I am truly delighted to become a part of this wonderful community of the Asian American Studies Program. I was born in South Korea and lived there until I came to the States in 2003 as a graduate student in Performance Studies at Northwestern University. I went to college in Seoul majoring in English. During my undergraduate years, I joined the university theater group as an actor and director. Guided by my love for theater, I took most of the dramatic literature courses offered by the English department. My first encounter with Asian American Studies was through readings of plays by numerous Asian American playwrights such as David Henry Hwang, Philip Kan Gotanda, Velina Hasu Houston, and so forth. Studying Asian American plays was an eye-opening experience for me at that time that enabled me to realize that theater is not merely a collective art form but a cultural representation that is inseparable from the history and political economy of larger society.

In 2003, I came to Northwestern as a graduate student in Performance Studies with research interests in Asian American Identity and Performance. My Master's thesis, "Performing Korean-Americanness: the Centennial Celebration of Korean Immigration to the United States" examines how Korean-Americans negotiate and perform their racial and ethnic identity during the year-long, nation-wide Centennial Celebration of Korean Immigration that took place in 2003. Currently, I am writing my dissertation on the political culture of post-Cold War South Korea. By examining Abductees’ Family Union’s successful political intervention that enabled them to press the South Korean government to pass a special law for returned abductees and continued on back
the families of the abductees still detained in North Korea, I intend to expose the ways in which national public memory is constructed and reconstructed in relation to changing national politics.

Although my research focus has shifted from the Asian American Studies to Studies of South Korean political culture and memory for now, I still would like to continue research on the Asian American Studies later on. Thus, I am very grateful to be able to have an academic connection to the Asian American Studies through my Graduate Assistantship.

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