting rights for black men contingent upon ownership of property valued at $250 or more — even as it rolled back the property ownership requirement for white men. As a result, only 16 black men in Manhattan had the right to vote.”

However, discrimination and racism persisted, perpetuating negative stereotypes and biases against African Americans. These attitudes fueled efforts to undermine the community's legitimacy and seize its valuable land rights. In the 1850s, the city government set its sights on the creation of Central Park, and Seneca Village found itself in the path of this ambitious endeavor. Biased media narratives, supported by the city, portrayed Seneca Village as a "shantytown" or "nuisance," effectively justifying the forced eviction and destruction of the community. The residents were offered meager compensation for their properties, far below their actual value. Despite attempts by some residents to resist and seek legal recourse, their endeavors ultimately proved unsuccessful. Furthermore, when Seneca Village was demolished, those property owning residents lost their right to vote.

Seneca Village was forgotten almost completely, until “Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar resurrected it in their celebrated book ‘The Park and the People: A History of Central Park’. Seneca Village is just one instance of erasure of minorities in America’s history, sitting alongside the Rock Springs massacre, the Tulsa race massacre, and the hostility towards Native Americans who just wanted to live on their ancestral lands.

Enjoying Central Park is not a bad thing in itself. But to stroll past the ruins of Seneca Village without a thought for those who lost their homes plays into the willful ignorance that plagued this country since its inception. Seneca Village's legacy challenges the prevailing narrative that reduces African American history to one of slavery and oppression, instead of highlighting the resilience, determination, and self-sufficiency of the community. The erasure of Seneca Village from public memory until recent years is indicative of the larger historical neglect and intentional omission of African American contributions in shaping American society.

Central Park [07.20.2023]

Central Park [07.20.2023]

Central Park [07.20.2023]

FIELD RESEARCH

30 Rockefeller Center - 5th Avenue [07.27.2023]

The 1917 Silent Protest Parade

By Hannah Kim and Seeun Lee

On July 28, 1917, in New York City, 10,000 African Americans participated in one of the first major mass demonstrations known as the Silent Protest Parade. It stands as the first major mass demonstration for justice for African Americans.

Michael Morand at Yale University estimated, “10,000 African Americans participated in the protest parade, which went from Fifth Avenue to Madison Square while carrying placards that denounced racial violence and injustice.” The protesters were made up of many children and women who are all wearing white, underscoring the precariousness of the victims and the extent of racial violence in the nation. The racial injustice was exclaimed from the back by men in dark suits holding placards.

The Silent Protest Parade was in response to a series of riots breaking out in East St. Louis, Illinois."In the horrific incidents of widespread anti-Black violence in the community, between 50 and 200 African Americans were killed and 6,000 were left homeless by arson assaults." Another race riot from July 1st to the 3rd of 1917 was started by a white mob that set fire to the black section of the city. African Americans were shot, attacked, and burned as they attempted to escape from the fires. These acts of discrimination and racial violence including lynchings and murders of African Americans happened in other states and cities, including Texas, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Omaha, Nebraska, and Knoxville, Tennessee.

The National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was eventually formed by James Weldon Johnson and W.E.B. DuBois. Johnson organized a meeting with civil rights leaders at St. Phillips Church, New York, planning ways to protest the brutal racial violence. The leaders concluded that a parade made of only black citizens could end the violence. Drawing influence from an idea suggested by Oswald Garrison Villard during a 1916 NAACP Conference, it was decided that the march would be a silent protest.

The Silent Protest Parade stood out from other protests in the US at that time. As a result, from 1917 to the 1930’s, other silent protests for different causes sprung up in inspiration. Its legacy would play a role in establishing the Civil Rights Act of 1957, 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968, as well as inspiring the next generation of silent demonstrations and protestors.

