

# A Bit of Me

This series of profiles on SUNY Broome community members is a part of the Student Village diversity calendar initiative. We will be highlighting members in our community who identify with or can speak on the diversity theme or topic for each month.

The theme for April is Culture and the topic is Do we interpret other people's behaviors through our own?

To be featured in this series please reach out to Kalis Nunes .

## Albert Choi

Intervention Specialist at the Student Village



### WHAT IS YOUR CULTURAL BACKGROUND AND IN YOUR OPINION WHAT IS THE MOST DEFINING CHARACTERISTIC OF IT?

I come from a Korean household and it's a collectivist culture. Essentially the focus is on the group rather than the individual. For example, your body is considered your inheritance from your parents so you take care of your body because you'll pass it down to your descendants. There's pros and cons of this kind of mindset vs the American individualistic mindset. But in asian culture you are always thinking about topics in relation to other people.

### HAVE YOU EVER EXPERIENCED CULTURE SHOCK AND IF YES CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE?

I remember the first time I went to a non-asian friend's house and I was absolutely shocked that they wore shoes inside the house. I was raised to always take off my shoes when I enter someone's house as a sign of respect. I mostly hung out with other Asians growing up so I really didn't go over people from other culture's homes. I didn't want to get the inside of someone's house dirty because of me.

### WHAT IS ONE WAY IN WHICH YOUR CULTURE PLAYS A ROLE IN HOW YOU PERCEIVE THINGS?

I usually think in relation to other people. So what does the person across from me think? It's a little different from just being considerate it's more like that's a reflection of yourself.

### WHAT ARE SOMETHINGS THAT ARE CONSIDERED RUDE IN YOUR CULTURE THAT MIGHT NOT BE IN OTHERS?

Not saying hello to every single person when you enter a place or gathering.

### HAVE YOU EVER HAD AN INSTANCE WHERE YOU OFFENDED SOMEONE OR WERE OFFENDED BECAUSE OF A CULTURAL NORM THAT ONE OF YOU HAD THAT THE OTHER WAS NOT AWARE OF?

Not exactly offended but it's usually just taking off your shoes when you enter an asian household. It's just a courtesy thing.

## **WHY DO YOU THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO LEARN ABOUT AND UNDERSTAND CULTURES?**

Dr. Ibram Kendi has a theory about being an anti-racist. He believes that everyone on some level has racist or prejudiced views. Part of that, is understanding yourself and your own biases then working on removing them. By understanding other cultures, you help work on your own prejudices and biases.

## **WHAT IS ONE IDEAL THAT YOU'VE HELD ON TO THAT COMES FROM YOUR CULTURE?**

I always held the belief that you should think about the perspectives of other people. It's just a way to show consideration and respect towards other people.

## **IF YOU COULD CHANGE ONE THING ABOUT YOUR CULTURE WHAT WOULD IT BE?**

There's a couple of things I love about my culture don't get me wrong but part of that is knowing we can be better. Asian culture really doesn't talk about mental health. East Asian cultures have some of the highest rates of adolescent suicide in the world. A lot of that is simply the fact that mental health is a stigmatized subject. We need to be able to be open about it to work on mental health.

## **WHAT ARE SOME WAYS IN WHICH YOU BELIEVE WE CAN ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO LEARN ABOUT OTHER CULTURES?**

Food is universally liked. I think it's a good way to start off a conversation about culture. Oftentimes, there's a historic reason why food exists. For example a lot of food in Korean cuisine are stews. This is because we used to be an impoverished country so we had to make food and flavor last as long as possible. Besides, who doesn't like food?

## **WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT YOU ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT?**

I'm an avid lifter. I love working out and I spend more time in a gym than I do in classes. I love food, every culture has their own take on food its really interesting to see. For example, many cultures have their own variation of a dumpling. East Europeans have pierogies, South Asia has samosas, Americans have potstickers (chicken and dumplings), Italians have ravioli. Even in East Asia a dumpling really varies by nation. Chinese have a wide variety depending on location but for

example they have siu mai or xiao long bao. Japanese have gyoza and Koreans have mandu.

## **IF YOU COULD TRAVEL ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD WHERE WOULD YOU GO?**

After covid, most likely Germany or Japan. If I go to Korea I'd get drafted into their military.

## **WHAT IS YOUR EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND?**

I'm currently a double masters of social work and public administration student from Binghamton University. I have an undergraduate degree in psychology.

## **WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THIS PROFESSION?**

I wanted to be a therapist for asian americans because mental health is not really something discussed in Asian culture.