Chinese restaurant owners face labor crunch and other challenges

By Ling-Mei Wong

Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker’s Phase 1 reopening has brought customers back to hair salons and other select businesses, while restaurants remain open for takeout and delivery only until an anticipated reopening is allowed for restaurants and other businesses next week during the Phase 2 gradual reopening of the state.

Chinese restaurants especially have faced great adversity as they struggle to stay in business during the state’s shutdown. They had already taken a financial hit at the beginning of the year after Asian xenophobia spread and customers began shunning Chinese restaurants as news of the coronavirus breakout in China made headlines, tightening already thin margins.

“My restaurants closed in March and we reopened May 28 for takeout and delivery,” said Steven Chen, owner of Great Taste Bakery & Restaurant, Top Bread Bakery and Corner Café Bakery in Chinatown. “I had to let go of staff, and it’s hard to bring them back.”

Great Taste’s renowned dim sum and Cantonese dishes had diners packed cheek to jowl before the COVID-19 shutdown. Chen estimates demand now is perhaps 30 percent of what it was before the pandemic. The restaurant, located at 63 Beach Street, had its windows smashed by rioters last Sunday night, with no staff hurt or looting committed. It was one of several restaurants in Chinatown that had their windows broken.

Chen and a skeleton crew run the bakery restaurant, with most work

See page 2, Chinese Restaurants

Out

Uncertainty and safety weigh upon Taiwanese college students considering a return to US

By Carey Lin

As Massachusetts begins to slowly re-open, international students and recent-graduates that returned home must decide whether they will be coming back to the United States. Even those without visa-related issues, returning to the states at this time poses many challenges that may not be worth the risk for them.

“It’s a big decision definitely going back to the U.S. where the situation is worse,” said Rebecca Lee, a Boston University graduate who is currently home in Taiwan.

Lee is pursuing a master’s program of Human Nutrition and the Registered Dietitian Practicum this fall at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. Before that, she

These are uncertain times for students like Caroline Tung from Taiwan, who is attending Boston University, “It’s really just looking at the situation, and I’m definitely worried about going back,” she said. (Photo courtesy of Caroline Chung)

need to move out of her apartment in Boston this summer. “It depends on the situation in those cities and the reopening process and the consequences, and that’s something we’ll see in the coming weeks,” she said. “I think one of the biggest challenge is keeping my daughter safe.”

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Sampan publishes every other Friday. For more news, please visit Sampan.org or add us on WeChat
Chinese Restaurants
Continued from page 1
ers earning more on unemployment income.
"If we're getting $600 a week, which is more than they earned at the restaurant," Chen said, who also is co-

also need to implement sanitiza-

and received funds, but the one-time

financially, they need support from

service to takeout-only before the lockdown,

distributed to any individual; $30/year (2nd
to chops vegetables and answer

delivered using Door Dash (not sure

Food for Thought
An old school Santarpio’s Pizza, and one bucket list eatery checked off

their Peabody spot). It took two calls

customers and after the customer eats.
We work on how to hire new employ-

an Acton nursing home and died. Her
sons are very sad. This is the most dif-
cult." Through Sumiao’s grief, she

for writing a letter to their landlords and requesting deferred

business owners, she said. The

their pizzas is first the dough, then

by Anna Ing

The reproduction, in whole or in part, of any information contained

their pizza dough fresh using a secret

upper crust delicious. It was extra

top of the thick crust. Though we

step of the process. Taste is easy. The

if we were able to place our order for

For Pandemic Paycheck Protection

her husband, of unknown causes. “The
grandparents helped us raise up our

in their original East Boston

20 blocks away. We were told that our

tasted was extra cheese, this pizza was not

Simple style of pizza to fully enjoy the

her. We have support from

local customers, along with people in

president of the Chinatown Business

there to get there in less than a five minute

in a rotisserie oven and is cooked at 549 degrees Fahrenheit degrees until well done. The
crust had nice blackened bubbles and was crispy, but the middle part was a slightly soggy and

customers earning more on unemployment income.
"If we're getting $600 a week, which is more than they earned at the restaurant," Chen said, who also is co-

But first, we need to implement sanitiza-

tion procedures before we receive

also need to implement sanitiza-

tion procedures before we receive

in 1903. Currently, they only have

In its fourth year, this local establishment

in the neighborhood only two blocks away. We were

told that our pizza would ready in

30 minutes. They are a trek from the nearest Blue Line T Station, but you can get there in less than a five minute

from Logan Airport in a car.

