

Lily Chin - Vincent Chin: The Courage to Speak Out excerpt

The following text includes modified text and excerpts from Helen Zia's article on "Vincent Chin's Story / Lily Chin: The Courage to Speak Out."

<p><u>1. The Main Idea</u></p>	<p>In the 1980s, the American auto industry was going through some difficult times. Hundreds of thousands of auto-workers lost their jobs because automobile plants and industries were closing while Japanese cars were selling very well in America. The automobile industry used to be a major part of Detroit, Michigan until Japanese cars were imported. Americans purchased Japanese cars because of gas efficiency and cheaper prices. Many American auto-workers lost their homes and financial stability.</p> <p>On June 19th, 1982, twenty-seven year old Vincent Chin was at a bar with his friends celebrating his bachelor party. He was engaged and was about to be married. At the bar were some automobile workers, Ronald Ebens and Michael Nitz, who saw Vincent and his friends and assumed he was Japanese. They started blaming Vincent for the problems Detroit was having in regards to the automobile industry closures and Vincent argued back.</p> <p>When Vincent fought back, Ebens and Nitz chased him around the streets of Detroit. When the night was over, the two men had beaten Vincent to death by swinging a baseball bat to his head several times. His 400 wedding guests went to his funeral instead.</p> <p>Several months after Vincent's death, the two men were in criminal court and were charged with probation and a \$3,000 fine. Both men did not serve time in jail or prison. Lily Chin, Vincent Chin's mother, was outraged that the two men were only given probation and fines for her son's death. She rallied and protested and went to community gatherings to speak about the injustice done to her only son.</p>
<p><u>Evidence:</u></p>	<p>Often speaking through tears, Lily Chin would say, in halting English, that she didn't want any other mother to lose their child as she did.</p> <p><i>"Lily Chin's bravery inspired Asian Americans of all ages and backgrounds to speak up against hate crimes in their own communities"</i></p> <p>Numerous Asian American groups all over the country organized for equal justice and against hate violence because of Lily Chin's willingness to raise her voice.</p> <p>I met Mrs. Chin at a small meeting at the Golden Star Restaurant in Ferndale, where Vincent had worked nights as a waiter. It was right after Judge Charles Kaufman let Vincent's killers off with probation and a fine for their brutal hate crime.</p> <p>Mrs. Chin sat in the back of the room as people discussed the legal options. Everyone could hear her sobs throughout the meeting. But when it was unclear what direction the community might take, Mrs. Chin stood up and said in her firm voice, "We must tell the American people this is wrong."</p> <p>In that moment, everyone could feel Mrs. Chin's courage and strength. Even in her deepest</p>

Lily Chin - Vincent Chin: The Courage to Speak Out excerpt

2. Author's point of view of Lily Chin

personal pain, she was able to stand up and press forward. It would have been far easier for Mrs. Chin to suffer privately than to bare her raw feelings over and over again. She relived the details of her son's terrible tragedy hundreds of times, telling the story to strangers, reporters, to television cameras—each time reliving the pain, all in the pursuit of that **elusive** thing called justice.

The Pledge of Allegiance that Mrs. Chin took so long ago when she became an American citizen contained a promise: "with liberty and justice for all." Mrs. Chin knew very well what that meant and she wasn't fighting for her son alone. She declared from the very beginning that she hoped that no other mother would have to feel the pain that she did, losing a child to violence.

Some people call Mrs. Chin the "Rosa Parks of Asian Americans"—and she was indeed. She stood up and refused to accept what was handed to her. Her courage rang through her **grief**, touching all who could hear. For me and hundreds and thousands of others, it was a call heard far and wide, uniting Asian Americans and people across this country.

Her dignity, strength, and bravery stood in sharp contrast to those who said that nothing could be done. Mrs. Chin stood up to show millions of Americans that something could indeed be done.

Evidence:

Mrs. Chin's special caring qualities and honesty made her the kind of person whom others looked up to and were willing to follow—an **inspiring** leader with her courage and integrity. She was so much more than a symbol of injustice and a mother's grief, which were the images that the media had captured so movingly.

Lily Chin reminds us that here is still much to be done, and that there is a terrible price to pay if we don't speak up. Lily Chin, a dear mother who emigrated from China and spent a lifetime working in restaurants, laundries, and factories so that her son could have a better life, showed us what is possible—and what we are all capable of. Her shining example of standing up and speaking out, even when it is most difficult, is an inspiration for all people who value fairness, equality, and justice in society.

Source: [Full text available online](#): Helen Zia. "[Vincent Chin – Lily Chin: The Courage to Speak Out](#)" *Untold Civil Rights Stories*. Los Angeles: 2009. [Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles](#) website.