

“Embracing a love ethic means that we utilize all the dimensions of love— ‘care, commitment, trust, responsibility, respect, and knowledge’ — in our everyday lives.”

I’ve only known Emily for a few months; however, despite this, I knew that we shared such a common experience regarding political dynamics between the older generation Vietnamese-Americans in our lives. What is so unique about this issue is that, while it is rooted in individual, personal experiences, it has a global reach. Generally speaking, it is almost a universal experience among younger Asian Americans to conflict with older generation’s more conservative, traditional views. With this in mind, when Praxis 2 was first introduced, I immediately knew that I wanted to interview Emily about her journey of conversation with her parents (for context, she has often ranted to me about her political familial debates). Not only is this topic so intricately complex, but also it’s so personal to my own experiences— making bearing witness to this issue that much more valuable *and* intimate. Inspired by bell hooks words, this project is largely driven by my curiosity to explore this topic, and the love that I have for my own family members. This zine is not a harsh critique of the cultural dichotomy that exists; rather, it’s here to grant a better understanding of the relationship between the two demographics—a bridge between the generational gap.

The issue that I interviewed Emily about was naturally a very small problem in scale. These transformative conversations that she holds with her parents aren’t as vast as any progressive organization or movement; but, as I mentioned in my zine, activism takes no definite shape, form or size; it can be as large as the Black Lives Matter movement, or as subtle as a singular conversation—all there needs to be is an intent to progress, encompassed by genuine love for the other. Stylistically, I wanted my zine to reflect this important principle—that something so small could instigate comprehensive change. The theme of the house symbolically not only represents the setting that this transformative action takes place, but also the fact that a daily change can be translated into something so much greater; it narrates a global scale issue from the perspective of a daily life. To complement the deliberate aesthetic, I wanted to zine to read like a story. Instead of focusing on infographic styles, where facts are formally laid out, the zine almost mimics the journey of Emily’s conversations—starting from the problem, leading to her inspirations, and ending with her goals for the future. The imagery of the door illustrates the purpose of the zine clearly: as the audience begins reading the zine, they enter Emily’s household, discovering the issue at hand and how she maturely deals with it, before exiting the intimate setting, aware of her goals moving forward.

For the interview, I asked Emily about the nature of her conversations with her parents—how they came about and the direction they go. Though at first, her answers generally aligned with my assumptions, it was interesting to hear her explain about the successes she had. In one of her more recent debates with her parents about the potential politicizing of TikTok, she described how she managed to

change her parents' viewpoints through one very drawn out conversation, which speaks to her passion for education and also her ability to bridge the gap between her and her parents. Unfortunately, Emily did mention that, for more difficult conversations regarding race, gender and sexuality, she finds it much more difficult to reach her parents. This point, specifically, steered our conversations towards the topic of identity, and how that particularly shaped her motivations. As a member of the LGBTQ+ community, Emily understands the importance of self-advocacy; in a relationship where too much is lost in translation, facilitating these difficult conversations about LGBTQ rights with her parents is so paramount—it not only pushes towards a more inclusive future, but also it directly affects her. Her identity as an Asian American woman and a member of the LGBTQ, while it confirms her status as a minority in more ways than one, guides her transformative actions; as I questioned in the zine: if she is not willing to speak up for herself, who will do it for her?

For this project, the idea of “bearing witness” greatly influenced my direction for the zine. It was a way for me to present the greater issue at hand while also exploring how it affects people individually. To bear witness to an issue, I find it incredibly important to offer the information in an unfiltered way—that is, to not project personal reflections onto the work. In this case, in my zine, I didn't want to speak over Emily's unique voice; I wanted her perspective, her ideas, to be unfiltered. I wanted the zine to speak enough for itself—to almost act like an extension of Emily's experiences. I simply documented Emily's story and gave a platform for her words to be impactful.

Because of how media is so universal, my zine is able to elevate Emily's narrative to a broader audience. It is able to reach across boundaries and barriers that would have otherwise inhibited genuine conversations. In the same way that Emily facilitated thoughtful conversations to bridge the generational, cultural and language barriers between her parents, successful media fosters the same kind of thoughtful conversations—the type of conversations that sway ideas, encourages reflective thought, and leads to transformative change.