For Pandemic Paycheck Protection

Secondly, we felt the out of the way

able to eat more than usual. Plus, I did

them. We are shaking. Mentally, they need sup-

port for all their difficulties during this challenging time.”

SAMPAN
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Embracing diversity and promoting understanding.

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by Anna Ing

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One of my Boston bucket list plac-
es to try has always been Santarpio’s

so the outbreak was personal. She was able to raise nearly $20,000 for

local hospitals and clinicians in Wu-

han, who in turn sent masks and PPE to America when the virus arrived. The restaurant also donated 100 meals

to Boston Medical Center’s Medical

we were able to place our order for

in 1903. Currently, they only have

in their original East Boston

Our restaurant,” Chen said, who also is co-

and answer phones, along with enlisting share-

ers to pack food. As of now, the business has broken even.

“We haven’t lost any money so

at a small size or single slices available) (we

toppings, next sauce and finally moz

with the anchovies for $18 at San-

“square topping, next sauce and finally moz

“I did the Wuhan project to sup-

port, using food as a bridge from our

customers to the Wuhan outbreak,”

Sumiao said. “We have support from

local customers, along with people in

Wuhan before opening her restaurant,

She is also on the board of Massachus-

ets Restaurant Association, which

has shared safety protocols. Sumiao

and Steven Chen have both applied

for Pandemic Paycheck Protection

and received funds, but the one-time

loan does not go far enough for small business owners, she said.

“The restaurant association found

a template to help small restaurant

owners for writing a letter to the

landlords and requesting deferred

rent,” Sumiao said. “Financially, they

are shaking. Mentally, they need sup-

port for all their difficulties during this challenging time.”

by Anna Ing

Painted on their sign is Joe Fats, the

of cheese and not much toppings.

First starting selling pizza in 1933, but

the anchovies for $18. They have a

sage, pepperoni and extra cheese with-

famous characters who as President John F Kennedy,

singer Paul Anka, Boston Celtics Lar-

ry Bird and actor James Gandolfini.

accordingly, I need to have a more

simple style of pizza to fully enjoy the

crispy and thin crust. Though there

was extra cheese, this pizza was not

as greasy as I feared. In fact, with the

meat cooked under the cheese, I was

able to eat more than usual. Plus, I did

not need to put a napkin on it to sop

off the usual excess grease.

We felt we got a decent pizza with

a solid thin outer crust, plenty of meat
toppings, and fresh ingredients. On

the flipside, we felt the out of the way

location, limited to no Frills menu, and

cash only as cash. One of the charms I

missed was the retro bar/dining room

filled old paneling with photos on the

walls including such famous people

which as President John F Kennedy,

singer Paul Anka, Boston Celtics Lar-

ry Bird and actor James Gandolfini.

So hope I can go back to try their food

again if I happen to be in the area.

The entrance of Santarpio’s Pizza in

East Boston. (Photo by Anna Ing)
Massachusetts prepares for Phase 2 gradual reopening

By Ken Smith

Gov. Charlie Baker provided more details of the state’s Phase 2 gradual reopening this week. The administration will determine the start of Phase 2 on June 8, but June 8 has been the anticipated start date.

Details of the reopening of the second phase would be approved through executive order, with a detailed list of sectors that fall into Phase 2.

The order, in part, will allow Phase 2 businesses to bring back employees through a “new normal” that will determine the start of Phase 2 reopening this week. The administration will issue work safety guidelines for restaurants, lodging and hotel businesses, which will be applied during the Phase 2 gradual reopening as detailed in the order, May 29.

The administration issued workplace safety guidelines for restaurants and lodging. “These workplace specific safety standards are organized around several categories covering Social Distancing, Hygiene, Personal Protection Equipment, Staffing, Operations and Cleaning and Disinfecting,” it stated.

