



# FORGING OUR PATHS

The Challenges and Opportunities for  
Chinese (Overseas) Students and Activists in

# SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS



Peter Yew Protest, 1975, Photo by Corky Lee

On March 16, 2021, six Asian women massage parlor workers, including two who were Chinese, were killed in a shooting at a massage parlor in Atlanta, GA. The shooting sparked fear and anger within Asian communities and brought racial discrimination against the Asian community -- particularly the over-sexualization and fetishization of Asian women -- back under the spotlight. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been numerous violent incidents against Asians in North America and broader Western countries. According to the advocacy group Stop AAPI Hate, there were more than 2,800 hate incidents against Asian Americans in the U.S. in 2020 alone. In addition, anti-Chinese sentiment continues to grow in the U.S., fueled by both Democrats and Republicans. A recent Pew poll found that about two-thirds of Americans have a negative view of China.

At the same time, Chinese students, activists, and marginalized groups in China and abroad have been stigmatized as affiliated with "foreign powers(境外势力)" and consequently experienced cyber violence by right-wing nationalists. As we finalized this report, more than two dozen official WeChat accounts of domestic sexual minority university student groups in China have been banned [Note 1], and populist Internet trolls are turning the tables on sexual minorities at home and abroad. Nearly 400,000 Chinese students, an important part of the Chinese population in the U.S. [Note 2], have bore the brunt of the US-China geopolitical conflicts and everyday anti-Asian, anti-Chinese, and populist sentiments, mixed with misogyny, homophobia and transphobia.

At the same time, we are also seeing a growing number of Chinese (overseas) students [Note 3] and activists who are willing to speak out for their own and others' conditions and actively engage in and contribute to social justice movements in transnational spaces. Some of them have experienced direct or indirect racist incidents, and others have been inspired by Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests. They have become more attuned to social justice issues, participating in and organizing local social actions, focusing on the intersectionality of issues, and raising their own political voices. For example, after the Atlanta shooting, Chinese feminists in New York and Vancouver took to the streets, holding posters advocating for the interconnected need to rally Stop Anti-Asian Hate, end the decriminalization of sex work, and rejecting the Model Minority myth while supporting the Black Lives Matter movement.

However, because of the widespread labeling of Chinese students and Chinese in North America as politically apathetic, we know very little about Chinese (overseas) students and young professionals: Who are they? What kind of social issues do they care about? How do Chinese (overseas) students or activists become involved in social justice movements in North America? What are the difficulties they encounter in the process of political participation, advocacy and organizing? What kind of support do they need?



Peter Yew Protest, 1975, Photo by Corky Lee

As a group of Chinese (overseas) students and activists involved in social movements, we - perhaps you who are reading this report as well - often feel isolated and unsupported. We wondered if there was anything we could do. Through the Chinese Students & Activists (CSA) Network, we conducted surveys and follow-up interviews to better understand the experiences of Chinese (overseas) students and young people in political participation, documented the voices of activists, are working to debunk the myth that Chinese (overseas) students are seen as “politically indifferent” or “Little Pink (小粉红)”. Based on 110 survey responses and 16 follow-up interviews, we wrote this report and proposed recommendations at the end of the report to help the community and our allies better support Chinese (overseas) students and activists so that we have more resources and space to participate in social movements and to promote social justice.

Finally, if you are a Chinese (overseas) student or activist, we would love you to know that:

**You are not alone. We will meet soon.**

[Note 1] On July 6, 2021, all the WeChat official accounts of the LGBTQ+ student club in major universities were banned and were displayed as “unnamed official account” on WeChat.

[Note 2] The number of F1 student visa holders in the US.

[Note 3] We use the term “Chinese (overseas) students” to include both Chinese students on student visas and those who are overseas and self-define as Chinese students but are not international students.

