I am part of a generation of Asian-Americans who cannot speak the languages of their grandparents, who cannot fathom the struggles of their immigrant elders, and cannot begin to comprehend the extent of cultural disconnect between generations. This body of work is born through my yearning to understand and know my predecessors. My work is an attempt to reimagine the past and reconstruct stories that portray familial relationships and individual identities.

Political disturbance and prior sibling immigration caused my mother to leave the Philippines for the United States. The loss of city paperwork in the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906 allowed my paternal grandfather to become, many years later, a “paper son” and gain U.S. citizenship while the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was still in place. Through intimate mediums of artist books and poetry, I create physical embodiments of family stories.

I utilize the book itself as an art object as well as a vessel for images and poems, exploring the relationships between form and format to enhance the viewer’s experience of individual narratives. Furthermore, the use of artist books as a medium allows me to invoke the “storytelling” significations of the book, while utilizing the linear sequential nature of book structures to reflect movement through time.

I have always been fascinated by the marriage of image, text, and sculptural form in artist books. Language is the material of the poetic art form. The narratives expressed through my artwork distort temporality to access other historical, cultural, social, and political environments. By repeating these family stories, they are renewed and relived through the reader. This thesis contributes voices to a collective “Asian-American experience” by following stories of ancestors who have carved out places for themselves and their families in the United States. I intend to preserve narratives that may otherwise disappear by recording them through my work.