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1917, Silent Protest Parade in New York City

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Civil Rights and Asian Americans

By Saerom Kim, Yerin Song, Chloe Yim, and Ian Chung

In the United States, solidarity is and has always been crucial for equality. Recognizing the common goal of racial minorities (i.e. dismantling white supremacy) is needed to make our voices heard. Antagonism between racial minorities is counterproductive and hinders all of our efforts toward achieving equality. When we focus on talking over each other rather than with each other, we only obscure our cries for justice. Solidarity between different communities played a significant role in the fight for equal rights.

Contrary to common belief, Asian Americans played an active role in civil rights. The key issues that Asian Americans wished to combat were racial injustices, such as working rights, neo-imperialism, which are modern imperialistic practices to dominate over minority groups, as well as discrimination in social services such as public spaces, local businesses, and communities.

The Asian American Civil Rights movement has its roots in the African American Civil Rights movement, which exposed the level of systemic racism in American society. Black activism inspired Asian Americans to advocate for their own civil rights, calling attention to the amount of discrimination they were subject to. World War II and the Vietnam War had changed the way society viewed Asian Americans for the worse, intensifying the discrimination they faced. Japanese Americans were forced into internment camps out of fear that they were loyal to the Japanese government. Vietnamese Americans were subject to hostility and racist stereotypes. America was not the land of equality it preached itself to be.

Asian Americans formed alliance groups and published articles. College-attending Asian American students demanded representation in their curriculum, highlighting the lack of Asian American history taught in their classes. Asian American organizations provided financial assistance to underprivileged communities and small businesses. By 1970, more than 70 campuses had groups with the term "Asian American" in it, giving a scale on how large the movement had grown.

Afro-Asian solidarity played a key role in the civil rights movements of the 1960s and '70s. Richard Aoki, a Japanese American veteran, was a founding member of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense and supplied them with their first guns. The Black Panthers were an organization founded in the 1960s, promoting Black power and advocating an end to police brutality. Yuri Kochiyama was a Japanese American activist that worked in Harlem for Asian American, Black, and Third World movements for civil and human rights, ethnic studies, and against the war in Vietnam. She founded Asian Americans for Action and wanted to create a connection between the African American movement. She believed strongly that racism was a blanket that covered all minority ethnic races. When she became close acquaintances with Malcom X, a leader of the Black Civil Rights Movement, she joined him in civil rights movements. Her contributions to the African American community's fight for civil rights was a step towards the civil rights movements of the Asian American community. The Asian American and African American communities have since maintained solidarity and worked in collaboration for racial justice.

Martin Luther King Jr. was able to perfectly capture the essence of solidarity: "Injustice anywhere is a threat of Justice everywhere". We cannot only just thrive for our own rights while sitting idly when others' rights are being provoked. A cause as important as the struggle for equality should transcend racial barriers, uniting everyone to work alongside one another towards that common goal.

New York City Hall - Manhattan, NY [08.01.2023]

DUMBO - Brooklyn, NY [08.01.2023]

Metropolitan Museum of Art - - Manhattan, NY [08.17.2023]

OPINIONS

Consulate General of the Republic of Korea - Manhattan, NY [08.17.2023]

Brooklyn Bridge - Manhattan, NY [08.01.2023]

2023 Town Hall Meeting with NYS Legislators - Bayside, NY [08.11.2023]

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Additional Youth / Young Adult Leadership Development Opportunities

Mentorship / Guidance
KACE provides mentorship opportunities and guidance to help high school students, college students, and young adults to excel in academics and career paths. One advice we share with all eager and motivated young persons is to not let your young age or lack of experience deter you from reaching out for guidance and mentorship. Experience is something that is earned over time, and time is the advantage that all young people possess. It goes without saying, of course, that you still need to put in the work. It's okay not to get it exactly right the first time. But with each attempt, you learn and build upon what you've already learned. Sooner or later, you'll find that those lessons add up to earning the experience needed to excel on your career path and passions.