## Who Are the Respondents?

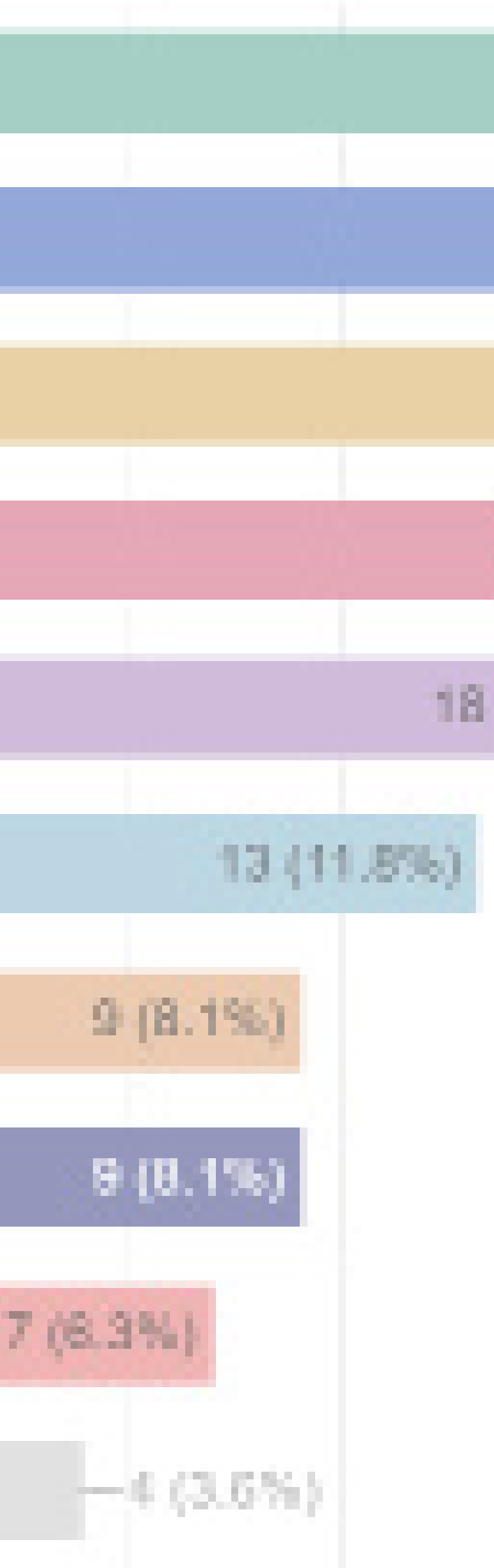
While the mainstream media often portrays Chinese (overseas) students as a homogeneous and highly similar group, Chinese (overseas) students and activists living abroad are actually very diverse. They may have different political views, educational attainment, life experiences, and multiple identities (e.g., minority background, gender identity, and immigration status). Because this report was originally designed to understand Chinese (overseas) students who want to participate or are already participating in social justice movements, we - as both researchers and activists ourselves - have chosen the “snowball” method in our recruitment. We recruited respondents through social media platforms, WeChat, and the CSA email listserv. Among the respondents who filled out the questionnaire, 50 of them were willing to be interviewed, and 16 people participated in one-on-one in-depth interviews [Note 1].

Many respondents saw the questionnaire recruitment on the social media platforms of the research team members, which means the respondents who filled out the survey were more or less already interested or invested in social justice - both a limitation and a valuable asset of our report. Nearly 85% of respondents indicated that they had been involved in some form of

social movements (including on campus-, community-, and nation-wide events), and 19 [Note 2] respondents said they had been involved in social movement organizing. Although similar in terms of political involvement, the respondents’ gender, age, and education differed. The following is a brief description of the demographics of our survey and interview participants.

[Note 1] Of the 16 interviewees, 13 were female, 2 were male, and 1 was non-binary. 5 were doctoral students, 2 were research students, and 9 were undergraduate students. Five were doctoral students, two were research students, and nine were undergraduate students.

[Note 2] In this question, participants can select all that apply.



The CSA survey collected 110 valid entries. There were 79 female, 24 male, and 4 non-binary respondents, and three did not specify their gender. By the end of the survey collection, the eldest of the participants was 60 years old and the youngest was 18 years old. The majority of the respondents were between the ages of 22 and 25 [Note 3]. A majority had or were pursuing a bachelor's degree or higher, including 45 graduate students and 18 doctoral students. Another 6 respondents were high school students.

When it comes to the area of study, social sciences dominated the group, followed by the humanities [Note 4]. The number of participants in mathematics and computer science and business management was about the same, at approximately 20 respondents. Except for law (never selected, probably due to the fact that most U.S. schools do not offer law as a major at the undergraduate level), all other major categories had at least one participant studying, including agriculture and health care. The vast majority of respondents attended public high schools in mainland China, 21 attended international high schools in mainland China, 21 attended high school in the United States, and 6 attended high school in other countries [Note 5]. Currently, about 45% are taking classes remotely in the U.S., China, or elsewhere [Note 6]; only 17% of participants are taking classes offline in the U.S. A total of 29 are already working in the U.S., and 10 of them are working on OPT visas.

[Note 3] One person was 60 years old, three people were 18 years old, and 16 people were 24 years old.

[Note 4] In this question, respondents can select all that apply. Nearly 40 people checked the social science category, and 23 people chose the humanities category. We allowed participants to select more than one field of study when asked about their majors, so the sum from each field of study exceeded the total number of participants.

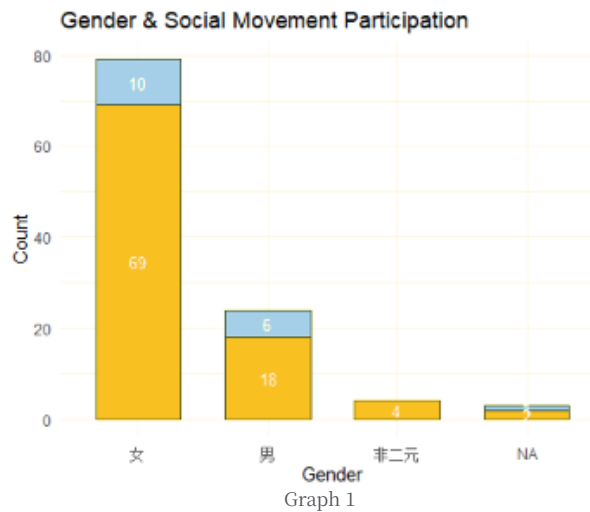
[Note 5] In this question, respondents can select all that apply.

