

Spring 4-25-2018

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/art_honors
 **How to be the Perfect Asian Wife!**
Part of the [Art Education Commons](#), [Art Practice Commons](#), [Asian American Studies Commons](#), [Asian Art and Architecture Commons](#), [Asian History Commons](#), [Asian Studies Commons](#), [Business and Corporate Communications Commons](#), [Business Law, Public Responsibility, and Ethics Commons](#), [Child Psychology Commons](#), [Children's and Young Adult Literature Commons](#), [Chinese Studies Commons](#), [Civic and Community Engagement Commons](#), [Community-Based Learning Commons](#), [Community Psychology Commons](#), [Contemporary Art Commons](#), [Dance Commons](#), [Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence Commons](#), [Ethnic Studies Commons](#), [Family, Life Course, and Society Commons](#), [Fashion Business Commons](#), [Fiber, Textile, and Weaving Arts Commons](#), [Fiction Commons](#), [Fine Arts Commons](#), [Food Processing Commons](#), [Gender and Sexuality Commons](#), [Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Ethnicity in Communication Commons](#), [Humane Education Commons](#), [Illustration Commons](#), [Inequality and Stratification Commons](#), [Interactive Arts Commons](#), [Interdisciplinary Arts and Media Commons](#), [International and Community Nutrition Commons](#), [Korean Studies Commons](#), [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies Commons](#), [Mass Communication Commons](#), [Other Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), [Pain Management Commons](#), [Painting Commons](#), [Peace and Conflict Studies Commons](#), [Performance Studies Commons](#), [Personality and Social Contexts Commons](#), [Photography Commons](#), [Poetry Commons](#), [Politics and Social Change Commons](#), [Race and Ethnicity Commons](#), [Reading and Language Commons](#), [Rhetoric Commons](#), [Sculpture Commons](#), [Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons](#), [Social Control, Law, Crime, and Deviance Commons](#), [Social Influence and Political Communication Commons](#), [Social Media Commons](#), [Social Psychology and Interaction Commons](#), [Social Welfare Commons](#), [Sociology of Culture Commons](#), [Theory and Criticism Commons](#), [Transpersonal Psychology Commons](#), [Visual Studies Commons](#), [Women's History Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

hill, sophia, "How to be the Perfect Asian Wife!" (2018). *Art and Art History Honors Projects*. 6.
http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/art_honors/6

This Honors Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Art Department at DigitalCommons@Macalester College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Art and Art History Honors Projects by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Macalester College. For more information, please contact scholarpub@macalester.edu.



“How to be the Perfect Asian Wife!”

Sophia Songmi Hill

Advisor: Ruthann Godollei

Project Duration: 2017-2018

Artist Statement

“How to be the Perfect Asian Wife” critiques exploitative power systems that assault female bodies of color in intersectional ways. Three large drawings mimic pervasive advertisement language and presentation to reflect oppressive strategies used to contain womxn of color. Created with charcoal, watercolor, and ink, these ‘advertisements’ contrast with an interactive rice bag filled with comics addressing my everyday life. Each ‘advertisement’ is paired with a text that chastises, criticizes, and instructs an Asian wife that isn’t “perfect” yet. The constant reference to a “Husband” is a direct critique of the violent and pervasive patriarchy. The instructions, and more honestly, the gaslighting of the text, reflect the messages I continue to experience as a female bodied womxn of color.

Initially, I wanted to make work about how I felt I wasn’t Asian enough.

As a mixed race Asian-American, I have struggled with belonging to an Asian identity and the standards of beauty in both my Korean and Chinese heritages. Stuffing my head into a rice cooker, desperately trying to fill my blood with more essences of Asian culture through kimchi would serve as allusions to my cultural anxieties. Then I realized, like most pervasive belief systems and social norms, these anxieties tied to a larger culture of violence and exploitation of female bodies of color. Violent patriarchy lives at the dinner table with family, exists in classroom teachings, and rests in my own eyes that reflect back to me when I gaze in the mirror. It was so easy for me to parrot the violent messaging that have followed my body through advertisement, community, and cultural ‘values’. And to associate kimchi, and rice with such perverse hyperboles of advertisement language, I connect cultural cuisine to the ingestion of self policing and internalized self-loathing practices.



