

# Remarks Given at the CCCC Asian/Asian American Caucus Meeting, February 2023

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Thank you all for being here. I was originally just the chair of this panel, but I am now here today to pay tribute to the original respondent, K. Hyoejin Yoon, who sadly passed away late last year. She was a leader for us here at C's via her work in the Asian/Asian American Caucus, in her writing that reveals our own history to us anew, and her relationships with so many here in this room and in our field, and in the legacy of her teaching and mentoring.



Figure 1: a close-up headshot of Hyoejin Yoon smiling and looking at the camera. She is wearing a black blouse and is in front of a quilt that is hanging on a wall.

Other people on this panel knew her better than I, and so I will focus my remarks today on the depth in her carefully layered work that is incredibly attentive to historical context and nuance. I also want to speak to the threads in her work that the members of this panel are taking up and developing in their own scholarship as we all strive toward a richer, healthier field and world.

On a personal level, I first came to her work through her scholarship on the portrayal of Asian American women in the media. I felt a connection to her nuanced discussions of how Asian femininity in particular is specifically bracketed by expectations for model minority behavior in her chapter “Learning Asian American Affect” from the collection *Representations: Doing Asian American Rhetoric*.

In reading this work again, I am struck by her skillful deployment of affect theory in her analyses of cultural and pedagogical situations. Before the wave of scholarship focusing on affect, her work offered nuanced analyses of the emotion/affect distinction and how individual feelings were enmeshed in broader structures. For example, her pairing of “emotionologies” and Asian American identity offers a model for doing cultural rhetorical analysis of affect while also remaining grounded in pedagogical concerns.

Her work, while boundary-pushing, is also purpose driven. Yoon’s article “Affecting the Transformative Intellectual: Questioning “Noble” Sentiments in Critical Pedagogy and Composition” offers a serious challenge to one of our field’s dominant emotional orientations. In this essay, she clearly and firmly demonstrates how the commitment to fostering critical thinking and intellectual transformation can inadvertently support, or at the very least sidestep questions about, embedded assumptions about student agency, whiteness, and responsibility. Through her careful examination of touchstone texts in critical pedagogy, she highlights how the goal of being a transformative teacher too often relies on affective assumptions that minimize student agency and maintain white supremacist ways of understanding the goals of composition.

In addition to her critical yet caring eye for our field and pedagogical practices, Yoon also modeled how to write interdisciplinary work with sophistication. Her essay co-written with Cari Carpenter on the historical and rhetorical portrayals of Chinese immigrants and American Indians during the nineteenth century shows both the challenges and delights of doing cross-racial historiography and media analysis.

As I listened to the wonderful panelists today, I was struck by several moments that resonate with what feel like the motivations and aims of Yoon’s work.

Sweta - In your descriptions of the Nepali work on responding to COVID-19, we see clearly how rhetoric from marginalized communities/knowledges does not mean small. Often, home-spun bricolage is fetishized as the most recognizable form of grassroots rhetoric. In contrast, this study shows how Asian rhetorical work can be and is transnational in scope. It is dynamic, responsive, modeling genre awareness, and in some cases, literally life saving.

Bo Jimenez - I was just sitting in a panel on hopeful feminisms, and your work on the rapper/singer Ruby Ibarra exemplifies an affect-ful way to think about hopeful, Asian feminist resis-

tance to colonizing instincts and attitudes. Resistance is never complete, as your point about the urge to represent Ibarra as just a female body makes clear. But nonetheless, Ibarra demonstrates how the affect of translingual craft can be sexy, playful, flippant, and complex simultaneously.

Jennifer and Terese - Your work on the normalizing force of citation practices demonstrates the importance of Yoon's engagement with affect and emotion. She lays bare the falsity of the "intellectual primitive" via her honest discussions of how race and power shape how Asian affect is perceived and also felt within the teaching body. On a personal note, even though I have read Yoon's work before, I found a key concept that I am using in my other panel through my rereading of her work for this dedication. We all need to be shaken out of a colonial mindset sometimes.

Xiaobo - Grappling with the real affect of Asian and Asian American lives means sometimes there is no affective closure. But that means all the more we need stories that reject model minorities, robotic intellects, and exotic temptresses; we need stories that hold our rage and care in tandem.

It is impossible to fully encapsulate a life, so I will close with this brief consideration of Yoon's own words. She states, "Our motives and reactions are riddles of displacements and substitutions, written like language, only accessible through its continual deferments" (692). These words, from her article "The 'Good' Teacher of Composition: Toward a Genealogy of Emotion," urge all of us to reckon with the genealogies of emotion that shape not just our identity but what we valorize as best reading and writing practice. This piece gently but urgently encourages us to confront the spaces in our pedagogy that are indebted to guilt more than to social justice. As the above sentence demonstrates, Yoon does not make such recommendations flippantly. Rather, she models and performs the sort of deep emotional labor that is required to even begin to crack the seal on our disciplinary idols. Such work requires an immersive dive into a field's histories and attachments, looking past easy interpretations and delving into the patterns of feeling that also bear ethical responsibilities.

I am grateful to be a compositional 'descendant' of Yoon and will carry her words and insights with me. Thank you.