a single crane

Heather C. Lou

University of California, Davis, heatherclou@gmail.com
a single crane

Heather C. Lou

I transplanted to Burlington, Vermont, from California in 2010. As one of three Asian Pacific Islander (API) students in my graduate program, I battled continuous homesickness, self-doubt, and emotional and physical pain, while also finding as well as immense growth as a lifelong student. The impacts of racism, racial battle fatigue, and stereotype threat during my time in New England eventually accumulated to posttraumatic stress disorder. As a student affairs administrator, I had navigated supporting and challenging students, but failed to engage in methods of radical-self care and put into practice the advice I have often given to students: “Take time for yourself. How can you support others if you aren’t doing that for yourself?”

Through years of therapy, developing boundaries, reconciling the harm of violence, and radical self-care through visual arts, I have learned to embrace health and wellness in higher education. “a single crane” represents the ways I have navigated power, privilege, and oppression in higher education, as well as the women of color resistance in colonial spaces. In the spirit of Anzaldúa’s (1981) “Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to 3rd World Women Writers,” this piece demands for the decolonization of educational spaces and redefinition of legitimate knowledge in colonial institutions (Anzaldúa, 1981).

Heather C. Lou, M.Ed. (she/her/hers) is the Assistant Director of Outreach at the University of California, Davis Womxn’s Resources and Research Center. She is currently the NASPA Asian Pacific Islander Knowledge Community Outreach Co-Coordinator and has served as the ACPA Standing Committee for Multicultural Affairs Advocacy Coordinator and Multiracial Network Past Chair. Heather earned her master’s degree at the University of Vermont and focuses on critical race theory, navigating political and dominant workspaces, intersectional and fluid identities, and womxnism.
a single crane

from a branch
she looks at me
her body bruised from
battle
fighting to stay
and fighting to
go
reclaiming space
for generations to come
the last of her kind
a symbol
of hope
of strength
and despair
muxers, before me
asked
“Why
do they
fight us?
...
Because we
shake and
often
break the white’s
comfortable
stereotypic images they
have
of
us…” (Anzaldua, 1981, p. 171)

a
china doll
almond eyes
glaring
tanned skin
too dark for comfort
in a sea of
snow
white
skin
a foreign
single crane
longing for my kin
fighting to
heal
fighting
to
resist
“To assess
the damage is
a
dangerous act.
To stop
there is even more dangerous.” (Anzaldua, 1981, p. 171)

refusing to surrender
acknowledging
power
decolonizing
my
mind
a single crane
she is empowered
she
is
power

Reference