Artist Statement (Continued)

It is intentionally ambiguous whether the figure in the drawing is swallowing the abuse or actively resisting it. The text is constantly admonishing the figure for “going too far”, “nagging”, “asking too many questions”, and “never sweetening (their) tongue”. Through this shaming, it is clear that the figure’s defiance and resistance is also relentless. With each new text accompanying the ‘advertisement’, we can imagine the figure deviating from the new expectations forced upon them.

Formal elements of the work also convey the figure’s resistance. A closer look at the texture of the skin and hair, there is a consistent undercurrent of agitated mark making. The paper is warping, the marks fly off the page, and the charcoal seems unconcerned with the presence of wet media. The figure is not constrained by the boundaries of the paper, instead they hold the space. With flexed muscles and intense presence, the figure captures and firmly holds the viewers gaze to witness these violent and absurd “advertisements”.

The process behind these ‘advertisements’ also embody resistance and intentionality. The drawings are based off reference photos directed, modelled for, and edited by me. Down to the conception and detailed execution, these ‘advertisements’ were *produced* by me - an Asian-American womxn of color.

Creating the three large drawings felt like I was simultaneously mutilating another womxn of color and providing them with channels of escape. To physically strengthen the figure’s agency, the ‘advertisements’ were created in laborious layers. I realistically rendered the charcoal figure, then applied hundreds of layers of watercolor to achieve deep vibrance, and finally applied ink hair one strand at a time until I achieved abundance and strength. I put intensive time towards the creation of the figure to pay respect to the female body I was using to reflect violent realities.

The Rice Bag installation is a counterpoint of healing to the macabre “advertisements”. Each grain of “rice” is a small comic that I drew by hand. They are quick documentations of my everyday experience. They are small truths. The reason it is titled “With Every Grain of Rice” is because I believe that the journey through self love and healing from violent realities is continuous. Each time I give weight to my life, and recognize moments that may seem ordinary as extraordinary, the exploitative systems that wish to see me eliminated **cannot touch me.**

“How to be the Perfect Asian Wife!”

Three Drawings and Three Accompanying Texts



Kimchi Prenatal Regiment
Charcoal, Watercolor, Ink on Paper
(49 x 34 in.)

(1.) KIMCHI PRENATAL REGIME

LADIES!

STAND OUT THIS LUNAR NEW YEAR AS "BEST WIFEY" BY LIBERALLY COATING YOUR UTERUSES WITH KIMCHI! YOU DON'T WANT YOUR PRODIGAL SONS TO BE BORN NOT LIKING THE TASTE OF CENTURIES OF CULTURE.

SO REALLY STUFF THE KIMCHI FARTHER THAN THE TIME YOUR KOREAN LITERATURE PROFESSOR FORCED A HIGHLIGHTER UP YOU ... WHEN YOU REFUSED TO KISS HIM BACK IN MIDDLE SCHOOL.

YOU NEED TO MAKE SURE YOUR SON'S BIRTHING CHAMBER CAN ACCLIMATE HIM TO HIS FUTURE NATIONAL INHERITANCE THE WORLD IS HIS AFTERALL.

DON'T WORRY, THE BUAN IS ONLY TEMPORARY COMPARED TO THE LONG LASTING HONOR YOU'LL HAVE AS A PERFECT WIFE! MAKE THE OTHER WIVES JEALOUS AND THE OTHER HUSBANDS WISH YOU WERE THEIRS.

AND FOR THOSE MIXED RACE MOTHERS; MAYBE YOU'LL FINALLY BE ACCEPTED BY YOUR HUSBAND'S FAMILY IF KIMCHI RUNS THROUGH YOUR BLOOD STREAM...

Kimchi Prenatal Regiment (Text)

Ink on Paper

(15.2 x 22 in.)



Uterus Plug-in
Charcoal, Watercolor, Gouache, Ink on Paper
(48.5 x 36.5 in.)

(II) UTERUS PLUG-IN

HONEY...

NOW YOU WENT TOO FAR DIDN'T YOU! NO ONE TOLD YOU TO PUT THAT MUCH KIMCHI UP YOUR VAGINA... HOW CAN YOU EXPECT YOUR HUSBAND TO GET HIS DAILY NEEDS? YOU'VE CURDLED THE WALLS OF YOUR VAGINA AND YOUR SECRETIONS REEK OF GARLIC.

YOU CAN'T EXPECT HIM TO PUT HIS GLORIOUS MANHOOD UP YOU WHEN HE COULD RISK BURNING HIMSELF...

