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Diversity Statement

Much of my research and teaching has been informed by questions of embodiment, particularly the shifting ways in which bodily difference has been imagined, revalued, and managed over time. This investment in how and why bodies matter is deeply intertwined with my own lived experience as a queer, disabled person of color. Prior to 1997, I had lived abroad in many different countries in Asia for most of my childhood. Having been enmeshed in multicultural urban environments like Singapore, I was ultimately unprepared for my relocation to conservative, suburban Georgia. Over the course of a decade, I found myself facing acute forms of homophobia and racism before I had even developed a vocabulary for identifying and grappling with either. Passing and identity erasure unfortunately became the means of surviving the hostile, violent culture knitted into the daily fabric of my community. It is this experience that shapes how I approach student mentorship as a form of not only individual empowerment but witnessing and care.

When I moved to Los Angeles for my undergraduate studies, I immersed myself in activist and community groups at UCLA. I became deeply involved with the Asian Pacific Coalition and Pan Asian Queers, both of which shaped my consciousness of Asian American history and its unique interrelationship with LGBT struggle right at the moment of Prop 8. For the first time, I was exposed to narratives by and about Asian Americans and queer people in my community organizing and coursework. My pedagogy draws from these formative experiences to create classroom communities that attend to history in a safe space of collective knowledge-making. Group close-reading, annotation, and discussions form the basis of my class sessions. As a literary scholar, I want my students to inhabit together the potential discomfort and disorientation of textual encounters with difference that can then generate unexpected moments of solidarity and connection.

I later served as a Peer Learning Facilitator for UCLA's Covell Peer Learning Labs. I worked with my primarily student athletes and international students, two student populations that have unique learning needs. At Covell, we emphasized *peer learning*. We facilitators worked to enable a collaborative learning environment otherwise unavailable to many undergraduates, many of whom often felt alienated in large lecture courses. *Facilitating* moves away from the top-down method of lecture-based teaching that frames student as passive consumers of knowledge toward a co-productive learning (between instructor and student, among students) that takes seriously *how*, not just *what*, students are learning. Our training also challenged us to think creatively about course design: we experimented with digital methods and flipped classrooms that encouraged multimodal learning for students with very different learning needs. Discussions about inclusive course design and accessibility questioned the kinds of bodies and norms we privilege in academic contexts. *Did my own classes have a place for a student like me struggling with brain fog and chronic pain?*

Disability thinkers like Eli Clare inspire me to *do disability* as both theory and praxis. My academic work has been inseparable from my own poetic practice, which tries to think through the complex entanglement of my own scoliosis-related disability, queerness, and Chinese heritage. My most recent project, *Curvature*, is a collaboration between myself and local Philadelphia

photographer, Den Sweeney. By putting poetry and photographic portraits together, *Curvature* asks whether or not the queer body in pain can be narrated. If “queer” simultaneously means “to estrange, to deviate, to twist,” *Curvature* turns to my scoliosis to speculate on what unexpected textures a queer body might have. I embrace disability thinking and art’s intertwining of meaning and making, and its unabashed theorizing from the embodied self.