Outdoor dining will begin at the start of Phase 2, and indoor dining will be allowed after public health data is reviewed, and indoor seating arrangements will have to allow for safe social distancing between patrons.

The social distancing guidance outlined states that restaurants must space “tables six feet apart with a maximum party size of six people. The use of bars, except for a separate table seating, will not be permitted. For hygiene protocols, utensils and menus should be kept clean through single use or with strict sanitation guidelines, reservations or call ahead for seating is recommended and contact less payment, mobile ordering or text on arrival for seating will also be encouraged.

In addition, restaurants must clean and disinfect in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control guidelines. “This includes closing an establishment temporarily if there is a case of Covid-19 in an establishment,” it was stated.

For hotels, motels and other lodging businesses, they too will be allowed to expand their operations in Phase 2. “Lodging safety standards apply to all forms of lodging including hotels, motels, inns, bed and breakfasts, short-term residential rentals including Airbnb and VRBO,” it was stated.

Still awaiting approval for reopening are event spaces, like ballrooms and meeting rooms, which are to remain closed. “On-site restaurants, pools, gyms, spa, golf courses and other amenities at lodging sites may operate only as these categories are authorized to operate in accordance with the phased reopening plan,” it was stated.

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Rules of all the leagues are developing. The facilities, however, will remain closed to the public.

day camps can open “with activity restrictions.”

As for child care, some of the guidelines stipulated include: daily screenings for fever and respiratory illness; non-contact temperature readings for anyone entering the facility; rooms that are at least 6 feet apart; and limits on 10 children with masks encouraged for children under two years of age if they are within six feet of other children.

Retail stores will also be allowed to open and “will transition from curbside pickup and delivery-only to browsing and in-store transactions with restrictions at the start of Phase 2,” the governor said in a statement on Monday.

Guidelines for retail stores as stated by the governor’s office and the DPH are that “Each retail store must monitor customer entries and exits and limit occupancy at all times to the greater of: 8 persons (including store staff) per 1,000 square feet of accessible, indoor space; or 40% of stated occupancy as documented in its occupancy permit on record with the municipal building department of other municipal record holder. Retail stores for which no permitted occupancy limitation is on record may rely on the 8 persons per 1,000 square feet method.”

The following are state guidelines for restaurants, lodging and hotel businesses that will be applied during the Phase 2 gradual reopening as detailed in the order, May 29.

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Opinion

One breath, one vote

By Natalie Brandt

“I can’t breathe!” They are the last words of George Floyd. They are also the gasps of the many people struck ill with Covid-19; they are the cries of those who live with inner and outer turmoil. All genders, all races, all ages may at one time in their lives, rest heads in hands while calling out “This is killing me!”

The same plea of George Floyd “Don’t kill me!” Hearing Mayor John Heart complain, “My stomach hurts, my neck hurts, everything hurts.” Relating to the struggle of breath, as someone or something metaphorically presses a knee on your neck. I’m hoping now George Floyd’s calls for help can be a voice for all who can not breathe.

Look at these numbers: 58% of 100 percent. What is your opinion of this ratio? Is it an A grade according to the grading scale in college board this ratio? Is it an “F” grade according to your personal voice for all who can not breathe. George Floyd’s calls for help can be a voice for all who can not breathe. What's it in reference to?

The peaceful protestors taking to the streets do so as a free expression to scrutinize injustice, and past actions of inequality. George Floyd’s death is the final fuel to the fire as it burns a light for society to move forward out of the darkness. The same peaceful protests happening all over the world, rallying the cry, “We can’t breathe!” Protesting to our governments for change that must happen. We all are a new point of demanding change and justice in our country.

Aren’t you tired of the lies and deceit of the past four years of this presidency? Of the loud and clear acts of dishonesty, in return for the personal gain of more money and more power? The impression of the intentional goal of creating falsehoods, confusion and fear? It is time for change, and that can happen by having your voice heard by voting. Not only in this election, but also in the local elections. For local government is the messenger, carrying our demands for justice and change. And our voices will be heard loudest when we all show up at the ballots in this year’s election.

Natalie Brandt is a mother and wife, and writes from Cohasset.