[Note 6] 33 percent took classes remotely in the United States, and about 12 percent took classes remotely in their home country or another country.

More than 60% of the participants lived on the East Coast. Fewer respondents - only 5 - lived in the South. Two respondents lived in Canada. The majority of respondents were from the more economically developed areas of eastern China. Guangdong province had the highest number of participants, at 20(18.2%). Beijing and Shanghai are tied for second place. Zhejiang, Shandong, and Sichuan are the next most popular provinces in China among our participants. Some identified with more than one province (e.g., both Shanghai and Zhejiang) or more with a region than a province (e.g., Northeast China, Pearl River Delta region). Since three out of the four research team members, who were primarily involved in distributing the survey, were located on the East Coast and one in the South - two were from Guangdong, one from Zhejiang, and one from Beijing - this may have led to the overrepresentation of these regions in our sample. Nonetheless, there are 20 domestic provinces covered by the participants.

As shown in the figure on the right, there is a correlation between the participants' identity and their participation in social movements[Note 7]:

In the gender-specific statistics, although the difference between the percentage of female and male participants involved in social movements is only 12%, there are twice as many women as men involved in social movement organizing[Note 8]. All four of the non-binary participants had experience with social movements. Half of the respondents who did not specify their gender had participated in social movements. The proportion of participants who had participated in social movements was over 80% for all education levels. The highest percentage of having experience in organizing social movements was doctoral students, nearly 39%.

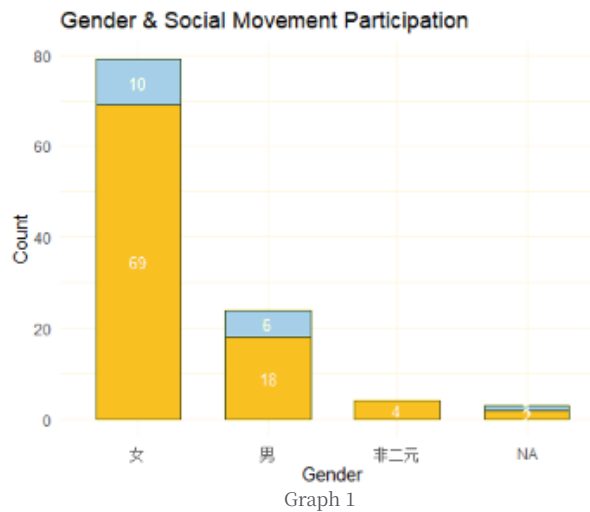


This percentage was about 13% for graduate students and 12% for undergraduates. Of the high school respondents, one had organized in a social movement. Fewer participants from mathematics and computer science majors and Business Management majors have participated in social movements. The majority of participants with organizing experience were from the humanities and social sciences.

To understand how the types of high school might affect students' involvement in social movements, we also asked participants about what kind of high school they attended. The data showed that the highest percentage of respondents with experience in organizing social movements were from private schools in China. However, due to the small sample of participants who attended private and public high schools in North America, we were unable to make definitive inferences related to the type of high school. When the opportunity arises in the future, we hope to collect more data in this area for further exploration.

[Note 7] The yellow bars represent the Participation Graph 1 and Organizing events in Graph 2. The blue bars represent the number of no participation.

[Note 8] The percentage of female respondents in social movement participation is 87% and 75% for male respondents. The female respondents with leadership experience takes up 20.3% of all female respondents and the percentage is 12.5% for male respondents. Non-binary and preder-not-to-share respondents did not report any experience in social movement leadership.



# 2

## Political Participation of Chinese (Overseas) Students and Activists

### 2.1 What social issues do respondents care about?

We found that the respondents of the survey had a wide range of interests regarding social issues. In the questionnaire, we invited participants to rank 12 social issues according to their levels of interest. After weighing (6 points for the first-ranked issue, 1 point for the sixth-ranked issue, and so on, and no points for issues not listed), the ranking of social issues according to respondents' interest were as follows:

1. COVID-19 and vaccine development
2. Anti-Asian violence
3. Chinese feminist movements
4. H1-B visa and immigration policies in the U.S.
5. Black Lives Matter movement
6. Fake news and misinformation
7. Labor rights
8. LGBTQ+ rights
9. Environmental justice
10. U.S. college admission policies
11. Indigenous people rights
12. Disability rights





## 2.2 How did the respondents get politicized?

The responses covered a wide range of dimensions, including their own and others' experiences, historical and current political events, their education, family and friends, political figures and thinkers. Some respondents felt that their political views were not influenced by single events or individuals, but resulted from a cumulative set of influences. We provided specific examples below of how different factors influenced their political positions and social engagement.

