

**Q. Could you introduce yourself, and share a bit about who you are?**

A. Hi, my name is Evelyn Leung. I'm a junior at the Academy of Saint Elizabeth, and I'm deeply passionate about art and writing as ways to tell stories that are often erased. Much of my work explores identity, memory, and AAPI history. As an Asian American student, I've become more aware of how often these narratives are left out, and I try to bring them back through storytelling and creative expression.

**Q. What inspired you to start the AAPI Youth Art and Writing competition?**

A. The idea really came from noticing how many talented AAPI students around me didn't have a space to share their voices. I also saw how AAPI history is often underrepresented in classrooms, which made me think about how storytelling could fill that gap. I wanted to create something that wasn't just a competition but a platform where students could explore their identities and speak up about issues that matter to them.

**Q. What went into picking out the theme for this competition?**

A. Choosing the theme was really important to me because I wanted it to feel open but also meaningful. I was drawn to ideas around identity, resilience, and visibility, because those are things I've personally struggled with and reflected on. I wanted others to feel like they could interpret the theme in their own way, whether that meant exploring culture, history, family, or even internal conflict. To me, the theme represents the idea that our stories are layered and deserve to be seen from multiple perspectives.

**Q. What did you hope would come from the competition, and has it been a success so far?**

A. My biggest hope was that students would feel seen and heard. I didn't want this to just be about winning a competition, but about creating a space where people could share something meaningful. So far, I do think it's been a success, especially seeing the range of submissions and how deeply people connected with the theme. In the future, I'd love to expand it, maybe include more workshops, mentorships, or even larger exhibitions. I definitely want to continue running the AAPI Youth Art and Writing Contest because I think it has the potential to grow into something much bigger.

**Q. Do you have a background in event organizing?**

A. Not at this scale. I am the president of both the Art Club and the Forensic Science Club at my school, where I've organized fundraising and smaller events, but this was definitely a much bigger step. I had to learn a lot as I continued to build this competition, from coordinating logistics to communicating with different people. I even reached out to over 500 schools across different states to invite students to participate in the competition. I also printed hundreds of copies of the flyer and went to local libraries and supermarkets to post them, just to make sure

the opportunity could reach as many students as possible. I'll admit it was stressful at times, but it also taught me a lot about leadership and problem-solving. Stepping into something unfamiliar was part of what made the experience so valuable.

**Q. What made you choose to work with the AAPI History Museum?**

A. Choosing the AAPI History Museum felt almost like a calling. Their mission to preserve and share AAPI stories aligned closely with what I wanted this project to represent. While attending a pre-college program at Brown University, I visited the museum and was amazed by how much Asian Americans have contributed to U.S. history, much of which I had never learned in a typical classroom. What resonated most were the personal narratives, since they made history feel alive rather than a distant event. I left with a sense of responsibility to help carry those voices forward. I am especially grateful to Jeannie for believing in youth and creating opportunities for the next generation to engage with our history.

**Q. What support did you have outside the AAPI History Museum?**

A. I was incredibly supported by my parents, peers, mentors, and community members who believed in this idea from the beginning. It was especially meaningful to have my art and writing teachers serve as judges, their trust and encouragement reflected a shared commitment to supporting the next generation of artists and writers. I was also genuinely amazed by how the community responded. Within just three days, I was able to raise over \$2,000 to help bring the program to life, which showed me how much people care about creating spaces like this.

**Q. What was one of the biggest challenges you faced?**

A. Starting something without a clear blueprint was the hardest part. There was a lot of uncertainty, especially balancing it with school, but it taught me that you don't need everything figured out to begin.

**Q. What advice would you give to others who want to start similar initiatives?**

A. Find something you are truly passionate about, and don't do it just for the sake of doing it. People can tell when something is genuine. Most importantly, don't be afraid to start before you feel ready. You will figure things out along the way, and the impact will come from how much you truly care about what you're building.