HE ALREADY HAS TO GO THROUGH SO MUCH WHEN HE GIVES YOU HEAD... NOW THIS? YOU CAN'T EXPECT HIM TO PUT HIS MOUTH THERE NOW... THAT'S JUST NOT FAIR TO HIM... HOW COULD YOU BE SO UNGRATEFUL... WHEN HE GAVE YOU HEAD THAT ONE TIME ON YOUR BIRTHDAY.

IT'S NOT LIKE HE WILL BE SATISFIED WITH YOU BLOWING HIM FOR THE REST OF YOUR MARRIAGE... AS A WIFE, YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO EARN YOUR HUSBAND'S RESPECT BY OFFERING UP ALL YOUR HOLES... BUT YOU... YOU'VE WRECKED YOUR VAGINA'S PURITY AND RUINED YOUR HUSBAND'S EASY ACCESSIBILITY TO PLEASURE.

DON'T WORRY THOUGH! LUCKY FOR YOU THE ACIDIC QUALITY OF YOUR BURNED UTERUS CAN CONDUCT ELECTRICITY! START PLUGGING IN EVERYDAY APPLIANCES UP THERE. THAT WAY YOUR HUSBAND CAN SAVE ON ELECTRICITY BILLS HE WORKS SO HARD TO PAY FOR.

AREN'T YOU GLAD THERE'S STILL A USE FOR YOU?

Uterus Plug-in (Text)

Ink on Paper

(15.2 x 22 in.)



Rice Cooker Makeover
Charcoal, Watercolor, Gouache, Ink on Paper
(48.25 x 37 in.)

(III.) RICE COOKER MAKEOVER

You SILLY GIRL...

WHY DO YOU KEEP DOING THINGS YOU CAN'T HANDLE... YOU'VE OVERUSED YOUR UTERUS PLUG-IN. YOU HAVE WRECKED YOUR BIRTHING CHAMBER COMPLETELY. ANY MALE FETUS WILL DIE IN THERE DUE TO THE RESIDUAL RADIOACTIVITY LEFT FROM THE HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES.

WHO WERE YOU TRYING TO PROVE YOURSELF TO? YOU KNOW, WHEN A WIFE TRIES TO EXCEED EXPECTATIONS IT IS AN EARLY SIGN OF CHEATING... ARE YOU TRYING TO SEDUCE A WHITE MAN? OH HONEY, NO ONE, NOT EVEN YOUR OWN KIND WILL HAVE YOU NOW... LET ALONE A MAN OF A SUPERIOR RACE TO YOUR OWN.

FOR NOW, KNOW YOUR PLACE!

YOUR HUSBAND WILL NEED TO FIND A FRESH OPTION. WHEN THE NEW WIFE IS ADDED TO THE HOUSE, YOU'LL HAVE TO JUST GET OVER IT. YOU WERE ALWAYS NAGGING HIM ANYWAY. YOU ASKED TOO MANY QUESTIONS AND NEVER SWEETENED YOUR TONGUE FOR HIM. YOU HAVE FAILED TO FULFILL YOUR ROLE. SO, TRY NOT TO MAKE A BIG SCENE. IT'S REALLY UNATTRACTIVE! IT'S YOUR JOB FROM NOW ON TO HELP YOUR HUSBAND TRANSITION TO HIS NEW WIFE.

SO, TIME FOR YOUR RICE COOKER MAKE-OVER! THIS MAKEOVER WAS SPECIFICALLY MADE FOR CASES LIKE YOU...

NOW, BE A GOOD GIRL AND STICK YOUR FACE IN. TRY TO CLOSE THE LID AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. IF YOUR NECK STARTS TO SPLIT, KNOW THAT WILL MAKE THE PROCESS MORE EFFICIENT. HE'LL TELL YOU WHEN YOUR FACE HAS BEEN COOKED LONG ENOUGH. THE GOAL IS FOR YOUR SCARS TO DISGUST HIM SO MUCH HE'LL AVOID YOU... HE NEEDS TO BENEFIT FROM HIS NEW WIFE WITHOUT DISTRACTION.

Rice Cooker Makeover (Text)

Ink on Paper

(15.2 x 22 in.)

“With Every Grain of Rice”

Installation Piece

“With Every Grain of Rice”

Artist Statement

(This artist statement was placed on the table as part of the installation piece.)