Strokes don’t stop because of Covid-19

By Dr. Lester Leung and Kate Skeels, NP

Right now is a frightening time for all as we fight against the global coronavirus pandemic.

Many of you are frightened to come to the hospital or the Emergency Room at this time. However, strokes don’t stop because of Covid-19. Traumatic injuries don’t stop because of Covid-19. My team and I and all of the stroke centers in Massachusetts want you to know: if you are having stroke symptoms, please call 911 and come to the hospital. We can treat stroke. We will do our best to keep you safe and get you home or to rehab as quickly as possible.

To remember stroke symptoms: remember to BEFAST:
B is for balance — if you suddenly start falling to one side, this is may be a sign of a stroke.
E is for eyes — if you suddenly lose all or part of your vision, this is may be a sign of a stroke.
F is for face — if you develop weakness or drooping on one side of your face, this is may be a sign of a stroke.
A is for arm — if you suddenly lose strength or drooping on one side of your body, this is may be a sign of a stroke.
S is for speech — if you lose the ability to speak, slurred speech, or understand others, this is may be a sign of a stroke.
T is for time — we can now treat many strokes up to 24 hours after the onset of symptoms, but you can’t wait — every minute that passes, millions of brain cells are dying, so please call 911 and get here fast!

The ambulance will call ahead to activate our Stroke Team so we can get you evaluated and treated as soon as possible.

Please stay safe and keep adhering to social and physical distancing, and remember — if you have stroke symptoms, BEFAST and seek medical attention!

Dr. Lester Leung and Kate Skeels, NP, work at the Comprehensive Stroke Center at Tufts Medical Center.

Affordable Housing Lottery

Hanover Westford Hills
1 Westford Hills Road, Westford, MA

3BRs @ $449, 2BRs @ $397, 1BRs @ $1,907

*Rents subject to change in 2020. Utilities are not included. Tenants will pay own gas, electric, cooking gas, hot water, electricity, and water.

Hanover Westford Hills is a 180-unit rental apartment community located at 1 Westford Hills Road, Westford. 36 Units will be made available through this application process. Of these units, there is a mix of 1BR, 2BR, and 3BR apartments, and one 3BR townhome available. Westford Hills is a distinctive apartment community. The project will include residential amenities such as a professionally landscaped courtyard, resort style pool, and BBQs for outdoor grilling. The project will also include a clubhouse with a demonstration kitchen, fitness center, cinema, conference room, children’s room, and television. Unit finishes will be the highest end in the market place. Kitchens will contain a breakfast bar, frameless cabinets, stainless appliances, stone countertops, tile back splash, and wood-style flooring. Living rooms will feature 9’ ceilings, wood- style flooring, and track lighting. Bathrooms will have carpet flooring, and bathrooms will include frameless cabinets, framed mirrors, garden tubs with tile surround, natural stone countertops, and porcelain tile flooring. Future built conditions may vary.

MAXIMUM Households Income Limits:
$37,800 (1 person), $43,200 (2 people), $48,600 (3 people), $54,000 (4 people), $59,350 (5 people), $62,000 (6 people)

Completed Applications and Required Income Documentation must be received, not postmarked, by 2 pm on July 21st, 2020.

A Public Info Session will be held on June 22nd, 2020 at 6 pm where questions about the lottery and the development can be addressed directly. The session will be available via YouTube at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HR9d8mFfVlE (or just search “SEB Housing” in YouTube and click thumbnail for Hanover Westford Hills) and via conference call at (425) 436-6200. Code 962027

The lottery will be held on August 4th, 2020 at 6pm on YouTube at: https://youtube.com/watch?v=HR9d8mFfVlE (or just search “SEB Housing” in YouTube) and via conference Call (425) 436-6200. Access Code: 962027

For Lottery Information and Applications, or for reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities, go to www.sebhousing.com or call (617) 782-4900 (x1) and leave a message or e-mail SEBHousing, 275 Hillside Ave, Needham MA 02494. For TTY Services dial 711. Free translation available.

Affordable Housing Lottery

Halstead Salem Station
72 Flint Street, Salem, MA

Eight 1BRs @ $1,625*, Free 2BRs @ $1,777*

*Rents subject to change in 2020. Tenants will be responsible for paying utilities; gas heating, hot water, cooling, electricity, water and sewer. This community is smoke free. Pets are allowed. Each affordable unit will have access to a parking spot on site.