### Personally experienced or witnessed discrimination

Twenty-eight survey respondents mentioned that the discrimination they experienced had influenced their political stances. Some experiences were related to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as being addressed in discriminatory terms or physically assaulted on the street. Others were unrelated to the pandemic, such as being excluded by white students at school, as well as the shootings targeting Asian women in Atlanta. Experiences of discrimination due to language barriers were also named. For example, one participant was discriminated against for speaking Chinese in public, and another was excluded by her peers because she was unable to speak Mandarin fluently in school.



Photo by Ira L. Black/Corbis via Getty Images

### Discrimination against other races and anti-discrimination campaigns

Twelve survey respondents reported that they became concerned about racism because they witnessed or heard about discrimination against other people of color than Asians. Most of them mentioned George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement. One participant also mentioned that the discrimination by Asians against other people of color influenced their political stance.

### The COVID-19 pandemic

Nineteen survey respondents mentioned that the pandemic had made them politically aware or influenced their political stances, citing conflicts between nations and individuals and among countries. Some mentioned Dr. Li Wenliang's experience impacted their political views and others mentioned the anti-Asian violence provoked during the pandemic changed their views. Fourteen respondents mentioned the post-COVID relationship between China and the United States in their surveys or interviews. Some of them noted that the different countries' public health solutions also influenced their political views.

### Political figures and thinkers

Thirteen respondents cited Donald Trump or Trump's policies

as influential. Many specifically mentioned Trump's performance in the 2016 and 2020 elections, while others cited policies Trump has implemented, such as health care reform, visa restrictions, the U.S.-Mexico border wall, and escalation against China. The influence of progressive political figures such as Latina Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders, and the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg were also mentioned. Black activist thinkers also had a profound impact on some of the respondents, such as civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. The interviewees also mentioned Audre Lorde and Toni Morrison. Some of them mentioned Chinese thinkers and writers such as Lu Xun (鲁迅) and Hu Shih (胡适). Others mentioned political figures outside of the U.S. and China, such as Lee Kuan Yew and Gandhi, each of whom they felt had shown them different political possibilities.

### Family and friends

Some respondents noted that people around them (partners, parents, grandparents, friends, etc.) had influenced their political views to various degrees. Some of this influence came through conversations. For example, some changed their minds through discussing so-

Heading: Stop Asian Hate Rally, San Jose, Photo by Jason Leung

cial issues with friends in WeChat groups, and some were influenced through conversations with elders experiencing political events since childhood. Some of the influence came from observations of family members. One participant commented that her mother, who worked full time at home, was not fully recognized in her value. This influenced the participant's views on gender issues.

### Education and readings

Some respondents felt that their school experiences influenced their political views. They mentioned high school courses (e.g., AP US Government) and college courses (political science, women's studies, African American studies, etc.). Some cited political philosophy and overseas Chinese studies books while for others the views expressed in these books corroborated their experiences. Others said that reading about what has happening in other places has a strong influence on their views; they are able to see political events from a different perspective.

### Recent social justice struggles

Recent protests around the world have also influenced the political views of participants. Some mentioned feminist movements at home and abroad. Many participants mentioned the movements

against police brutality and the Black Lives Matter movement in the U.S., and other movements in China and other places abroad.

### Personal participation in social movements

These social movements were either on campus or off campus. One interviewee said that after participating in social movements, they no longer had a fixed political stance; their political positions "had more room to evolve, depending on the issue." One interviewee also mentioned that participation in online and offline events orga-

nized by the Chinese feminist community in North America during the pandemic had a great impact on them.

### Other factors

Other factors, such as U.S. health care reform, visa issues, the international refugee crisis, environmental issues, and domestic speech control, also influenced the political views of some participants.



#Chinese4BlackLives Poster, Design by Jackie Chen



Dr. Li Wenliang Vigil, New York, 2020. Photo by Faye Fong

### 2.3 How do the respondents participate in and organize social justice movements?

Many Chinese (overseas) students and activists are already personally involved in issues that concern them, either as listeners, witnesses, or organizers. They are involved in a wide range of social issues that often intersect, including women's rights (anti-domestic violence, anti-sexual harassment, we support Jingyao, etc.), racial justice (BLM, Asians4BlackLives, anti-Asian discrimination, etc.), social inequality in the new pandemic (minority public health, sanitation workers' protection against COVID-19 and rights, etc.), local community movements (community environmental protection, workers' rights, housing, etc.), student movements and labor movements.