Horrific media messaging and essentialization of womxn of color bodies continues to be more and more personal and pervasive.

“Healing” and “self-care” continue to be co-opted and manipulated as forms of gaslighting in service of a capitalist regime.

But I don’t care.

I will continue searching and dreaming of a reality where I am living without fear.

Inside this rice bag are white cards with illustrations and text. These white cards are meant to symbolize grains of rice.

Each are hand drawn. Each come from my daily experience.

Each rice kernel is different. Each are precious.

Handle them with respect and care. And then put them back how you found them.

It will take time. So please take the time or come back. You won’t be able to consume them. You may not be able to relate.

Our experiences are so different. And that’s ok.

I found hope and healing by documenting truths I know to be real.

Feel free to take pictures of rice kernels that you connected with.

Post them, send them to your friends...All I ask is that you credit me @songmi_x or Sophia Songmi and don’t sell them for personal gain. That defeats the point.

Feel free to email or dm me the illustration that spoke to you and attach the memory/story you experienced upon viewing it.

Good luck on your journey to self love.

“With Every Grain of Rice”

(Continued)

The installation piece had 156 comics in total. These were stored inside the tupperware containers and housed in the rice bag.

Due to printing constraints, I have only included a few of the many comics. A future project I have in mind is to create thousands of these comics and fill many ricebags. This will overflow the space with my resistance and hope for a better future.

To the courageous and wonderful students of color who may be reading this:

I believe in you and I will continue the fight for your/our future.

I LOVE YOU.





With Every Grain of Rice

Store Bought Rice Bag, Ink, Cut Paper, Tupperware on Found table
(Table: 24 x 32 x 15.5 in.; Rice Bag with 2 Containers inside: 8 x 13 x 5 in.;
Large Tupperware: 9 x 7 x 3 in.)





With Every Grain of Rice

Theme 1: Self Talk

Ink on Paper

(5 x 5 in.)



Josephine Songmi 2018

With Every Grain of Rice

Theme 1: Self Talk

Ink on Paper

(5 x 5 in.)

YOU CAN'T TAKE ME.



With Every Grain of Rice

Theme 2: Talking Back

Ink on Paper

(5 x 5 in.)



With Every Grain of Rice

Theme 2: Talking Back

Ink on Paper

(5 x 5 in.)



With Every Grain of Rice

Theme 3: When Words Aren't Needed

Ink on Paper

(5 x 5 in.)



With Every Grain of Rice
Theme 3: When Words Aren't Needed
Ink on Paper
(5 x 5 in.)

WEALTH IS
GOING TO BE
SOUL CRUSHINGLY
NOT ABOUT
MONEY AT ALL.

(SUCK MY DICK, (CAPITALISM).)

With Every Grain of Rice

Theme 4: When Only Words Are Left

Ink on Paper

(5 x 5 in.)

