

WE HAVE TO REIMAGINE:

A Conversation About Anti-Asian Racism and Violence

WE LEARNED
TO PROTECT ONE ANOTHER...

IN THE FUTURE
OUR ASIAN
PACIFIC ISLANDER
ELDERS ARE
SAFE

...WITHOUT
POLICE

Columbia University
21 April 2021

@JESSXSNOW

This interdisciplinary panel honors the work of philosopher, revolutionary thinker, and activist Grace Lee Boggs, Barnard College, '35. It addresses the historical roots and current manifestations of anti-Asian racism and violence in our collective efforts to reimagine.

In a 2012 conversation with Angela Davis, Boggs noted:

We have to reimagine.... We have to do what I call visionary organizing. We have to see every crisis as both a danger and an opportunity. It's a danger because it does so much damage to our lives, to our institutions, to all that we have expected. But it's also an opportunity for us to become creative, for us to become the new kind of people that are needed at such a huge period of transition. And that's why it's so wonderful to be here today—that we dare to talk about revolution in such fundamental terms.



On Revolution: A Conversation with Angela Davis and Grace Lee Boggs

27th Empowering Women of Color Conference: A Holistic Approach: Justice, Access, and Healing, University of California at Berkeley (March 2, 2012)

Transcript: <https://www.radioproject.org/2012/02/grace-lee-boggs-berkeley/>

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9IsJwEOB1c>

Program

April 21, 2021

2:00-3:30 pm EST

Opening Remarks

Vice Provost Dennis Mitchell

Executive Vice President Amy Hungerford

Introduction

Ellie M. Hisama

Presentations

Mae M. Ngai

Marie Myung-Ok Lee

Lydia H. Liu

David Henry Hwang

Akemi Kochiyama

Q&A

Biographies of speakers



Ellie M. Hisama, panel organizer and moderator, is Professor of Music at Columbia University where she has taught since 2006. She has worked in Asian American music studies for nearly three decades since the publication of her essay “Postcolonialism on the Make: The Music of John Mellencamp, David Bowie, and John Zorn” (1993, repr. 2000). Hisama’s other writings in Asian American music and criticism include “Popular Culture: Cultural Activism and Musical Performance” (Bloomsbury, in press); “On seeing and hearing anew: On the Theatre of a Two-Headed Calf’s *Drum of the Waves of Horikawa*,” *ASAP/Journal* (2019); “John Zorn and the Postmodern Condition” (2004); “Comment on AVANT’s interview with John Zorn,” in *AVANT: The Journal of the Philosophical-Interdisciplinary Avant-Garde*, Torún, Poland (2012), translated into Polish; and “Afro-Asian Crosscurrents in Contemporary Hip Hop” (2002). She will become the next Dean of the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto in July 2021.



David Henry Hwang’s work includes the plays *M. Butterfly*, *Chinglish*, *Yellow Face*, *Golden Child*, *The Dance and the Railroad*, and *FOB*, as well as the Broadway musicals *Aida* (co-author), *Flower Drum Song* (2002 revival) and *Disney’s Tarzan*. Hwang is a Tony Award winner and three-time nominee, a three-time OBIE Award winner, and a three-time Finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. He is also the most-produced living American opera librettist, whose works have been honored with two Grammy Awards. He co-wrote the Gold Record “Solo” with the late pop icon Prince, and was a Writer/Consulting Producer for the Golden Globe-winning television series *The Affair*. Hwang serves as Head of Playwriting at Columbia University and as Co-Chair of the American Theatre Wing. His newest work, *Soft Power*, written with composer Jeanine Tesori, premiered at Los Angeles’ Ahmanson Theatre and New York’s Public Theater. It received eleven Drama Desk nominations, four Outer Critics Honors, a Grammy nomination, and was a Finalist for the 2020 Pulitzer Prize.



Akemi Kochiyama is a scholar-activist and community builder who currently serves as the Director of Advancement at Manhattan Country School. She is also Co-Director of the Yuri Kochiyama Archives Project and co-editor of *Passing It On: A Memoir by Yuri Kochiyama*. She recently published “Reflections on my Grandma Yuri, Malcom X, and the Past, Present, and Future of Black-Asian Solidarity” in *That Which Remains*. A graduate of Spelman College, Akemi is a doctoral candidate in the Ph.D. Program in Cultural Anthropology at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.