The ways Chinese (overseas) students and activists participate in social movements are diverse. In addition to street marches (Women's March, BLM, etc.), they also participate in or organize lectures and workshops on issues related to gender, race, etc., on campus or through online

platforms. Some of them started because of racist incidents during the pandemic. In response to the high incidence of racial discrimination during the pandemic, some initiated a campaign to build a cross-college Asians4justice community to promote inclusive and empowering teaching and learning environments in colleges and universities, and to support students in organizing anti-racism activities. Many students and activists took more direct actions, such as raising money for community support programs through online concerts, fundraising for nonprofit organizations, translating, and making and distributing masks. Other students at (overseas) universities have been long-time organizers in graduate student unions, defending the labor rights of young scholars, and they have been voices in their familiar research and academic fields, advocating for scholarships for students with disabilities and people of color. There are also activists who use innovative forms of co-creation to create spaces for the dialogue and action that they want, such as interactive offline sex education exhibitions. The pandemic has also led Chinese (overseas) students and activists to experiment with online communities, such as book clubs on race and

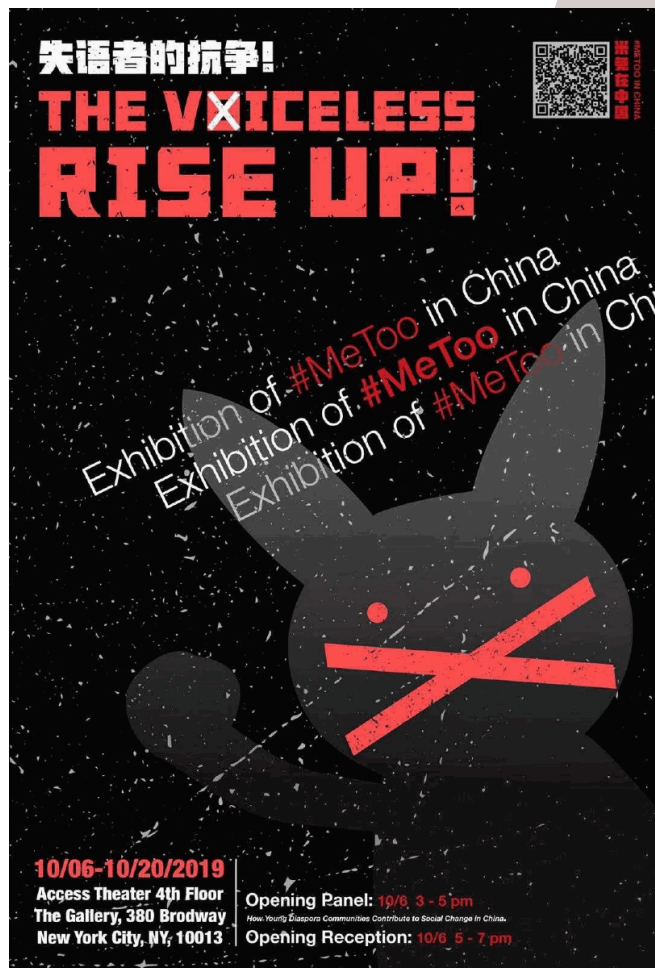
African American studies, and public platforms that focus on a wide range of sex/gender issues, BLM, Asian issues, and labor issues, connecting young people who care about social issues through articles, podcasts, movie screening, and conversations.

In the survey, we have collected some quotes from the respondents, which we share with you below:

- “The process of getting to know people is often refreshing. Some actions can make you feel disappointed. Social movements are a complex process, a process of realizing one’s sociality, and when emotions have reached a peak, participation in social issues can create a little space.”



Photo by @ChineseforBlacklives\_Vancouver



Metoo in China Exhibition NYPoster

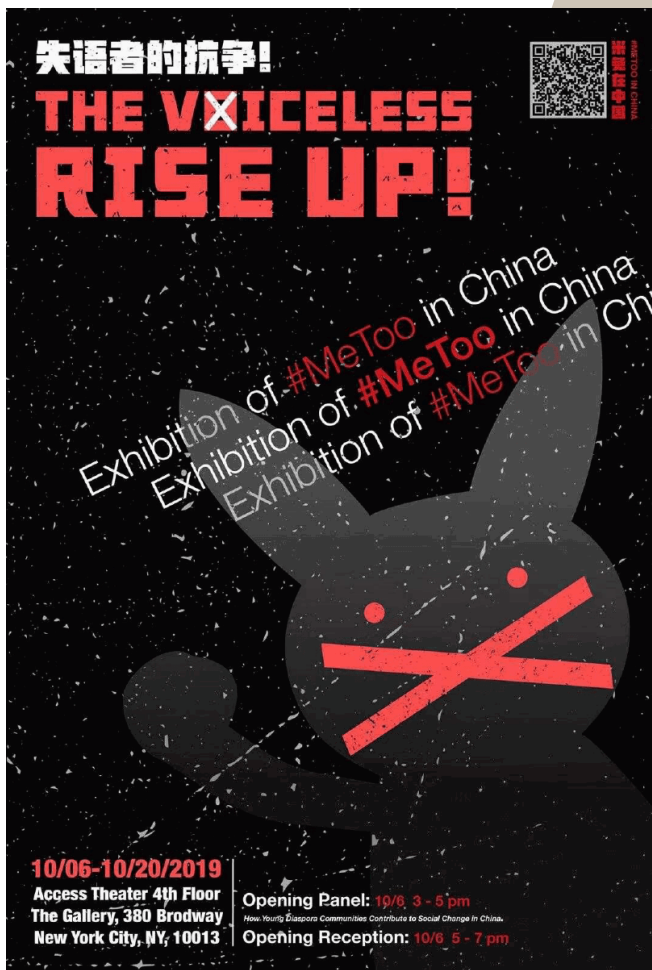
- “In some issues, I can’t find my place ...Stop Asian Hate is in the context of Asian Americans, not Asians; Asians are more silent in this context of race, and our story is weaker. Whether this Stop Asian Hate includes us feels particularly complicated. On the one hand we are experiencing it, on the other hand, we are also not included here.”
- “After the George Floyd incident, an Asian student made a comment in the fraternity that wasn’t very nice, and then we published an opinion piece which received a lot of negative comments, especially from parents, about why we couldn’t huddle with Asian students. I didn’t expect so many parents to be so vocal in expressing such opinions. It made me hear more perspectives than I could have ever imagined, and I wanted to talk to them even more after I understood why they disagree with our article.”