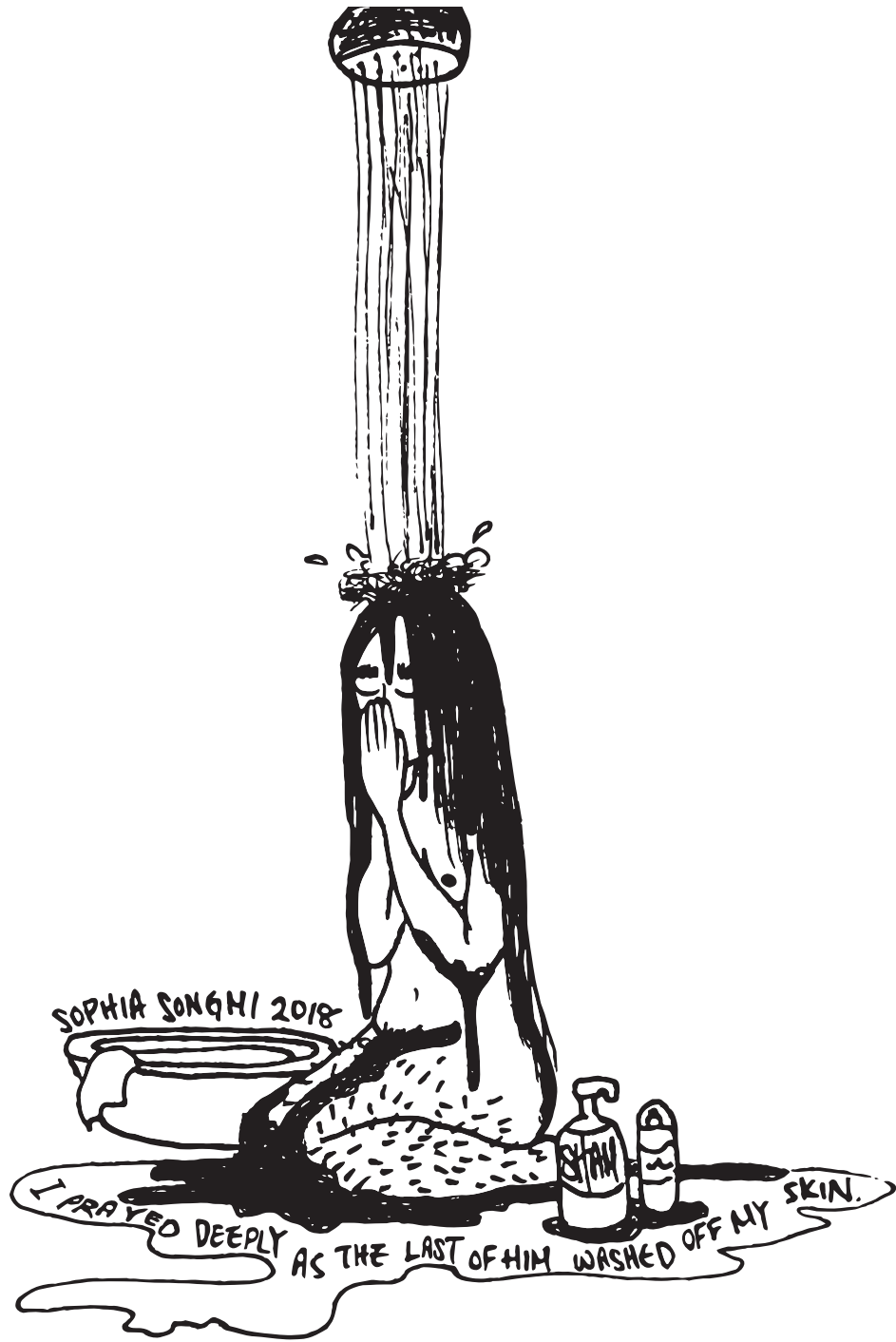
AT MY AGE...
I WOULD HAVE
BEEN TAKEN AS
A COMFORT
WOMAN BY THE
MILITARY.

With Every Grain of Rice

Theme 4: When Only Words Are Left

Ink on Paper

(5 x 5 in.)



With Every Grain of Rice
Theme 5: Healing from the Patriarchy
Ink on Paper
(5 x 5 in.)



2018 Jorjia Songm1

With Every Grain of Rice

Theme 5: Healing from the Patriarchy

Ink on Paper

(5 x 5 in.)



With Every Grain of Rice

Theme 6: Daily
Ink on Paper
(5 x 5 in.)