Marie Myung-Ok Lee is a cofounder and former board president of the Asian American Writers’ Workshop and is a lecturer in fiction at Columbia College and Writer in Residence at the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity (CSER), where she directs the Asian American Diasporic Writers series. Her novel, *The Evening Hero*, is forthcoming with Simon & Schuster, and her young adult novel, *Finding My Voice*, has just been re-released by Soho Press. Her stories and essays have been published in *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, *Slate*, *Salon*, *Guernica*, *The Paris Review*, *The Guardian*, *The Nation*, and the *New York Times Book Review*, the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, and forthcoming in *Smithsonian Magazine*.



Lydia H. Liu is the Wun Tsun Tam Professor in the Humanities in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures and the Director of the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society at Columbia University. Her representative works include *The Freudian Robot: Digital Media and the Future of the Unconscious* (2010), *The Clash of Empires* (2004), and *Translingual Practice* (1995). Her 2013 book *The Birth of Chinese Feminism* co-edited with Rebecca Karl and Dorothy Ko is listed as one of the Essential Reads on Feminism by the New York Public Library. More recently, she published an article called “Wittgenstein in the Machine” in

Critical Inquiry (Spring 2021) and an essay on the current pandemic called “The Incalculable: Thoughts on the Collapse of the Biosecurity Regime” in *Critical Inquiry* (May 2020).



Mae M. Ngai is Lung Family Professor of Asian American Studies, Professor of History, and Co-director of the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race at Columbia. She is a U.S. legal and political historian interested in questions of immigration, citizenship, and nationalism. She is author of the award-winning *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (2004) and *The Lucky Ones: One Family and the Extraordinary Invention of Chinese America* (2010). Ngai has written on immigration history and policy for the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Nation*, and *Dissent*.

Before becoming a historian she was a labor-union organizer and educator in New York City, working for District 65-UAW and the Consortium for Worker Education. Her new book, *The Chinese Question: The Gold Rush and Global Politics*, will be published by W. W. Norton this summer. She is now writing *Nation of Immigrants: A Short History of an Idea* (under contract with Princeton University Press).

Staff

Ellie M. Hisama, Event Director and Moderator; Program Booklet Editor
Adina Berrios Brooks and Kristen Barnes, Event Advisors
Gareth Cordery, Event Coordinator, Program Booklet Designer, & Assistant Editor

Acknowledgments

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We are grateful to all of the speakers for their participation and to Dennis A. Mitchell and Amy Hungerford for their support of this event.

We would like to extend our thanks to the following sponsors and cosponsors for making the panel possible.

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We extend our deep gratitude to Shana Lassiter for her superb institution building and her steadfast commitment to equity and inclusion at Columbia. It has been a special pleasure to work with such a brilliant administrator. We wish the very best to Shana in her new position at Duke University.

Our heartfelt thanks go to Jess X Snow for allowing us to use their beautiful work “In The Future Our Asian Pacific Elders Are Safe.”



We Have to Reimagine is the last event I will have organized for the Barnard, Columbia, and Harlem communities before I move to the University of Toronto this summer. I would like to extend a special thanks to those who have sustained this work and made it possible: Kristen Barnes, Christopher L. Brown, Elizabeth Castelli, Yvette Christiansë, Laura Ciolkowski, Alessandra Ciucci, Sarah Cole, Denise Cruz, Zosha Di Castri, Patricia Dailey, Brent Hayes Edwards, Kevin Fellezs, Meredith Gamer, Eileen Gillooly, Ellen Gray, Farah Jasmine Griffin, Fredrick C. Harris, Jean Howard, Shamus Khan, Ana Paulina Lee, George E. Lewis, Johanna Lopez, David Lurie, Yulanda C. Mckenzie, Dennis Mitchell, Alondra Nelson, Robert O’Meally, Gabriela Kumar Sharma, Patricia Smith, Maya Tolstoy, Lucie Vágnerová, and Rebecca Young.

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—Ellie M. Hisama

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Image credit: *Jess X Snow, End Anti-Asian Violence Series*, a collaboration with Justseeds Artists’ Collective