Grassroots Internship Coordinator Program
Typically former grassroots interns (not a requirement), our Grassroots Internship Coordinators assist with the education, training, and management of high school interns/volunteers. The position is open to undergraduate students or recent college graduates. Candidates for the program are selected after an application and interview process. By going through this program, our coordinators learn the skills and gain the experience to confidently lead the next generation of proud and responsible Korean Americans.

2023 KACE Scholarship Awards
Thanks to the generous donations from Celina Cho, Esq., this year's scholarships are made available for students with DACA status or undocumented status enrolled in college or graduate school full time in the Northeastern region of the United States (NY, NJ, CT, MA, PA). A total of 2 scholarship awardees were selected after an application and interview process.

KACE Collegiate Leadership Conference (CLC)
Designed for college-aged young adults interested in contributing toward the Korean American community, this program goes over the responsibilities of being a Korean American in the modern day. Topics covered include networking, grassroots activism, voting rights and voting advocacy, and taking the lead in action. We hope that through this program, participants will leave empowered with a greater understanding and appreciation of the strength they possess, and a sense of purpose of their place within the Korean American community at large. This year's CLC was held on May 25, 2023 at the Met Church in Manhattan, NY.

College Student-lead Initiatives
We have been working with college-aged young adults to understand and utilize their vast networks and resources to deliver change and impact to improve their communities. Earlier this year on April 7th, KACE co-hosted an event with NYU students to address low voter registration rates and low voter turnout rates among college-aged young adults while providing further opportunities to become engaged and involved in their communities.

College / Legal Internship
KACE offers internship opportunities for college students, young adults, and current law students. This internship program is very different from the Grassroots Internship Program meant for high school students. College student and young adult interns assist with a variety of our work, while legal interns assist us with legal research and help facilitate our legal clinics.

GENERAL SUPPORT

Since its founding in 1996, KACE has diligently worked to develop and empower the Korean American community by raising new leaders and fostering good relations between Korea and the United States. KACE hopes to contribute to the greater good of the United States through the empowerment of the Korean American community.

We helped register over 55,000 Korean Americans to vote since 1996, and over 1,000 Korean American voters every year. KACE plays a significant role in establishing Korean assistance at election sites in New York and New Jersey, and continues to work to improve Korean assistance services.

KACE also represented the interests of the Korean American community and succeeded in various instances: House Resolution 121 (Comfort Women Resolution, 2007), Korea's inclusion into the US Visa Waiver Program (2008), and US's first Comfort Women Memorial monument(2010).

Your donations will be of great help to us in empowering the Korean American community. With your valuable support and contributions, we will be able to continue this important work for the betterment and lifting up of our communities.

Korean American Civic Empowerment is registered as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with the Internal Revenue Service. Your donations and contributions are tax-deductible. KACE sends out certificates of contribution within 15 days of receipt. Please take the certificate(s) to your tax professional when preparing your annual tax return. If you choose to support us regularly or at multiple times, we can send a certificate at the end of the year as well.

For questions, please call (718) 961-4117 or email us at info@kace.org.

SUPPORT US ONLINE: You can support us via with VISA, MasterCard, American Express, or Discover through the following link: https://kace.org/support/.You can also support us through PayPal as well.

SUPPORT BY CHECK: You may send a check payable to "Korean American Civic Empowerment", and send it to:

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SUPPORT BY ZELLE: Using your mobile banking app or Zelle on the bank website, please add the recipient email kace@kace.org and donate. In the memo line, please provide your name and email so we can follow up with your donation for the donation certificate or tax exemption forms.

SUPPORT US $1 A DAY (KACE DREAM FUND): With only $1 a day, you can contribute for our community to be a better place to live in together. (https://kace.org/donations/1-a-day-dream-fund/)

All donations directly impact our organization and help us further our mission.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude for your support!

The 2023 KACE Grassroots Internship in front of the United States Capitol Building in Washington, D.C., July 13, 2023.

Korean American Civic Empowerment extends our warmest gratitude toward this year's Sponsors of the 2023 KACE Grassroots Internship Program.
Thank you!

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