

On The Murder of Vincent Chin, A Reflection. June 19, 2026
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On June 19, 1982, 44 years ago today, a vicious assault took place. Vincent Chin died from that assault on June 23. It was murder, and we have been remembering that murder ever since.

Vincent was assaulted simply because he was an Asian in the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong people. Tragically, that type of murder happens far too often. It happens particularly to those of us designated as “others” usually because of our ethnicity or our religion. Most of these murders go by with little recognition.

The murder of Vincent Chin however was different. It sounded an alarm and woke up the Asian community. We discovered **we had a voice**. That awakening was stirred by us Michigan Asian Americans - many who stand here today. **Vincent became a symbol for the injustice that we Asian Americans have endured for generations.**

American Citizens for Justice was born and still fights for that justice 44 years later.

In preparing for this reflection, I discovered that on this day 250 years ago Thomas Jefferson was writing the draft for the Declaration of Independence. He wrote that **we are all equal and are endowed by our Creator with certain Inalienable Rights, that among these God given rights are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.**

Vincent was tragically deprived of his pursuit of Happiness, his Liberty and finally his Life!

250 years ago, this nation was in the process of declaring our independence and trying to get things right. But sadly,

there were some unwritten exceptions to that Declaration. We still had slavery, so **except for “people of color”**, even though as one who taught color theory, I know that we Homo Sapiens are just different tints and shades of the same color. That also means **except for “other races”**, even though science tells us we are so close genetically that we can’t be divided into “races” or sub species despite our slightly different appearances. And **except for women**, who are at least equal if not superior to men in all the ways that matter.

Along with the “others” we Asians suffered greatly over the years. There were laws preventing our ancestors to even come here. We were murdered in mass and hanged. The assaults tragically continue. But **then** our national government didn’t round up our ancestors and deport or imprison them. That imprisonment didn’t happen until WW2 when in spite of CIA reports that Japanese Americans were among the most loyal ethnic groups in this country, our Japanese American families were incarcerated.

In Detroit, one church stood up for both the Chinese Community and later for the Japanese Americans when they were released from their incarceration.

In 1915, at the height of the Chinese Exclusion Laws, Central United Methodist Church in Detroit invited a few Chinese children to our Sunday School. That simple invitation grew into a Chinese Church at Central that lasted nearly 50 years. The Chin Family were members of that congregation and his memorial service was held at Central, as was the 40th anniversary of that service a few years ago.

During WW2 members of our congregation formed a Japanese American Friendship group and helped the nearly 900 Japanese Americans who came to Detroit after their

incarceration. Today members of five different Asian American Pacific Island ethnicities attend Central.

I mentioned the Declaration of Independence for several reasons. Yes, it was flawed but it set into motion some important concepts. Among them are its promise for **self-government and no kings**, and **its promise of Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness, endowed by our Creator, that it claimed was the role of Government to assist.**

On July 2nd, about two weeks from now, we will celebrate President Johnson's signing of **The Civil Rights Act of 1964. That Act, envisioned by Kennedy, outlawed discrimination based on "race, color, religion, sex, and national origin".**

That Civil Rights Act removed those excluded and gave us ALL, by law, the rights to Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

When President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 into law, among other wise words, he said, **". . . those who founded our country knew that freedom would be secure, only if each generation fought to renew and enlarge its meaning."**

The question today is, **"Are we fighting hard enough to both renew and enlarge the meaning of equality?"**

Today, we have a demonic national administration, a king want to be who acts more like a crime boss than president and whose stated intent is to destroy the gains we have made in equality, diversity, and inclusion - the very rights offered by our Declaration of Independence and made law by The Johnson / Kennedy Civil Rights Act. Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness are now systematically being denied to immigrants. Not criminals, but

hard-working people, whose crime rate is less than 2% of citizens per capita. Family's are divided, concentration camps are being built in our neighborhoods. A national pseudo police force was designed specifically to depriving them of their rights. **NO, Not "them"! US! Designed to deprive US of our rights, our Life, our Liberty, and our pursuit of Happiness! The opposite of the intent of the Declaration of Independence.**

When this demonic administration's ICE looks for "others" they ask, "Where are the Hispanics?" and, **"Where are the Asians?"** They are not searching for criminals. They are searching for people like us!

When national policies are immoral, they are not 'politics' - they are simply immoral!

Forty-four years ago, Vincent's tragic murder awakened us to work for justice. **Today we are faced with national policies that support the "othering" mindset that murdered Vincent and would strip us, yes US, from our Lives, our Liberty, and our pursuit of Happiness.**

We Asian Americans must do more than be awake, we must do more more than just speak, we must ACT.