Halstead Salem Station is a luxury apartment community located in Salem, Massachusetts. The prime location is walking distance from downtown Salem and from the MBTA commuter rail, with direct access to Boston in as little as 26 minutes. Apartments offer high-end features and finishes such as 9-foot ceilings, stainless steel appliances, gas stove tops, plank flooring, modern cabinets and countertops, and the latest smart home technology from Latch, Butterfly, and EchoBe. The community offers a wide variety of amenities including a fitness center and a roof deck with grills and a turf area for outdoor games. There will be 13 affordable apartments ready for occupancy starting in Summer 2020. All affordable apartments will be rented to households with incomes at or below 80% of the area median income through this application process.

MAXIMUM Household Income Limits:
$67,400 (1 person), $77,000 (2 people), $86,650 (3 people), $96,200 (4 people)

A Public Info Session will be held on June 10th, 2020, at 6:30 pm via: YouTube Live Stream https://youtu.be/9fEj9bVbD94 (or just search “SEB Housing” in YouTube) and via conference Call (425) 436-6200. Access Code: 962027

Completed Applications and Required Income Documentation must be delivered, or postmarked, by 2 pm on July 14th, 2020. Applications postmarked by the deadline must be received no later than 5 business days from the deadline.

The Lottery for eligible households will be held on July 28th at 6:00 pm via YouTube Live Stream https://youtu.be/9fEj9bVbD94 (or just search “SEB Housing” in YouTube) and via conference Call (425) 436-6200. Access Code: 962027

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June 5, 2020
Sampan
Surprising advantages of distance education in an unpredictable world

By Christopher John Stephens

Since 1998, I’ve taught English at some of the finest colleges and universities in the Boston area. Some of the smaller institutions have been absorbed into larger ones. That’s the logical end result of the business known as education. We strive to teach, to educate and to give back, but if the school providing the education is unable or unwilling to adapt to the changing times and meet new students’ needs, it will naturally and logically disappear.

Each of these places where students went to acquire knowledge, and where I went to provide that service, has confronted the reality of Covid-19 in their own ways. University campuses quickly shut their doors in mid-March, one after the other, and by the end of the month, societal priorities shifted to the more urgent need of testing people for the virus, hospitalizing those with a positive diagnosis, and, in some cases, using dormitories as makeshift hospital rooms.

Perhaps the greatest benefit from over two decades as a part-time college English and adult education ESL teacher has been the opportunity I’ve had to experience all types of teaching environments. I’ve been a small sandbox teacher running across the length of a huge ocean coastline and a huge skyscraper in a small village. It’s always changed depending on student enrollment and the needs of the market. But the constant force that runs through every one of these environments has been my own motivation to meet the needs of my students, no matter the physical environment and unpredictability of the surrounding world. My goal has always been to make the classroom a safe place where language is acquired, knowledge is absorbed, and ideas shared without fear of retribution. Beyond a degree or even a certification of completion, that’s always the greatest reward from any educational experience.

It’s not news to anybody that Covid-19 has dramatically impacted our culture and infrastructure since its outbreak. We’ve lost over 100,000 people in the US alone, and millions worldwide in any of our lifetimes. The educational fabric of our culture has not always effectively met the needs of the coronavirus has exposed that sad truth more than anything else. Educators who can easily adapt to online learning had no Avenue to do so. Many have struggled to keep up with demands, getonline.com classrooms, scho-

Tufts University is offering emergency grants to nonprofits in its host communities to help them implement services associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Emergency response grants of $1,000 each will be awarded to Medford, Somerville and Brighton nonprofits, and a separate fund will provide grants to organizations in Boston and Grafton. Applications will be accepted from May 23 to June 26, 2020, and will be awarded on a rolling basis. Organizations are encouraged to apply as soon as possible.

“These grants will help local organizations address pressing community needs that may include food insecurity, emergency equipment purchases, or educational supply needs. An applicant must be a registered nonprofit (501(c)) that serves a Tufts host community (Medford, Somerville, Boston, or Grafton).”

