To the Whom It May Concern,

As a queer woman from a low-income household of Vietnamese refugees and with a formal education and deep involvement in UCLA's ethnic studies department, I am deeply aware of what it means to both face and fight institutional marginalization. I have a clear investment in learning about diaspora studies, having minored in it in college and worked as a peer mentor for SouthEast Asian students. I strive to educate myself beyond the marginalized experiences I identify with, and continually engage with Black American advocacy by attending workshops and events.

In my previous position at Wellinks, I was a key member of the DEI committee. I presented on the political struggles and successes that different Asian-American groups have faced throughout history while also holding smaller workshop sessions with AAPI identifying colleagues. There, we fostered camaraderie and safety, while continuing to discuss how best to advance the voices of women of color in our predominantly male, white teams.

My advocacy for justice extends to design justice as well, and I continually apply this in my technical roles. Access to resources on the web is a human right, and we must take steps to ensure that the web remains democratic and accessible. To address my own biases as an able bodied person, I began my journey into design ethics by becoming certified by the W3C Web Accessibility Initiative in digital accessibility.

I strive to live these ideals in my spare time as well, working as an ESL tutor for Seattle's Asian Counseling and Referral Service. The course is offered for free to English as a Second Language learners in the greater Seattle community. I tutor several Cantonese-speaking students, who are mostly new immigrants, in weekly hour-long sessions over ten-week increments. By conducting instruction in their heritage language, I am able to create a learning environment that is comfortable and comprehensive.

As a product designer, I would love to implement accessibility standards across all multimedia materials. This would involve making use of both digital and print capabilities by providing alternative forms of content access whenever possible. Translations in languages like Spanish, Vietnamese, and Amharic should be available to better reach new immigrant student communities. Additionally, closed captioning could be made available for video content to serve our hard of hearing community members. People of all backgrounds deserve access, and I would ensure our work reflects that understanding.

Warm Regards,
Vanessa Ta