



Irene Chun's Thesis

Ugly before American Law & Society:

The Ugly Laws, Asian Female Body, The Georgia Shootings

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INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES IN
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- College; Class of 2021
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Abstract

Recognizing the overlapping areas of inquiry from various intersecting areas of academic study when studying the treatment and categorization of minorities (including and not limited to racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, and religious considerations), this paper aims to take into account prior work done in fields of interdisciplinary social science, while contextualizing the discussion of what it means to be considered as “ugly” in the United States through the 2021 hate crimes towards Asian diaspora (specifically the March mass shooting of Asian-Americans in Atlanta, Georgia.) The implications of the March Atlanta shootings upon race politics and gender studies are tremendous, as there has yet to have been a mass killing inflicted upon the Asian American community that caused for the nation to collectively reevaluate the social and cultural positioning of Asian diaspora in the understanding of group that would otherwise be habitually characterized as the “model minority.” The discussion regarding how Asian diaspora, and even more specifically, Asian women, fit into the black and white binary has been by a selective group of those who already identify as Asian Americans. As a result, though the deaths of six Asian American women at the hands of a white man represents yet another case that proves the undeniable privilege that a white man possesses to be given the benefit of the doubt of having a “bad day” in front of criminal charges, this poignant time is also a constructive case to prove how Asian American women are “ugly” before American law and society.



Narrative

Where/why it began

- I found myself looking to find an opportunity to research and write in an interdisciplinary setting and so decided to apply to the Interdisciplinary Studies major.
- The topic I chose to write about combines the considerations of how Asian diaspora fit into the historical and modern conceptions of what it means to be American while utilizing the Georgia mass killing of six Asian American women as a case that proves the state of political limbo and status of "ugliness" they possess in the United States.

Mentorship

- Professor You-me Park (Professor of WGST)
- Professor Marc Rom (Professor of Government)
- Dean Bernie Cook (Interdisciplinary Studies Dean)



Narrative

Key Findings

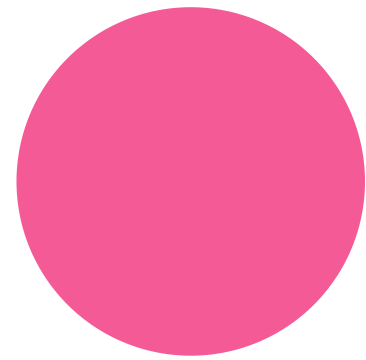
- Because of the number of historical biases and the aggressive stereotyping that non-normative populations face by American institutions, the identification of "ugly laws" should not be defined simply as anti-discriminatory statutes that targeted those with physical disabilities and should not be tucked away into historical record.
- In order to broaden the fight against discriminatory practices particularly in the legal sphere, the definition of othering and citizenship, alongside identifying what constitutes a mode of acceptance in the eyes of the American public and its institutions, is required.
- To be "ugly" is anything that is anti-establishment, not white, not male.
- When the remembrance of a national identity is defined upon a binary, is that those who do not fit on either side of the imaginary line of acceptance will not find their story.
 - There will be no recognition of their suffering as comparative to white and black bodies, history and institutions refuse to acknowledge the severity.
- "Illicit" businesses are frequently targets for sting operations, which most commonly end in the arresting of those very individuals police forces claim they are working to free and protect. And yet, the truth is that many, if not most, immigrant-run spas and massage establishments perform legitimate business transactions and aesthetic services.
- The term "ugly" should not be attached to "law" and limited in academic inquiry or advocate work to encompass only those legal statutes that addresses the phenotypical "other," but rather, it should be a term that is utilized in a variety of areas of minority studies to argue that ugliness in the American legal system is applied in the evaluation and treatment of any individual or behavior that is not in line with the phenotypical and sociocultural success of the white male identity.
- The combination of degradation based on sex and race through fetishization and slavery and the simultaneous working of "model minority" image privilege, places the Asian female body in a state of limbo. This is a woman that is perceived as not white enough to be awarded the identity of "true American", but not subjugated enough in contrast to that of a black woman. This is a woman who if not at the most esteemed educational institutions will be considered as high-risk to sex work or other menial means.



Reflection

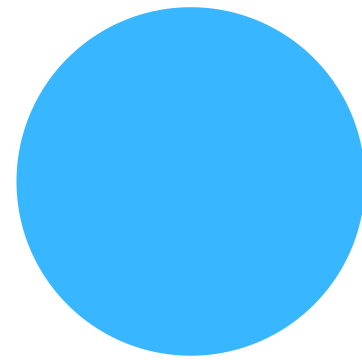
- There was plenty to work through as the Georgia mass killing of the six Asian American women occurred as the thesis was being written and there is plenty to be said about how Asian diaspora have historically and presently are discriminated against through American law and societal practices.
- Identifying what was missing in academic research regarding the situating of Asian diaspora in American politics and society, the insights to be taken from analyzing the Asian female body, and expanding the definition of ugliness before the law are crucial for the development of the general public's and educational institutions' work towards helping combatting anti-Asian hate.

Conclusion



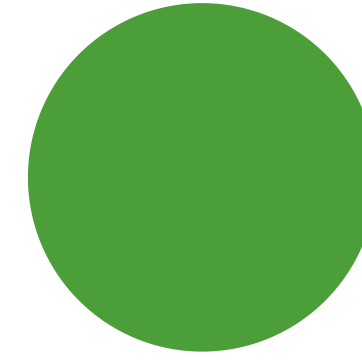
Conclusion #1

To generalize and assume that the Georgia spas that were attacked were truly illicit businesses without proper investigation is callous, negligent of how biases against certain races, ethnic groups, and sexes can cloud understandings of crime.



Conclusion #2

The combination of degradation based on sex and race through fetishization and slavery and the simultaneous working of "model minority" image privilege, places the Asian female body in a state of limbo. Asian diaspora have historically been othered and considered ugly before the law.



Conclusion #3

American ideologies of liberty were so fundamentally challenged and threatened by the way that disability presented a "double movement: a seemingly anomalous and deviant version of humanity that nevertheless focuses all too uncomfortably for many on the central issues of the human condition" which caused for the unprecedented attempt to control the "ugly" through municipal ordinance.