Cont.

- “I think it is necessary to participate in activities with a sharing nature, because in front of a major event everyone is short of words ..... Once I listened to 20 to 30 people share their own activist experience; after that I thought more people should hear how others engage in activism.”
- “After these things, I emphasize a lot more on personal storytelling. Media that have a lot of say, such as newspapers, official accounts and celebrities, can influence people a lot. But a society can't be made of just loud voices. The stories, difficulties, and struggles of individuals should be documented, and that's what I try to do myself.”



Photo by: @ChineseforBlacklives\_Vancouver



Metoo in China Exhibition NYPoster

- “I feel that there are many people around me who are doing this kind of work! We are not alone. For example, I have a friend who often shares information about social movements. I would find out that people I knew before are already focusing on Chinese labor issues, and my history classmates are working with a labor center in Flushing... I wouldn't call myself an activist, because I think there needs to be a threshold. I'm just doing something.”
- “The sense of anger that stirs in me is what inspires me to act.”

## Challenges and Concerns

Chinese (overseas) students and activists often ask themselves "why are we here and where are we going?". Most are well aware of the urgency of the matters, but have concerns about participating in social movements. Some are already speaking out and taking action, but they still face many challenges such as the lack of resources, identity crisis, etc.

## 3.1 Intertwined Dilemmas



### Uncertain Future Abroad

Some interviewees said that Chinese (overseas) students often face dilemmas when choosing their career prospects because they have to consider issues such as income and whether to stay in the US. Many of them would choose high-paying jobs and seek a profit-oriented career. According to one interviewee, the more prestigious the school, the more students are attracted to capital-intensive industries. At the same time, because students are usually self-funded by their families, their career choices are also heavily influenced by their families.

Some interviewees mentioned that Chinese (overseas) students focus a lot more on utility, such as how participating in the social movements will benefit their studies or careers. Most of the interviewees are on student or work visas. Their concerns about their immigration status often lead to their reservations in participating in justice movements.

### Self-Censorship and Risk Assessments

Self-censorship and how to assess the risks of political participation are perennial issues for overseas students and activists. One interviewee shared the experience of self-censorship when she did a project with sanitation workers in China. She expected pushback from the authority but found very little interference. Another interviewee talked about how the risk of protesting is often overestimated among Chinese (overseas) students. Students are raised to be obedient and with the belief that "the outspoken usually bear the brunt of attack". The long-standing habit of self-censorship has made it difficult for many Chinese overseas to choose to speak out.

### Mental Health

Many interviewees mentioned the anxiety they face as Chinese (overseas) students and the importance of counseling. However, due to social taboos on mental health in China, counseling is not the first option that came to their mind. During difficult times, such as the rise of violence against Asians in the US, counseling services are in high demand.

### 3.1 Intertwined Delimmas(cont.)



#### Identity Crisis

Many mentioned the identity crisis of Chinese (overseas) students. For example, some don't identify themselves as Asian-American and yet at the same time they slowly detach themselves from Chinese nationalist identity as they integrate into American campuses and social life. It is a unique identity that makes it challenging for Chinese students to connect with other communities, especially while putting effort to sort out the overlaps and intersections of issues.

Interviewees mentioned that international students who had received nationalist education in mainland China often could not distinguish between the concepts of "party", "nation", and "citizens" when they first entered the US. Some students' feeling of homesickness made their

grasp of these concepts even more ambiguous.

Some shared that initially they often do not know how to discuss China in American classrooms. For example, one interviewee shared that she often encountered stereotypical comments from her classmates who are well-meaning but clueless about China. She was at a loss as to how to respond and how to be impartial without getting caught up either in the pro-Chinese government narratives or in supporting biased, discriminatory views.

