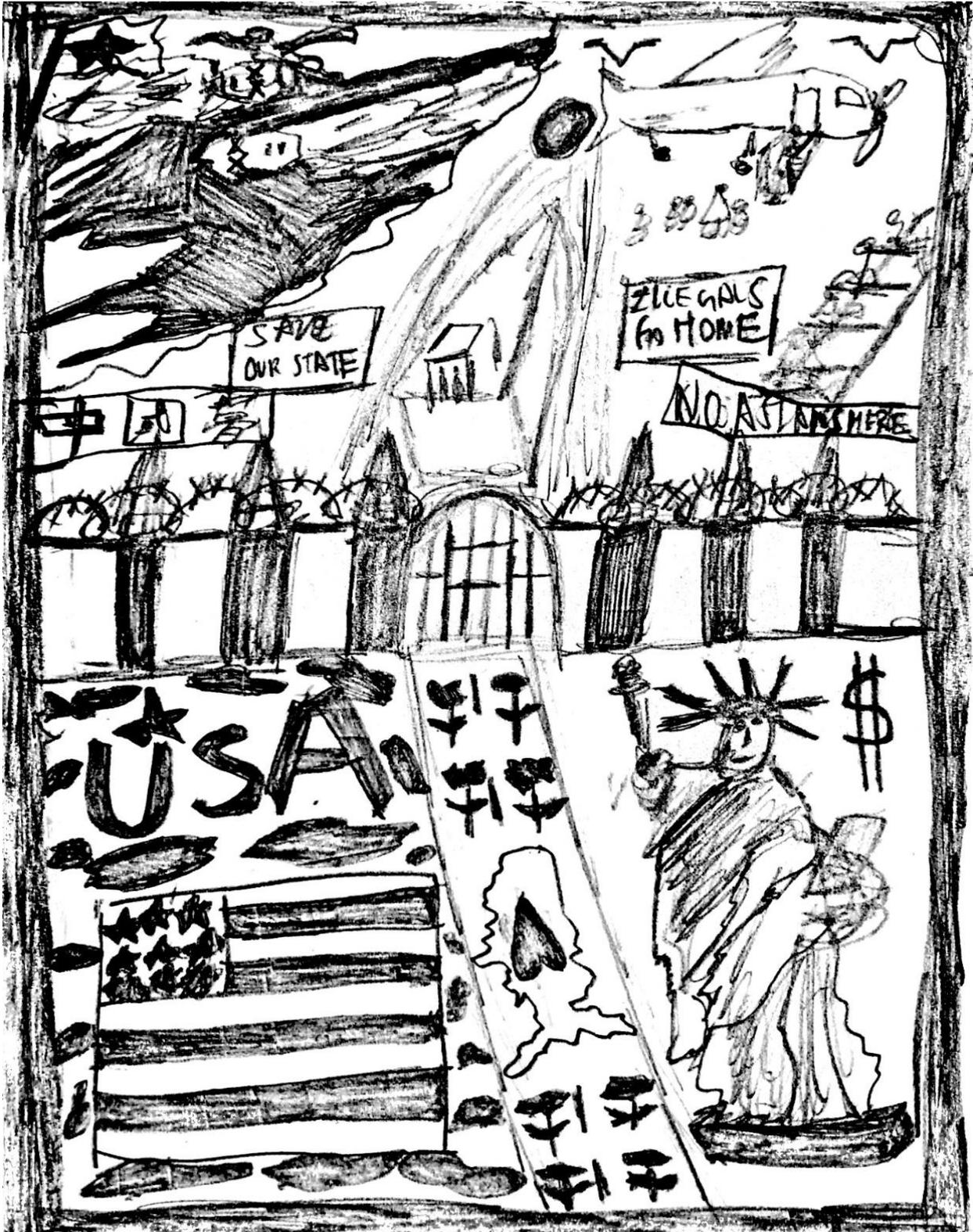


The Invisible Identities

#1 Concept

The Invisible identities is the missing card in the major arcana. Whether is the adoptee, the deportee (ex-documented), the refugee, the foreigner, these individuals and interdependent identities are often invisible to mainstream society. Sometimes, even within the Asian American communities, many of these identities are hidden and unconscious. Whether is the peace within this generation or the continuous fabrication of Asian America history in the United States, the illusion of the American Dream naturalized the underlining issue of model minority, pass trauma, violence, discrimination, war, culture shock, inhumanity within American's hegemony society. And by observing a person physique and appearance, the invisible identities are often buried in silence little people know about the struggle of Korean adoptee or even the history of the adoptee created through the Korean War. So little people realized the pain adoptee have to go through as their white family left behind their adoptees' original birthplace and culture. Cultural genocide became the start of their fear, insecurities, loneliness, misunderstanding, and strangeness towards their perceived identity. In their family, they are viewed as white yet in society they don't receive the benefit of being white. They are viewed as the Model Minority, the stereotypes. These stereotypes cause further camouflage the struggle of ex-documented students, the need to survive without the promise of the American Dream. Many may achieve their American Dream, but the anguished through their hardship, homesickness, and hopelessness in this process are also sealed in the Invisible Identity. And most importantly, how war forces the foreigner to go ashore, into the unknown, and finally arriving American as refugees are also a multiple defined identity which are often overlooked. The history of the family's past are purposely silences, and many children have little knowledge understanding what their parents actually went through, like the Vietnam War. I hope this card can simply open conversation. An honest conversation is the beginning of reopening the wounds yet healing the hurt simultaneously.

#2 Concept



The Purpose of the Invisible Identities

During the Multiculturalism class in the Drama department, my professor Daphne Lei, who is also the co-founder of the UC Irvine Asian American Theatre Group, Theatre Woks, held an in-class conversation that alternated my vision of people forever. The “Invisible Workshop” changed my perception on viewing any human being surrounding my environment. During the workshop, we discussed about what are some of the key elements that are invisible to us when we encountered another human being who can either be a stranger, a friend, or even a family member. And one of the key elements is our identity. Base a person’s skin color, looks, and behavior, we cannot tell how what identities they are associated with or belief in, and sometimes, they may still be struggling with their own identities. Through this train of thoughts, I immediately re-connect this concept back to Korean Adoptee. Have I not known the story of Korean Adoptee and the