Lisa Perry, associate director of Tufts’ Government and Community Relations team, has been in close contact with community partners in the neighborhoods surrounding the university’s Boston campuses—the Health Science Campus in Chinatown and the School of the Museum of Fine Arts Campus in Fenway and Mission Hill—about what they most need right now.

“Nonprofit organizations supporting our host communities have had to cancel spring fundraising efforts, which often support significant portions of their annual revenue,” she said. At the same time, “their services are in great demand and their costs are rising. Our emergency response grants can help, as we know our neighbors are relying on our nonprofit community partners during this difficult time.”

Laurie Ferguson of Tufts Now can be reached at laura.ferguson@tufts.edu. For more information, contact the office of Government and Community Relations at 617-627-3780 or communityrelations@tufts.edu.

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“Nonprofit organizations supporting our host communities have had to cancel spring fundraising efforts, which often support significant portions of their annual revenue,” she said. At the same time, “their services are in great demand and their costs are rising. Our emergency response grants can help, as we know our neighbors are relying on our nonprofit community partners during this difficult time.”

Laurie Ferguson of Tufts Now can be reached at laura.ferguson@tufts.edu. For more information, contact the office of Government and Community Relations at 617-627-3780 or communityrelations@tufts.edu.

Surprising advantages of distance education in an unpredictable world

By Christopher John Stephens

Since 1998, I’ve taught English at some of the finest colleges and universities in the Boston area. Some of the smaller institutions have been absorbed into larger ones. That’s the logical end result of the business known as education. We strive to teach, to educate and to give back, but if the school providing the education is unable or unwilling to adapt to the changing times and meet new students’ needs, it will naturally and logically disappear.

Each of these places where students went to acquire knowledge, and where I went to provide that service, has confronted the reality of Covid-19 in their own ways. University campuses quickly shut their doors in mid-March, one after the other, and by the end of the month, societal priorities shifted to the more urgent need of testing people for the virus, hospitalizing those with a positive diagnosis, and, in some cases, using dormitories as makeshift hospital rooms.

Perhaps the greatest benefit from over two decades as a part-time college English and adult education ESL teacher has been the opportunity I’ve had to experience all types of teaching environments. I’ve been a small sandbox teacher running across the length of a huge ocean coastline and a huge skyscraper in a small village. It’s always changed depending on student enrollment and the needs of the market. But the constant force that runs through all of these environments has been my own motivation to meet the needs of my students, no matter the physical environment and unpredictability of the surrounding world. My goal has always been to make the classroom a safe place where language is acquired, knowledge is absorbed, and ideas shared without fear of retribution. Beyond a degree or even a certification of completion, that’s always the greatest reward from any educational experience.

It’s not news to anybody that Covid-19 has dramatically impacted our culture and infrastructure since its outbreak. We’ve lost over 100,000 people in the US alone, and millions worldwide in any of our lifetimes. The educational fabric of our culture has not always effectively met the needs of the coronavirus has exposed that sad truth more than anything else. Educators who can easily adapt to online learning had no Avenue to do so. Many have struggled to keep up with demands, getonline.com classrooms, scho-

Tufts University is offering emergency grants to nonprofits in its host communities to help them implement services associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Emergency response grants of $1,000 each will be awarded to Medford, Somerville and Brighton nonprofits, and a separate fund will provide grants to organizations in Boston and Grafton. Applications will be accepted from May 23 to June 26, 2020, and will be awarded on a rolling basis. Organizations are encouraged to apply as soon as possible.

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Ask Dr. Hang

I have mixed feelings about being Chinese-American. My parents were born in China and I was born in the U.S., so I don’t feel like I am either “Chinese” or “American” enough. I am fluent in English, but my Chinese is limited; I don’t know anything that’s “Chinese” other than eating Chinese food with my family and having extended family members in China, whom I don’t communicate with. But in the U.S., people always see me as just Chinese or Asian first, even though I feel more “American” than Chinese or Asian. I feel like I’m too “Americanized” to fit in with other Asian kids, and I’m too Asian to fit in with White kids. Where do I belong?

