Honouring our resistance, celebrating our stories
Asian Heritage Month, 2019

For Asian Heritage Month 2019, ETFO presents a series of four posters that conceptualize themes of diverse identities and journeys, stories of celebration and resistance. The premise of the set of posters is to celebrate the cultural contributions of Asian diasporic peoples here in Ontario, more so with a focus on text and images that speaks to the power of the Asian diasporic imagination. Highlighted in the narratives are the communities’ capacities to retain core elements of who we are, where we come from, voicing our own stories, sharing our own experiences and reflecting resistance through metaphor.

About the Writer

Sou is releasing a new book and has generously submitted four pieces of writing for this project. Three of them are poems, and one of them is an excerpt from a non-fiction piece she wrote for Granta on craft. All of the pieces speak to the theme of cultural production as a diasporic person.

Souvankham Thammavongsa: [granta.com/souvankham-thammavongsa-notes-craft/](http://granta.com/souvankham-thammavongsa-notes-craft/)

About the Posters

The following questions can be used as prompts to explore each poster:

- *What do you notice? In the text and in the image?*
- *What connections can you make to the text and the image? (Text to self, text to text, text to world)*
- *What questions do you have?*

**Poster 1**
The four poster series begins with Sou’s text, *When I make things.... a non-fiction piece she wrote.*

Sou’s passage speaks to the necessity of ‘voice’ as self-expression, power and identity, and that this need to articulate through art and writing one’s self is innate in everyone. Building off an Alice in Wonderland theme, Hana Shafi, the artist, creates a sense of wonder and whimsy in the image of the young South Asian girl. The character is falling down the rabbit hole, past chai, mangoes and pomegranates. Metaphorically, this speaks to the shock/trauma of displacement, but also the things that we bring with us as artists in the diaspora.

Additional question(s) to explore: *What survives? What do we retain?*

**Hana Shafi aka Frizz Kid** is a writer and artist. Known on Instagram for her weekly affirmation series, she is also the recipient of the Women Who Inspire Award, from the Canadian Council for Muslim Women. Her first book, *It Begins With The Body* was recently selected by CBC books as one of the best poetry books of 2018.

Website: [instagram.com/frizzkidart/](http://instagram.com/frizzkidart/)
**Poster 2**

Sou’s poem, Materials, conjures moments of childhood in the space of everyday items that were both present and absent in her life. Strong themes of displacement, isolation and belonging are represented in her selection of objects.

Both the poem and the illustration speak to the ways we survive and make the most of the resources that we have available to us. What seems like discarded items to others can be a source of inspiration, knowledge and growth for us and our strength is in our capacity to see this potential, hold things dear; to see what’s invisible to others.

Additional question(s) to explore: *What tools do we create for ourselves?*

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**Ness Lee** is an award-winning illustrator and internationally-exhibiting artist based in Toronto. She is a graduate of OCAD University with a Bachelors of Design in Illustration, and continues to explore her practice using a wide range of mediums such as ceramics, drawing, painting and mixed media sculpture.

Website: [nesslee.com/](http://nesslee.com/)

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**Poster 3**

In Sou’s poem, a spider weaves its own world, which comes from within. As diasporic people, we do the same, pulling from our skills, traditions, memories, landscapes and homelands. Beena Mistry’s art uses weaving as a metaphor for this resilience through creation.

Additional question(s) to explore: *How do we build new worlds for ourselves?*

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**Beena Mistry** is an illustrator and designer living and working in the Toronto area. By playing with shapes and colours, they like to create work that explores intersectionality. They hold a bachelor’s degree in illustration from Sheridan College and are the web art director for *Shameless* magazine.

Website: [beenamistry.com/](http://beenamistry.com/)

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**Poster 4**

Sou’s poem, entitled Poem for the Rain, is about love, compassion and longing as resistance, when faced with loneliness and isolation. Erin’s illustration speaks to the idea of “seeking” and the continuity of this search for connection in a world that can be cold to us in many ways.

Additional question(s) to explore: *How do we find each other? How do we make each other feel safe?*

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**Erin Taniguchi** is an illustrator and printmaker living in Vancouver, BC. Her work is influenced by spirituality, animals, yoga, handmade items, and printmaking methods, particularly relief printing. Erin works primarily in a combination of linocut prints and digital. Her illustration work has been featured in magazines in Canada and the USA.

Website: [erintaniguchi.com/](http://erintaniguchi.com/)

For a PDF version of the posters and for more information and resources on Asian Heritage Month, please see the link: [etfo.ca/buildingajustsociety/equityresources/pages/asianheritagemonth.aspx](http://etfo.ca/buildingajustsociety/equityresources/pages/asianheritagemonth.aspx)