pain these individuals have to go through regard to their conflicted identities, lost culture, and misunderstandings, I would simple subjectively assumed that there are only Asian Americans and immigrants in America. I would had been completely unconscious about the fact that behind the mask of the Asian American appearance can possibly have a wound that still haunting their daily life due to the fabrication of the Asian American history and, most importantly, that American Dreams are always glorious, positive, and free. And seeing this significant explanation missing from the deck of “Open in Case of Emergency” Tarot Cards created by Mimi Khuc, I decided to type my thoughts and open up my creativity to create this missing card from the deck. I believe this “missing tarot card” will add an overall completion of the deck, and capture one of the most important element people should grasp to have empathy, awareness, and understanding on the Asian American experience.

Tarot Card for the Adoptee

Invisible Asians by Kim Park Nelson

- ❖ The idea of colorblindness, culture genocide, and multiculturalism demonstrates how stereotypes of the model minority image naturalizes the real struggle of Korean adoptee experience through white privileges.¹ The Model Minority Myth became one of the main fabrication of the real identity within the Korean Adoptee. As if they are expected to not only be smart and abundant, but also grateful for living in white families which provided them the white privileges.² The white privilege is also another existing fabrication that camouflage the fact that Korean Adoptees do not benefit from this privilege. They may be called white and different from other Asians by their white friends and families, deep down the undisclosed experience of discrimination, violence, and racism still exist.³ As forty-four-year-old Barry, one of Kim Nelson's oral history project participant further states this silenced invisibility, "I felt very socially isolated being an adult adoptee. And always felt, a lot of times, my friends couldn't understand it, you know, they would just, pretend I was White [chuckles] or they would just say, 'I don't think of you as a minority.'"⁴ By learning the invisibility of the Korean adoptee, we also educate ourselves with the cost of war. Like what Mimi Khuc states in her Tarot Card design for the Adoptee, "the Adoptee can be a warning that once can never return".⁵ But in a positive note, "The Adoptee urges you to examine inheritance, and how someone else has brought you to what you think is yourself".⁶ And I hope also by

¹ Kim Park Nelson, *Invisible Asians* (Rutgers University Press, 2016).

² Judy Wu, Lecture Class Content, May 17, 2018.

³ Kim Park Nelson, *Invisible Asians* (Rutgers University Press, 2016).

⁴ Kim Park Nelson, *Invisible Asians Oral History 12* (Rutgers University Press, 2016), 121

⁵ Mimi Khuc, "Open in Emergency" (The Asian American Literary Review, 2017).

⁶ Mimi Khuc, "Open in Emergency" (The Asian American Literary Review, 2017).

reading and observing the drawing of the “Invisible Identities”, this missing card will also urge you to see what is invisible within yourself, your identity to the world or even your own person.

