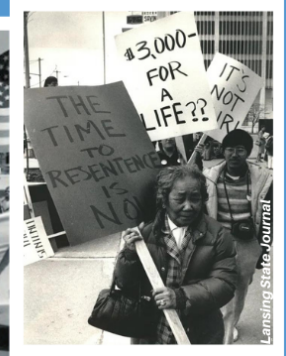


**Korematsu Institute
Statement
Remembering
Vincent Chin
on the 40th Anniversary
of his Murder**



**FRED T.
KOREMATSU
INSTITUTE**



"We must tell the American people this is wrong." - Lily Chin, mother of Vincent Chin*

Forty years ago, on June 19, 1982, Vincent Chin was hunted on the streets of Detroit and attacked with a baseball bat after a verbal fracas in a bar. His injuries were so severe, that he was taken off life support and his life officially ended on June 23, 1982. What had begun as a celebration of his marriage on June 19 ended with his funeral just before his scheduled wedding on June 28, 1982. His murderers, two white men who shouted racial slurs at Vincent, served no time in jail with their only penalty being three years of probation and a \$3,000 fine with court costs.

In a city filled with racial animosity towards its Asian residents as "the other" and hostility towards all things Japanese due to smaller Japanese cars requiring less gas being imported into the US auto market during a gas crisis, the system debated whether Vincent's murder should or even could be considered a hate crime. The judge determined it was not. Not only were the Japanese-based racial slurs against Vincent, with a Chinese background, not based on fact, but the ignorance, his murder, and the callousness and lack of consequences showed a lack of respect for the entire Asian American community through the loss of one man's humanity. His life had worth beyond his fiancée, his mother, his friends, and his country of origin.

Vincent's death galvanized a new pan-Asian American community to come together to demand fair treatment, seek the protection of basic civil rights and advocate for justice, and also for change. Then, as now, in a time of political division, renewed racial reckoning, and heightened violence against Asians, we ask that all Americans be treated equally and fairly.

Before he slipped into a coma, Vincent's last words were, "It's not fair." And he was right. Social responsibility should be learned at an early age. Respect for oneself, one's family, and one's whole community and what binds us all together should be sacrosanct. No one individual, no single group, is self-contained. We live together, we go to the same schools, the same churches, the same hospitals, and we all affect each other. We are all links that join a community. We should learn about and respect the differences of all our members while also respecting the sacrifices and contributions they have made to our collective culture.

What does it mean to be an American? Are some of us more American than others because of the languages we speak among family, the traditions practiced in our homes, or the origins of our grandparents? No. Of course not. The rise in AANHPI violence and hate speech since 2016 has shown us that some things change, but some things stay the same. But there are more people unwilling to let injustice stand. And even though forty years have passed, it still shouldn't cost a man his life to make us all understand our shared humanity. And it still shouldn't take a grave injustice and outrage to make us unite to stand up for what is right. We must continue to move forward, strive to speak up when we see a wrong in the world, and advocate for what is right, whether it affects one man who senselessly lost his life on a street in Detroit in 1982 or everyone today. This is about all of us.

* Lily Chin: The Courage to Speak Out", Helen Zia, Advancing Justice, Los Angeles

[LINK](#)