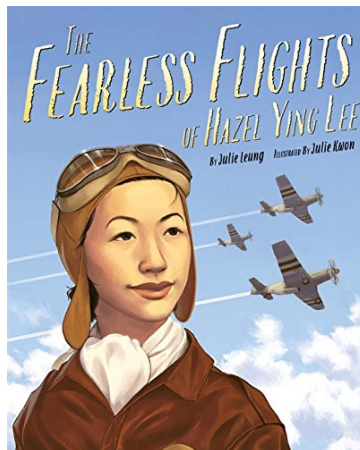


**Second Reaction: *The Fearless Flights of Hazel Ying Lee* –
Breaking Barriers and Boundaries**

Julie Leung. *The Fearless Flights of Hazel Ying Lee*. New York, NY: Little
Brown Books for Young Readers, 2021. Print.

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This touching and powering biographical picturebook illustrates Hazel Ying Lee, a Chinese American girl, chasing and achieving her dream to be the first Chinese American woman to serve the U.S. military during the era of the Chinese Exclusion Act and World War II in which Chinese American women were subjected to multiple forms of oppression, including pervasive racism and gender inequalities. *The Fearless Flights of Hazel Ying Lee* is a story that highlights the heroism of Chinese Americans and their significant contributions to the United States during World War II.

Unlike other historical realistic stories about Chinese Americans in which the oppressors are often hidden and not named (Rodriguez & Kim, 2018), *The Fearless Flights of Hazel Ying Lee* delves deeper into the Chinese American racialized experiences within a White-dominated society under the Chinese Exclusion Act. The book provides a nuanced and detailed portrayal of the discrimination and obstacles faced by Chinese Americans during this period, shedding light on the distinctive ways Chinese Americans were racialized under discriminatory laws. For one thing, the book names the oppressors. For example, after Hazel Ying Lee earned her flying license, she wondered, "American didn't want to hire the Chinese. And who would hire a Chinese girl pilot?" For another, the book illustrates the unique racialized experience of Chinese Americans being perceived as "perpetual foreigners" (Tuan, 1998). For example, when Hazel encountered a farmer in Kansas after her plane landing, the farmer mistook Hazel, a Chinese American woman, for being Japanese and subjected her to discriminatory treatment based on that misperception.

The Fearless Flights of Hazel Ying Lee provides a multilayered depiction of the severe discrimination and racism targeting Chinese Americans during the Chinese Exclusion Act. It highlights the systemic barriers and injustice faced by people of Chinese descent in the historical context, including racial segregation ("not allowed in certain parts of the town" and Hazel was not allowed to be buried in a Whites-only cemetery), exclusion from citizenship ("had to carry identification" all times), and employment discrimination (Hazel were only allowed to work as an elevator operator). By presenting the nuanced experiences of Hazel Ying Lee, the book illuminates the impact of racism and discrimination on Chinese American individuals and communities. It provides access points for classroom teachers to bridge the ongoing struggle for equity and justice.

Unlike some picturebooks which focus solely on the adversity Chinese Americans endured,

The Fearless Flights of Hazel Ying Lee depicts the heroism of a Chinese American female, Hazel Ying Lee, who had strong self-determination and courage to overcome significant barriers to achieve her dream of a lady pilot. For a prolonged period, Chinese Americans' hard work and contributions to this land are uncovered, hidden, and ignored in the dominant discourse. Students, especially students of Chinese descent, have limited chances to learn about their historical counterparts in the larger contexts of American history in and out of school setting, neither their racialized experiences nor their heroism in fighting for social and racial justice. This picturebook serves as a valuable counternarrative to fight against the model minority stereotype, which positions Chinese Americans and other Asian American ethnic groups as good citizens who are not subject to racism.

The picturebook provides multiple access points for young readers to understand the historical episodes. For example, the Chinese American author, Julie Leung, mentioned the year several times and provided the historical background in the book. One is when Hazel Ying Lee informed her family that she wanted to become a pilot, the author provided the historical background, "It was 1932, and less than one percent of pilots were women". It highlights one of Hazel's barriers and boundaries – gender inequality and sheds light on how her gender posed significant obstacles to her dream of becoming a pilot and the discrimination she encountered as a woman in a male-dominated profession.

Works Cited

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About the Author

Wenyu Guo is an assistant professor of Literacy Studies at the University of South Florida. Her research focuses on bilingual education, racial literacy, multicultural children's literature, and qualitative research methodologies, specifically how K-8 culturally and ethnically diverse students (particularly of Asian descent) negotiate agency, power, and racial realities against the backdrop of dominant racial discourse, current educational policies and practices, and larger international contexts.