Tarot Card for the Deportee (ex-documented)

Flavors of Empire by Mark Padoongpatt

- ❖ The term “Ex-documented” is by far one of the most underrated identity which majority of the people don’t even recognize or understand. As Mark Padoongpatt states in *Flavors of Empire*, “by the early 1970s many Thai students found themselves outside of legal status – as ex-documented. Increased tuition costs for international students in California hurt Thais’ ability to stay in good legal status”.⁷ By dropping out of school, Thai immigrants became a part of the “Invisible” Deportee. “Deported” within the American society, and having no legal status, the identity of being ex-documented has a similar quality with the Deportee, where both individuals experience “failed immigration” and “frequently must travel roads they are forced onto” states on the Deportee tarot card by Khuc.⁸ This similarity is also invisible within our current society. Both the Deportee and the ex-documented Thai experience the cruelty and injustice treatment of being “undocumented” in American society. And under the illusion of the American Dream, the reality become a flip side of the promise America give to all immigrants. And like the Statue of Liberty, the promise for freedom is a painful lie to these individuals possessing these identities. And by learning the existence of the “Ex-documented”, we learn to not view them as criminals and have

⁷ Mark Padoongpatt, *Flavors of Empire* (University of California Press, 2017), 56.

⁸ Mimi Khuc, “*Open in Emergency*” (The Asian American Literary Review, 2017).

empathy with their struggles of chasing for their dream and leaving their hometown for their families' future.

Tarot Card for the Refugee

The Best We Could Do by Thi Bui

- ❖ Throughout this entire book, author Thi Bui gradually piled away the fabricated past. This past was once an “Invisible Identity” that her parents often silenced from their conversation with Bui. Whether is the unwelcoming of their presence in America after escaping from the Vietnam War, such as her father getting spit by the white individuals calling them “Gook”, the horrifying voices his father had to endure in the underground as the French soldiers “burned houses, killed women and children”, the fight for survival as Bui dad take on the duty to guide the boat to land and safety, the conflict of identity and language as her mother discover her pride as Vietnamese despite the influence of the French language, the encounter of other Vietnamese struggle to provide food for themselves and their families and died on the streets, and the need to endure fear as her parents plan their survival while knowing Sai Gon will be a Sea of blood due to the 1968 Massacre in Hue.⁹ These past all piled up into a universal identity within their family that become “Invisible”. The “Invisible” also represents the endless sacrifice Bui’s parents have to accept and take action on in order to survive and raise their children for a better future. Indeed, sacrifice are in many ways “Invisible” in our lives and only if it was told or revealed should we know about the truth behind the sacrifice. Thus, I truly believe what Khuc states in the Refugee tarot card, “the Refugee imparts strength to those living with uncertainty” and “also warns that while the crisis

⁹ Thi Bui, *The Best We Could Do* (Abrams ComicArts, 2017).

might describe the limits of a condition or structure, the desire for security and protection can also recruit control or even submission”.¹⁰ Uncertainty become the other half of the invisible element in Refugees and also in Bui’s family. Because of the trauma of past crisis, living always comes with a certain type of alertness and survival mode, that at any moments violence can strike into their lives. This mentality further proves the hurt that are invisible to us, and that only by creating conversation can the wounds be slowly healed. And as I said in my Tarot card, “I hope this card can simply open conversation. An honest conversation is the beginning of reopening the wounds yet healing the hurt simultaneously”.

Tarot Card for the Foreigner

Overall Picture of all Tarot Cards

- ❖ This Tarot card became the main inspiration of my overall drawing for the missing card “Invisible Identities”. The foreigner basically captures the melting pot of the “Invisible Identities”: The Adoptee, the Deportee (ex-documented), and the Refugee. These different types of foreign identities perfectly paint the big pictures of the hyper-invisibility of the American culture. The perfect life of the American Dream is too good to be true. And in many ways, the American Dream can also be a possible image to naturalized the devastation of the Vietnam war, the existence of the exdocumented students, the oppression of the deportee, and the climax of adoption in American after the Korean war. The top side of the drawing represents the “Invisible Identities” blocked away with walls from the American Dream land at the bottom half of the drawing. The wall represents not only the ignorance of American society and the

¹⁰ Mimi Khuc, “*Open in Emergency*” (The Asian American Literary Review, 2017).

forgotten history of these identities, but also the violence and hatred of the deportee. More importantly, the “Invisible Identities” drawing represents the genocide of the Vietnam war, the aftermath of the communist party, the rescuing of the adoptees and Vietnam refugees into the helicopter and the boat, and the labels of hateful commentary on the immigrants, refugees and undocumented individuals in America. Thus, the contrast between these two extremes creates a further wakeup call on our limited knowledge about our own communities, the people surrounding our lives, and also our own history as a unique identity.