Firstly, you are not alone in struggling with your cultural identity and belonging. So many immigrants and children of immigrants in the U.S. have similar struggles. Your questions now indicate your readiness to explore answers for yourself.

Your exploration may start with learning of other people’s experiences. You can begin by describing your own. There is a lot of research on ethnic and racial identity if you are interested in academic papers, but if you’d rather hear others’ experiences of grappling with their identities, you can read great books written about this topic.

Some of my personal favorites are The Woman Warrior by Maxine Hong Kingston, African American Born Chinese by Gene Lun Yang, and The Joy Luck Club by Amy Tan (and a few others). There are great books written about this topic.

To submit your questions to the Ask Dr. Hang column, please email editor@sampan.org.

Disclaimer: The advice offered in this column, its author, and the column is intended for informational purposes only. This column, its author, and the newspaper and publisher are not responsible for the outcome or results of any advice given, or the actions following any advice in any given situation. You, and only you, are completely responsible for your actions.

FOR SALE – Completely renovated through a pilot program from MA Department of Housing and Community Development and NewVue Liabilities to Assets, Inc. 3-Bedroom home with easy access to shopping and transportation. Stu...
Councillor Wu hosts livestream Q&A for Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

By Ling-Mei Wong

Boston City Councillor Michelle Wu hosted a livestream discussion for Asian Pacific American Heritage Month on May 22, with guests (clockwise from top right) UMass Boston Institute for Asian American Studies director Paul Watanabe, VietAID executive director Lissette Le and Chicken & Rice Guys owner Ian So. (Image courtesy of YouTube)

Boston City Councillor Michelle Wu hosted a livestream for Asian Pacific American Heritage Month on May 22, with guests (clockwise from top right) UMass Boston Institute for Asian American Studies director Paul Watanabe, VietAID executive director Lissette Le and Chicken & Rice Guys owner Ian So. (Image courtesy of YouTube)

June 5, 2020 Sampan

By Venerable Master Hsin Yun, Founder of Fo Guang Shan Temple

Disasters, calamities and accidents are common natural disasters that occur throughout the world. Every day we live amid danger and fear, afraid of what will happen to us next.

Walking down the street, we might get stabbed because we accidentally bump into the wrong person or look in the wrong direction. Driving down the freeway, we might be assaulted by an attacker. Even in the mall, our purses could mysteriously disappear while we're trying on new shoes. No matter where we are, danger awaits us. Fear has become a part of our lives.

After a devastating earthquake that topples concrete buildings, we question the safety and durability of our homes. After a killer hurricane that sweeps across our hometown and causes massive landslides, we begin to wonder how many times we have to endure such destruction.

We are also vulnerable to man-made calamities. Drive-by shootings and environmental pollution have become everyday headlines in the newspaper. No matter where we are, it seems there is no escape from danger and fear. Everywhere we turn, we are exposed to harm and risk.

Since the early 1980s, we have lived in the shadows of AIDS, and the situation has yet to show sign of improvement. It is still a worldwide epidemic despite advances in medical research. The “3 in 1” cocktail, a new AIDS treatment, can only delay the onset of the disease, it is not the cure that everyone has been hoping for. Therefore, AIDS remains the Black Death of the twentieth century.

In recent years, an increasing number of computer users have taken advantage of the unlimited resources on the Internet. More people have logged on to the various chatrooms available on the worldwide web. At the same time, unfortunately, more and more perpetrators have used the Internet to distribute child pornography and lure children away from the security of their homes. Nowadays, parents have to worry when they are taking their children on the computer to surf the Internet. They are always worried whether their youngster will get out of sight.

The world has changed, and our homes are no longer exempt from unwanted intrusions and danger. Even when the U.S. economy prospered and the unemployment rate was at an all-time low, people still worried about inflation and the rise of interest rates. At the slightest hint of an economic slowdown, investors panic and the stock market suffers dramatic changes. In everyday life, it seems like the world is full of bad news.

When we turn on the television or read the morning paper, all we hear and see are reports of foul play and destruction. Murder, air pollution, ethnic strife and war in third world countries, natural disasters, and other negative stories have made us more apprehensive of the world in which we live.

