

Chalkings

“CLOSE THE BORDERS, STOP THE ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS, SAVE OUR NATION. MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN”

Xiao Mei focuses her sight at the chalked messages on the ground while she walks towards her next lecture. In the few months that she has lived in the US, she has seen plenty of political protests and messages. Even though it's not the type of thing she would see back in China, she has gotten used to the political atmosphere on campus. This time, however, something just doesn't feel right.

“FOREIGNERS STEAL OUR JOBS AND COMMIT CRIMES, WE MUST...”

Before she is able to finish reading, Xiao Mei notices her friend Mark reading the messages. Mark notices Xiao Mei and approaches her.

“Looking at those messages as well, eh?”

“Yeah,” replied Xiao Mei, still staring at the messages with an expression of unease.

“You seem awfully off today. Is there anything that's bugging you lately?”

“I don't know,” muttered Xiao Mei meekly, “For some reason I don't feel safe here. If people seem so resentful towards minorities like me, at some point I'll be the target of their next act of hate.

“What is there to worry about?” questioned Mark, “first of all: you're Asian, so it's not like you'll be deported or anything. Besides, Asians are all over campus and all you guys do is study, so it's not like they'll try to harm you or anything.”

Mark's words only make Xiao Mei feel even more uncomfortable, and it doesn't help that Mark had an incredulous facial expression the entire time. As Xiao Mei gives a half-hearted excuse to Mark, she paces towards her next lecture.

Even though I am an Asian international student and not an Asian American, I nonetheless connect with Kong's analysis of the campus climate. Even though Asians and Asian Americans are the largest demographic group in UCSD, they are not well represented in cross-racial activism. Thankfully, most students on campus are open-minded and do not contribute at all to racial tensions, but certain individuals have made the campus climate hostile to Asians and Asian Americans.

The most prevalent theme mentioned in Kong's work that I experience on campus is the perpetuation of the model minority myth by non-Asians as well as fellow Asians and Asian Americans. The idea is that, as an Asian international student, I should not be facing any academic difficulties because of my background. If for some reason I am facing difficulties in class I should be "ashamed" of myself for not letting my ethnicity and race down. This thinking perpetuates the idea that Asians are a monolithic group who are all Chinese or Indian taking STEM classes and getting mostly A's. My personal theory as to why such an attitude exists in campus is that many students, both Asian or otherwise, grew up in a competitive atmosphere which contains many Asians who fit this image to certain extents, so they come into college thinking that the people they'll meet in college will be similar to those they've met in High School.

Ultimately, I would not say that Kong's analysis on UCSD's campus climate has affected my own views on UCSD in a significant manner. Before arriving at UCSD, I was already aware of the concept of the model minority and the lack of Asian representation in race-related activism. That being said, Kong's analysis did present me of past events in UCSD's history such as the Compton Cookout, which explains why the current campus climate is in its current condition.