Another interviewee mentioned that during her years of study in the U.S., her nationalistic sentiments had slowly faded away and she began to understand the views of the broader Chinese diaspora.



## 3.2 Challenges in Taking Actions

### Lack of Multilayered Resources

Time and financial supports have limited the scale and sustainability of organizing. Some interviewees mentioned that they organized academic and art forums that attracted a decent sized audience, but their events were not sustainable due to time and other resource constraints. Interviewees also mentioned that many ongoing organizing projects are small not unsustainable, unlike some local membership based organizations in the US that sends out regular newsletters and feedback.

### Limited Exchanges Across Issues

Many interviewees expressed they tend to focus on one particular social issue, such as labor, gender or environmental justice. Even though they are interested in learning more about other issues, often lack means to get more involved.

### Lack of Connections Among Organizers

One interviewee described that she wanted to organize a fundraising event but had zero experience and knew no one to contact. Eventually, she started from scratch and built connections with other students at nearby colleges. The interviewee reflected that if there was pre-existing network, the organizing and fundraising would be easier.

### The Impacts of Conservative Rise on Overseas Movements

One interviewee shared that when she was an exchange student in Japan, she experiences how activism against sexual violence faced internal resistance in pushing for change within the university. Another interviewee noticed that conservative Chinese Americans are highly organized and action-oriented. They often have similar career background, stable incomes and strong social ties. In comparison, young progressive students often lack such organizing capacity and resources.

On the other hand, the reluctance of progressives to have dialogue with conservatives is also detrimental to the development of a pluralistic society. One interviewee observed that in the student clubs in more liberal colleges, progressive students are the majority and those with conservative political views are ostracized.

### 3.3 Concerns of Chinese (Overseas) Students and Activists

#### Increasing US-China Tensions

More than 70% of the participants said that as Chinese (overseas) students caught between the US and China, they were concerned about how to deal with the deteriorating relationship between the two countries. On the one hand, they were concerned about their career opportunities and academic future under the impact of the pandemic, and were unsure if they would graduate on time, when they would be able to return to China or able to stay in the U.S. to continue their studies or work.

On the other hand, they were also concerned that as a cultural link between China and the U.S. they are more vulnerable to attacks, such as discrimination and verbal or physical violence against Asians in the U.S. Many participants expressed fear and anxiety during the pandemic because racial violence incidents were frequently reported on the news. The rise in nationalist, anti-Chinese sentiment in the U.S., fueled by the Trump administration's "China virus" political rhetoric, made it difficult for them to feel safe in public.

#### The "Untrusting" Sentiment from Home

At the same time, they also feel distressed and powerless because of the bias against Chinese (overseas) students on the Internet in China. Public opinion accuses them of being "traitors" and ungrateful to the motherland, and suspects that they have been "Americanized" and "denationalized". Most of the students who study abroad do not want to be monitored and scrutinized by the Chinese government. They often avoid statements and actions that may cause controversy because they are afraid that their comments and actions abroad will have retaliation and negatively affect their future in China.



## Recommendations: What Can Be Done?

Based on the survey results, we proposed the following recommendations, categorized by roles.

## **If you are a Chinese (overseas) student/young person who is interested in social justice but unsure of how you can get involved:**

### **Identify the obstacles that prevent you from participating in social movements and political discussions, and seek specific solutions or mitigating measures:**

- ◇ If you are concerned about personal safety and privacy, you can objectively assess the risks, use more secure communication tools such as Signal, Telegram, etc., and avoid posting personal information such as your real name, geographic location, and academic status in the public domain.
- ◇ If you are concerned about visas and residency rights, you can check the relevant laws of your country of residence to understand the political and social participation rights of your visa holders, for example KnowYourRights by ACLU in the US.
- ◇ If you are concerned about devoting too much time and energy might compromise your studies, work, or physical and mental health, you can make sure you have the time at your disposal to participate in a timely and appropriate manner after securing your own needs, so that you do not fall into the polar opposite of over-committing or giving up participation altogether.
- ◇ If you experience certain psychological barriers in terms of language, culture, or socialization, you can try to step out of your comfort zone little by little and interact with people of different races, backgrounds, and positions to gain a deeper understanding of issues that are close to us but may lack channels of understanding, while taking into account your physical and mental needs.

### **Find and build communities with similar values:**

- ◇ Find online or offline communities that share similar interests and values and can be trusted. Try to participate in and help promote existing community activities and provide support to the community in any way you can.
- ◇ Create your own community with people who share your goals, needs, and concerns: Many overseas Chinese young people who embrace progressive ideas express a desire for a mutually supportive, and diverse community where they can discuss serious issues and also get support. On a personal level, you can consciously discuss specific, relevant social issues (e.g. racial or gender discrimination, housing, family, education needs, etc.) with people around you to understand their views, willingness and resistance to participate in discussions and actions, and to find like-minded people to work with. This can be practiced by starting small collaborative groups -- online discussion groups, resource sharing, book clubs, etc. -- so as to develop a certain sense of community, build trust, and act together.
- ◇ Be proactive in understanding and participating selectively in political discussions and social movements in your area. Support the movements in your neighborhood and local community with your capacity (e.g., helping to disseminate information about events, providing translation services, and offering constructive advice from the perspective of overseas Chinese students/youth).