Thus, we anxiously wait for the moment when everyone will be free from danger and fear, the moment when everyone will enjoy everlasting peace and security.

To attain that goal of freedom from peril and apprehension, steps must be taken by the authorities, as well as by ordinary citizens. The government must enact laws that will guarantee justice, equality and happiness for all. It must always take into consideration the interests and well-being of the people and pass legislation that will ensure personal and public safety. Individual rights and freedom must be respected at all times, including the right to a life without fear and danger.

Freedom from fear

By Venerable Master Hsin Yun, Founder of Fo Guang Shan Temple

From all of us on the frontline at South Shore Health to all of you in our beloved South Shore community.

Thank you for your support

Learn the latest on COVID-19 and the steps we're taking to keep you safe at SouthShoreHealth.org/Safety
Musings from China

Due to the disruptive patterns imposed by the coronavirus over the course of the spring term, middle schools are not required to write formal tests in China—at least for the time being. In the city of Guiyang, where I teach at a private middle school, we are still waiting for official word to be announced from the Ministry of Education about formal testing protocols and procedures (if any) at the end of the term. Final second semester studies are expected to wind down sometime during the third week of July. Summer vacation will begin then.

The challenge of accommodating the Chinese national curriculum across subject areas using online, WeChat formats was difficult to manage to say the least.

Many students failed to maintain adequate levels of interest, and it became a daunting task to monitor student progress in a real-world sense. Parents could not replace the role of teachers at home, and so homework assignments quickly became a heated topic of discussion. Both reviewing topics with students and parents, and trying to evaluate the qualitative results of student work, brought many open-ended questions and concerns to the table.

Virtual learning has both advantages and disadvantages, with respect to training outcomes and expectations. Curricular materials can be provided and objectives outlined, but, in this case, the teacher’s role was limited due to the constraints of the software employed. Educators across China have had to adapt their instructional strategies, while trying their best to fit curricular materials in an independent collaborative manner; collating items as needed, in the process of synthesizing materials to work around the limitations of Western materials in middle schools—but in high schools Western resources remain okay to use as needed.

Dualities of digital media effects, video-conferencing, data tracking learning fingerprints can work some of the time, but it soon quickly fragments Socratic experience, and does little to capture the true essence of an open classroom milieu that invites curiosity and motivation to elicit creativity of mind.

My students are now back in the full swing of things. Presently our Cambridge guides complement the standard Chinese curriculum, albeit this will soon end as China’s national education policy has forbidden any formal use of Western materials in middle schools—but in high schools Western resources remain okay to use as needed.

As a consequence, both Chinese and foreign language English educators in our school are now adjusting their learning materials to work around the mandated changes. We are presently in the process of synthesizing materials in an independent collaborative manner; collating items as needed, in expectation of the Fall semester’s academic goals.

Inside my classroom, students enjoy a lot of interactive learning. I draw them into tasks that involve both paired and group based investigations. Cooperative activities such as supporting the development of oral and written communication skills in an integral manner, especially when it is grounded in self-actualization exercises. They are invited to demonstrate their understanding on the chalkboard, and through the use of our classroom’s digital projector system. Having a good sense of humor and showing a playful side of oneself when working with children is very important. They soon catch on and do the same. This makes for a very lively and entertaining classroom experience that everyone enjoys.

Learning must be fun! This proactive atmosphere is achieved in my classroom by allowing students to express themselves as independent, creative and critical thinkers. Sometimes I use a simple plastic beach ball to evoke responses—as a means to loosen up the mental space. The classroom of the future invites individuals who can express ideas freely, and not simply regurgitate dry facts like mindless gray automatons. We have provided ample opportunity for them to find their own voice, as we examine a wide range of universal topics, from China’s place in today’s world, to the impact of technologies on the physical and cultural environment.

Today, June 1, for example, is International Children’s Day in China, and our students have organized many unique social activities for teachers to be involved in with them on our outdoor playing field. Namely, cooperative games that allow us to share our deeper understanding of human values. Universal ideas are a common thread that helps unite the world to build life-long friendships.

Columnist James Mercer with his middle school students in Guiyang, Guizhou, China, as they enjoy outdoor games on Children’s Day, June 1. (Photo by James Mercer)