With Every Grain of Rice

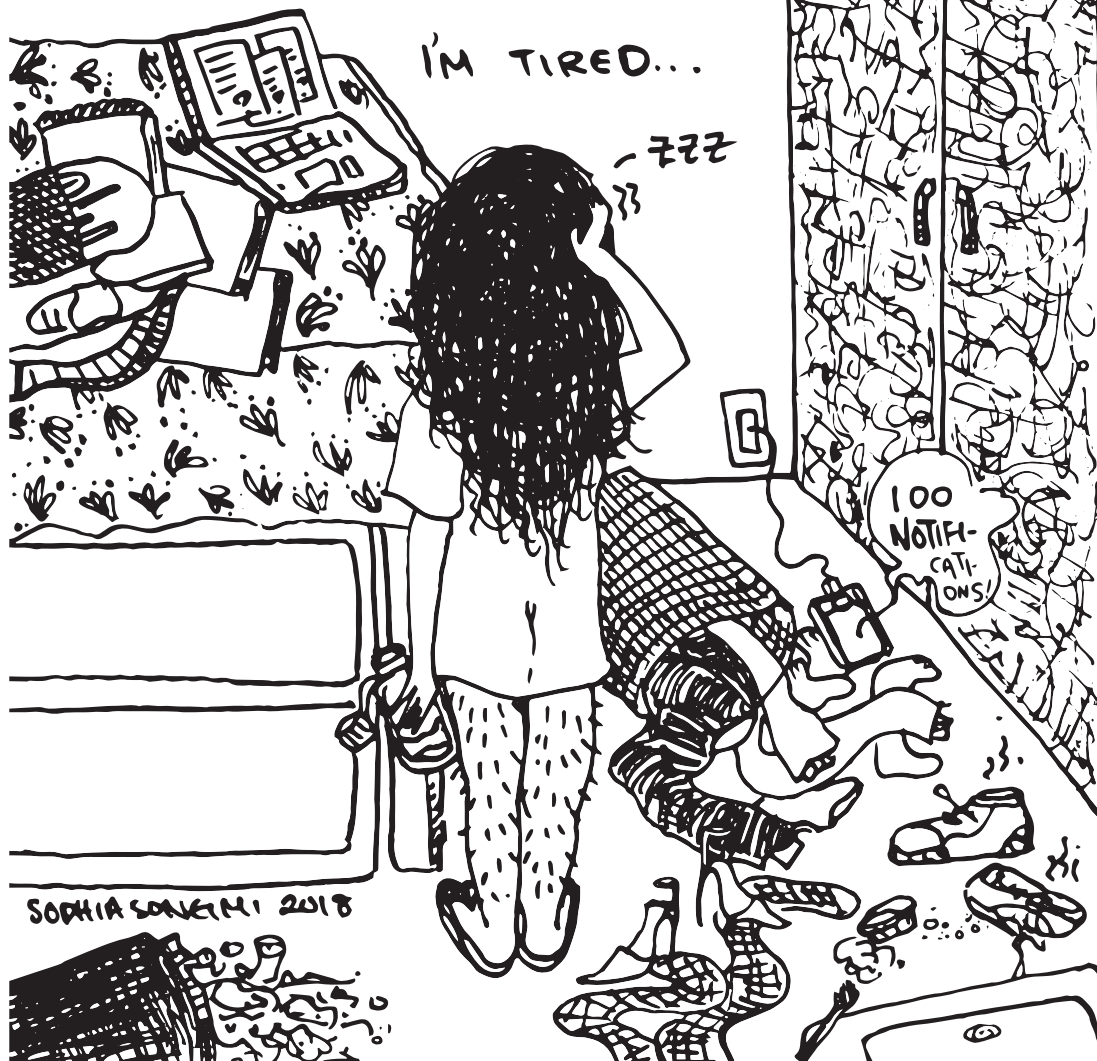
Theme 6: Daily
Ink on Paper
(5 x 5 in.)

SOME DAYS...

I CAN'T BE ANYTHING.

I'M TOO TIRED..

I'M TIRED...



With Every Grain of Rice

Theme 7: Just Truths

Ink on Paper

(5 x 5 in.)

YOU CAN'T ALWAYS SAVE
YOUR FRIENDS.

With Every Grain of Rice

Theme 7: Just Truths

Ink on Paper

(5 x 5 in.)

I LEARNED
HOW TO STAY
SILENT FROM
MY MAMA.

With Every Grain of Rice

Theme 8: Family

Ink on Paper

(5 x 5 in.)



I CRIED FOR
20 MIN. REWATCHING
SAMSUNG'S AD WITH CHLOE KIM...
THE PRIDE IN HER DAD'S
VOICE ... DAMN...

With Every Grain of Rice

Theme 8: Family
Ink on Paper
(5 x 5 in.)

Acknowledgements

I would like to respectfully thank the following people for making this project possible.

Thank you Haruna, Obiele, Dominique, Petersan, Mama, Grandma Chin, Lizzette, Ruthann G, Stan, Vin, Kristi, Chris, Dr. Kari, Tori, and Donna.

Thank you to all my ancestors and mentors from afar for dreaming up and fighting for a reality forged from your imagination.

THEY CAN'T TAKE MY
DANCE.



GRANDMAMA,

DO YOU WATCH
ME FROM WHERE
YOU ARE? I'M

TRYING MY BEST.

I IMAGINE SHOWING
YOU ALL THE SKILLS
AND KNOWLEDGE I'VE
EARNED.

With Every Grain of Rice

Theme 8: Family

Ink on Paper

(5 x 5 in.)