

Asian American Affect and Advocacy: Remembering Hyoejin Yoon

Terese Guinsatao Monberg & Jennifer Sano-Franchini

Terese Guinsatao Monberg is a community-engaged teacher and scholar in rhetoric, writing, and literacy studies. She is an Associate Professor and Associate Dean of the Residential College of Arts and Humanities at Michigan State University. Through methodologies that look at spatial and temporal dimensions of community—dwelling, listening, and reciprocity—Dr. Monberg is interested in the ways communities use arts and humanities methods to write, revise, and sustain their rhetorical legacies and collective memory. Her research has been published in *Representations: Doing Asian American Rhetoric; Reflections: A Journal of Community-Engaged Writing and Rhetoric; Enculturation: A Journal of Rhetoric, Writing, and Culture;* and the *Community Literacy Journal*. She also published, as co-editor, *Building a Community, Having a Home* (with Jennifer Sano-Franchini and K. Hyoejin Yoon; 2017) and a special issue of *Enculturation* on transnational Asian American rhetoric (with Morris Young; 2018).

Jennifer Sano-Franchini is Gaziano Family Legacy Professor of Rhetoric and Writing and associate professor of English at West Virginia University. She researches cultural rhetorics approaches to technical communication and digital rhetoric, especially as pertinent to user experience design. She teaches courses on professional writing, visual rhetoric and document design, cultural rhetorics, Asian American rhetoric, and feminist interaction design. She has published articles in *Composition Studies, Rhetoric Review, enculturation, College Composition and Communication, Open Words,* and other journals and edited collections.

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K. Hyoejin Yoon served as Co-Chair of the CCCC Asian/Asian American Caucus from 2012 to 2016. We both had the honor of co-chairing the caucus with Hyoejin—Terese from 2012–2015, and Jennifer from 2015–2016. She was a thoughtful leader, mentor, and scholar who was careful with her words yet not afraid to speak up about injustice.

Hyoejin’s scholarship in the discipline is consistently boundary-pushing and purpose-driven. As described in Jennifer LeMesurier’s tribute to Hyoejin in this issue, Hyoejin’s work on affect—as is all of her work—is theoretically rigorous, contextualized historically, and grounded in the embodied experiences of Asian American women. We encourage *Peitho* readers to revisit this work, including “Affecting the Transformative Intellectual: Questioning ‘Noble’ Sentiments in Critical Pedagogy and Composition,” published in *JAC, the Journal of Advanced Composition*. Ilene Crawford’s response to this piece noted how Hyoejin made “an unabashed case for imagination” (235), urging that we consider how “institutional discourses, even radical ones, keep our work and our imaginations and other real possibilities bound” (Yoon “Affecting” 734). In another

er response, Catherine Fox noted how “Yoon asks us to question our investment in the ‘noble’ emotions deployed in the name of democracy and citizenship and how these tropes occlude the fraught nature of emotions and desires elicited by critical pedagogy discourse, particularly for those who find themselves on the outer edges of this discourse” (244).

Further pushing the contours of affect in the discipline, Hyoejin’s chapter published in Lu-Ming Mao and Morris Young’s collection, *Representations*, titled “Learning Asian American Affect” articulates how the model minority trope is shaped in part by embodied performances of affect by Asian American subjects, and would likewise influence many in the affective turn in our discipline. Morris Young reflects on Hyoejin’s work and impact:

I don’t recall exactly which year it was, but I first met Hyoejin at the CCCC Convention in the early 2000s. In those days, the Asian/Asian American Caucus was growing and reaching out to emerging scholars and teachers to provide a space to support their work. When I met Hyoejin at one of these caucus meetings, it was clear she was going to be an important voice and leader. I got to know her even better as I worked with her when she contributed an essay for the collection, *Representations: Doing Asian American Rhetoric*, that LuMing Mao and I were co-editing. Her essay, “Learning Asian American Affect,” was sophisticated, insightful, and beautifully written. There was little to edit but much to learn from this essay that offered an early articulation of the affective turn that we have seen in current scholarship in composition and rhetoric. Her scholarship was cutting edge, her leadership inspiring, and her generosity unmatched.

Morris Young

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Hyoejin was always looking for ways to push the discipline further. Her co-edited issue of *College Literature* on Native/Asian Encounters acknowledges settler colonialism while also looking to other frameworks for understanding that relationality. A consistent theme in her work is a move between media representations, theory, an unpacking of affect to reveal racist biases, and a method for mobilizing affect to radically change our pedagogical, scholarly, and institutional practices. In this collection of essays, Hyoejin and her co-editor, Cari Carpenter, consider “how the space that Chinese and American Indians shared on the newspaper page can be likened to their shared space in the American nineteenth century” (8). As with her work on affect, she leads the field in research related to Asian/Americans, especially how we are complexly positioned in relation to other marginalized groups in the U.S., in ways that continue to shape our experience but have been largely under examined.