### **If you are a Chinese (overseas) student or young professional who is already active in social movements and has some organizing experience:**

- ◇ Understand and value the impact of Chinese (overseas) student identity on community members and provide support accordingly.
  - » When articulating issues of concern, focus on their relevance to the Chinese (overseas) student community.
  - » If possible, highlight the transnational nature of the issues and encourage community members to discuss domestic socio-political issues within China, local social issues of the residence and the connection between the two, and then engage in relevant activism.
  - » Pay attention to how identities of, discrimination against, and adverse policies about Chinese (overseas) students in both resident country and China affect their physical and mental health, political participation, and activism. Intentionally guide more supportive discussions and actions based on those updates and changes.
- ◇ Collect and encourage community members to actively seek out resources
  - » Such as on how to address discrimination at school and in the workplace, how to report incidents of anti-Asian violence (is there a better solution to deal with the incident in a community-led way other than calling the police in decreasing violence incidents?), and how to intervene effectively in times of trauma and other crises for themselves or others.
- ◇ Openly discuss the risks and risk-mitigation strategies of participating in social movements and other political actions overseas, and guide community members to make appropriate assessments of the costs and risks of participation, and to minimize the psychological and practical barriers.
- ◇ Actively participate in and organize multi-faceted, cross-issue discussions, consciously handle the intersectionality of issues (including and not limited to gender, labor, race, disability, environmental justice, etc.), and support organizations and individuals who are deeply involved in other social justice issues to the best of your capacity.
- ◇ Emphasize the perspectives and needs of Chinese (overseas) students in local communities that lack understanding of Chinese issues.
- ◇ Collaborate and connect with local grassroots social movement groups in your area of residency to promote mutual understanding, resource sharing, and support for action.

### **If you are an ally in North America or elsewhere and wish to support Chinese students and activists in their pursuit of social justice:**

- ◇ Understand the views and needs of Chinese (overseas) students and activists, and provide a platform for them to speak out and take action.
- ◇ Support progressive Chinese (overseas) student organizers and activists in their projects.
- ◇ Advocate for policies and initiatives that benefit Chinese (overseas) students and activists and give them more resources, space and social support to engage in social justice movements. For example, Stop Asian Hate needs to focus on US-China relations and the situation of Chinese international students caught in; mental health services should have counselors speaking students' native language; and cross-contextual translation awareness of language, cultural background, and historical context should be strengthened when organizing local events.
- ◇ If you have Chinese (overseas) students or young professionals in your community, consciously provide a safe and free space for discussion and avoid forcing them to "come out" politically and exposing them to unnecessary political risk. Understand the risk-mitigation tendencies/strategies of Chinese (overseas) students and avoid falling into preconceived racist prejudices that assume they are conservative thinking or politically indifferent.
- ◇ Help Chinese students and young activists connect with local grassroots organizations and to bring them into greater contact with local social movements, and to share organizing experiences and activist resources.

## Epilogue

Despite - or perhaps exactly because of - so many dilemmas and concerns, many overseas Chinese students and young activists are looking forward to joining (or have already joined) local and transnational social movements as part of the progressive forces in political liberation. We at CSA (Chinese Students and Activists Network) are also inspired by our respective communities and hope to use this platform to connect and support young Chinese activists overseas, to create more possibilities for joint collaboration and action, so that we are not alone in our respective paths of progress.

"May all Chinese young people get rid of the coldness and just move upwards, without listening to the words of self-loathing. Those who can do something, do something. Those who can raise their voice, raise your voice. If you have a little heat and a little light, you can shine a little light in the darkness, just like a firefly no need to wait for a torch. After all, if there is no torch flame: I will be the only light."

“愿中国青年都摆脱冷气，只是向上走，不必听自暴自弃者流的话。能做事的做事，能发声的发声。有一分热，发一分光，就令萤火一般，也可以在黑暗里发一点光，不必等候炬火。此后如竟没有炬火：我便是唯一的光。”

Let us respond to Mr. Lu Xun's call a century ago, and let us respond collectively.



#反对针对亚裔的仇恨

也必须包括支持

#黑人的命也是命

#取缔移民及海关执法局

#性工作去罪化

#去殖民化这片土地

#反抗白人至上主义

#粉碎父权制

**Research/Drafting**  
YZ, KL, JC, Kun, 七七, Ria, GM

**Design & Support**  
G, 七七, GM, FanYi

**Pictures**  
CSA Fellows  
Faye Fong

**Special Thanks**  
CSA 2021 Fellows

**Contact Us**  
[chinesestudentactivist@gmail.com](mailto:chinesestudentactivist@gmail.com)