Asian Ethics and Identity in Theatre

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Asian Culture and Representation in the Arts

• Underrepresented in Theatre and Film in America
• Stereotypes in both Film and Theatre industries
• Lack of resources and opportunities for creative evolution for Asian American performers

• Read more on the Asian American Arts Alliance website: https://www.arts.gov/stories/magazine/2021/2/showing-strength-through-creativity-equity-and-access-arts-asian-americanpacific-islander/making-space-asian-americans-arts
Inspiration and the Project

• My own experience with casting, specifically in Colorado.
• Student Ethics Ambassador with Kevin Landis as part of his *Prologue* series.
• Colloquium for students, faculty, staff, and community members to learn and discuss Ethics in Asian casting and how we can better integrate cultures into our community.
• Guest speakers Chay Yew and Vanessa Kai to come to Colorado.
Chay Yew

• Stage director, playwright, and producer born in Singapore.
• Based out of NYC
• Known for Porcelain, A Language of Their Own, Half Lives and countless other works as a writer.
• Known for directing Ainadamar, Cambodian Rock Band, and Oedipus el Rey.
• Was Artistic Director at Victory Gardens Theater from 2011-2020.
Vanessa Kai

- Chinese American Film Actress
- First Generation
- Based out of NYC
- Known for *Kung Fu* (the CW), *New Amsterdam* (NBC), and *Gabriel’s Inferno: Part One* (Passionflix)
- Can discuss experience as a performer of Asian descent.
The Challenges of Ethical Casting in the Arts

• Accurate representation of Cultures
• Inclusivity in Diversity
• Will speak with Chay Yew and Vanessa Kai to hear their own experience with these issues during the talk.
Daniels Fund Ethical Principles: Integrity

• “Act with integrity in all situations.” - Daniels Fund Ethics Initiative
• Work to fight against stereotypes
• Represent cultures accurately when portraying them
• Work to advocate for fellow artists who are underrepresented, especially if you have the means

“INTEGRITY, THE CHOICE BETWEEN WHAT’S CONVENIENT AND WHAT’S RIGHT.”
-Tony Dungy, Uncommon
Daniels Fund Ethical Principles: Trust

• “Build trust in all stakeholder relationships.” - Daniels Fund Ethics Initiative

• Show Asian performers dedication to diversity

• Work towards building those relationships and allowing them to trust that they will be represented accurately
Daniels Fund Ethical Principles: Accountability

- “Accept responsibility for all decisions.” - Daniels Fund Ethics Initiative
- Be willing/able to make mistakes
- Work to improve
- Admit fault and strive to grow
Daniels Fund Ethical Principles: Transparency

• “Maintain open and truthful communications.” - Daniels Fund Ethics Initiative
• Include unbiased reasoning in casting choices and be willing to share thoughts regarding casting plays/films
Daniels Fund Ethical Principles: Fairness

• “Engage in fair competition and create equitable and just relationships.” - Daniels Fund Ethics Initiative
• Work to bridge inequity in Asian casting
• Base casting choices on the ability to fulfill the role accurately and justly
Daniels Fund Ethical Principles: Respect

- “Honor the rights, freedoms, views, and property of others.” - Daniels Fund Ethics Initiative
- Respect other cultures
- Strive for accurate representation
- Conduct proper research about cultures and identities
Questions?