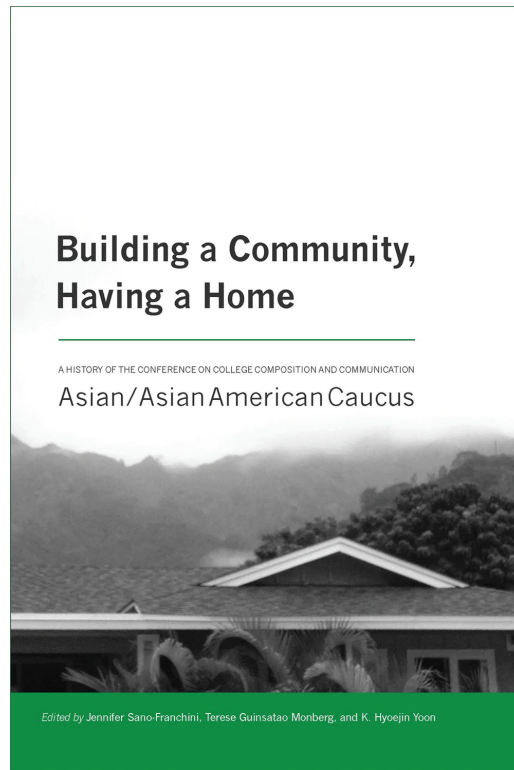


Figure 1: the cover of the book that Hyoejin Yoon co-edited with Jennifer Sano-Franchini, and Terese Guinsatao Monberg: *Building a Community, Having a Home: A History of the Conference on College Composition and Communication Asian/Asian American Caucus*. The top half of the image is white with the title of the book written in black font, and the lower half is a hazy mountain skyline and the roof and upper part of a house with palm trees in front. The bottom of the image is a solid green block with the editors' names in white font.

We later worked together with Hyoejin on a project documenting a history of our caucus, leading to an edited collection titled *Building a Community, Having a Home: A History of the Conference on College Composition and Communication Asian/Asian American Caucus*. Hyoejin was an essential part of this project, particularly in how we intentionally brought emerging scholars into the collection and into the caucus. Hyoejin took the lead on this part of the project as she supported the scholars from a conference roundtable through the publication process, always responding to their work with generosity, empathy, and care. This work is reflected in Hyoejin's forewords to essays in the collection by Phuong Tran and by Scott Ka'alele, Edward Lee, and Michael Pak. Hyoejin was committed to mentoring emerging scholars, scholars of color, and especially women of color.

We also worked together to co-author an article for *Reflections* focusing on anti-Asian racism “before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic.” As we worked on this piece, we’ll always remember how much it meant for the three of us to be together on a video call following tragic events affecting the Asian American community. We also remember how enthusiastic we all were that she could bring her background in biology to our discussion of pandemic rhetorics of virality and infection. As a Senior Associate Dean at West Chester University, she brought an important perspective about how university leadership positions don’t necessarily protect Asian/Asian American women from anti-Asian racism. We both benefited from the chance to work together with her on this piece that allowed us to process our own experiences in the discipline and in current society collectively and think about ways to shift institutional practices. We could not have written this piece or the work that will continue to follow without her.

Hyoejin was passionate in her advocacy of others. The February 4th memorial service that West Chester University held for her included colleagues, family members, and lifelong friends who all spoke about Hyoejin’s impact, tireless advocacy, and mentorship. Her legacy of service for marginalized scholars in the profession extends far beyond our own caucus, as she also served as a co-chair of the CCCC Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession, a member of the CCCC Committee for Diversity, and was an elected advisory board member of the CFSHRC (then the CWSHRC). She was also active in NCTE’s Scholars for the Dream network. Florence Elizabeth Bacabac reflects on Hyoejin’s generous mentorship and the impact it had on her:

Without her knowing it, Hyoejin was a source of encouragement for me when I first organized (and directed) a campus women’s resource center while juggling a TT position at Utah Tech University. Her generosity allowed me to gain access to the National Women’s Studies Association resources/listserv and led me to attend the A/AA Caucus meeting at the C’s which she co-chaired in 2013. Our brief encounter may be an accident, but it had a lasting impact on my career. Safe travels, fly free, and see it all, Hyoejin!

Florence Elizabeth Bacabac

Utah Tech University

Hyoejin had an amazing ability to be present, to lift you up and push you forward—and to tell you what you might not want to hear but need to hear but in a way that was so calm, kind, and thoughtful. (We remember how she did this for the discipline when she wrote “Affecting the Transformative Intellectual.”) She had a calming presence but was also fierce in pushing the boundaries of the ways she found herself and others boxed in by the institution. She was a first-generation college student who majored in English and biology as an undergraduate, a daughter, a mother, a poet, a Kundiman fellow, and a 1996 CCCC Scholars for the Dream Award Winner. She was

committed to mentoring others, bringing them into the conversation, and developing them as scholars, teachers, and leaders. She will be deeply missed, and we encourage us all to carry forward—and build upon—her legacies as a scholar, teacher, mentor, and leader in the discipline and beyond.

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