



hardboiledberkeley.edu

Nov 2014

issue 18.2

hardboiled

THE ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN NEWSMAGAZINE!

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18.2 hardboiled

NOV 2014

hb meetings
Wednesday 283 Dwinelle
at 6:00 - 7:30pm
hardboiled.berkeley.edu
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ABOUT THIS COVER

This month, the 8th annual Celebration of Asian Pacific American Womyn was held to recognize the work APA women do in our lives and in this community. The carnations on our cover is often used as a symbol of motherhood and love, appropriate as we celebrate women this month. In this issue, we talk about feminism and womyn soldiers, as well as highlight voices from our communities through our interviews. Just as there is a carnation in the front, we at hardboiled hope to push important issues - including women's issues - to the forefront.

editors' note

UC Berkeley has introduced me to so many badass unapologetic feminists. I am really proud that this year's **hardboiled** managing team affirmed the fact that **hardboiled** is a feminist and Asian Pacific American magazine. This year's core retreat really set the tone that **hardboiled** is a space for fierce and bold leaders to ensure that diverse APA perspectives are represented. My peers at **hardboiled** have nurtured and instilled my passion for advocacy. With all of these things considered, I have so much to be thankful for this year.

I thought I knew it all when I was a first-year. By "all," I had assumed that APA advocacy consisted of the model minority myth. Through **hardboiled**, I was challenged to think outside of the box—I was encouraged to consider other intersections of the APA identity, like gender and sexuality, socioeconomic status, and refugee and immigrant movements. In this way, **hardboiled** painted a more vivid and diverse portrait of the APA community than what I was originally familiar with.

This organization and publication has been my go-to safe space. **hardboiled** has given me a space in which community agreements allow students to have open dialogues about issues that are important in our spaces. It has made me aware of privilege, and how it can be detrimental to other folks who lack certain privileges. It has also taught me how we can use our privileges to step up and step back to give space for other folks to speak and teach.

On the other hand, this knowledge has made me hyperaware of my own existence. As an APA woman in an interracial relationship, it has made me more cautious of who is watching and who might be judging my choices. It has made me more aware that some folks might think that a white man is fetishizing me as an APA woman. It reminds me of the discussions and concerns I have had about films like *The World of Suzie Wong*, *yellow fever*, and *white knights*. These contexts makes me insecure about myself, and have also made me wish I did not give a shit about social/cultural/historical contexts about APA women and their non-APA partners. It recently made me angry that I needed to defend my own relationship and argue my partner and I had conversations about fetishization and cultural appropriation. All in all, these criticisms made me consider the fact that ignoring my history may be easier than engaging with APA history. It made me think that my values concerning inclusivity and progress were too critical and ambitious, even inhibiting my ability to integrate back into non-Berkeley life.

This recent doubt regarding my participation in progressive APA spaces was alarming. I had weighed that ignorance was easier than engaging with my history. However, after much thought and discussion, my doubt also reminded me that these issues concerning our intersectional identities and our histories are imperative for progress. Talking about these issues can initiate a safe space for change. Even more urgent, safe spaces are increasingly important in today's world. The discussions we have in the APA progressive community challenge us to push for the best—to be inclusive, understanding, and considerate of where we came from and what we can do to enact positive change.

As Co-Managing Editor, I admit that I do not know it all. However, **hardboiled** has given me the space to facilitate critical dialogues to learn and engage with different perspectives. This community has shown me true selflessness, passion, and leadership. It has given me the space to rant and heal. More personally, **hardboiled** has helped me strengthen my values, and given me the resources to understand why APA activism is so important in today's cultural landscape.

hardboiled, I will miss you. I would like to extend my warmest hugs to my **hardboiled** managing team for laboring alongside me in this tumultuous, yet incredibly empowering space this semester. I also want to thank the OGs—Kassie Pham, Steven Cong, Sam Lai, Jenny Lu, and Kat Wang—for nurturing me, encouraging me to be bold in this space from day one.

I love you all!

always in **bold**,
Soph

in this issue...

- 03 I Too Am Racialized by lydia brown | layout by katherine wang
- 04 Dear White People by katherine wang | layout by monica xue
- 05 Bill Maher by kitty lui | layout by cynthia huang
- 06 CAPAW by sam lai | layout by valerie tsai
- 07 New Wave of Feminism by sam lai | layout by valerie tsai
- 08 Dammit Janet by sophia ng | layout by katherine wang
- 09 Womyn Soldiers by mai zong her | layout by brandon doan
- 10 Interview with J layout by evy peng
- 11 Grad School by steven cong | layout by jason kim
- 12 Interview with jeff chang by tracey fung | layout by katherine wang

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I, too, am racialized

TW/Content: Brief discussions of violence and ableism, detailed discussions of racism and racist microaggressions. by **lydia brown**

I am constantly expanding my understanding of myself, my identity, my life, and my experiences as a racialized subject—what I mean by this is how I am made to have a race in my society and culture. I am Han and was born in China. I appear to be East Asian. Yet while I identify as a person of color, I am also transethnic. I am a transracial, transnational adoptee. My parents are white Americans of European descent. I was raised in Melrose, Massachusetts, a culturally white neighborhood in a city that is over 91% white. When I was a child and usually physically accompanied by my parents, I experienced the benefits of white privilege through my white parents. It is really only since coming to college at Georgetown University and being physically separated and thus, dissociated, from my parents that I have increasingly experienced the violence of racism against me (especially in everyday racial microaggressions). Yet I have also become keenly aware of how I still benefit from the intersections of class (middle-class-ish) privilege, education privilege (I attend an elite four-year university), light-skinned privilege, and sometimes still white privilege (as when people assume from my name only that I am white, as it is not a stereotypically Black or Asian or Latin@ or Native/Indigenous name) and socialization as white.

For example, other people often assume that because my speech/writing patterns come across as articulate or eloquent, I must be educated (in my case, I am), and therefore, must also be upper-class/money-rich (in my case, I am not), and therefore, must also be white (and in my case, am also not).

In another example, I have frequently gone to check-in or registration desks at events or conferences and given my name so the staff person could check me off the list, only to receive confused comments about my not being white because my name was assumed to belong to a white person.

Yet I also had an encounter a year ago with the DC Metropolitan Police Department that at the time left me floored and shocked, but now comes as no surprise to me. After speaking to a white officer for about half an hour (including answering his questions), he excused himself for 15 minutes and returned with an East Asian officer who spoke to me in Mandarin (a language I don't know or understand). When I said that I don't speak Mandarin, the East Asian officer gave the white officer an annoyed expression and said, "Dude, she speaks English." The white officer actually replied with, "How is that even possible?" I was standing less than a few feet away from them during this entire time.

(Sometimes people who appear East Asian, and probably are also Chinese, approach me and speak to me in Mandarin, but that presumption on their part doesn't carry the same baggage as when non-Chinese people—though especially white people—assume that I speak Mandarin or any other East Asian language, or that I don't speak English.)

Since then, I have also had innumerable incidents during which complete strangers or acquaintances whom I'd met maybe a few minutes beforehand have intrusively and repeatedly asked about my ethnicity, ethnic background, national heritage, national origin, real place of birth, ancestral heritage, etc. This is even after I politely deflected. The presumptions behind these interrogations are that a) I must not be from the U.S., b) they are entitled to this information despite being perfect strangers, or that c) of course, I have a race and ethnicity, but they are just "normal" or "regular" Americans. White people also frequently compliment me on my accent when I speak English, whereas most people who appear to be white would never be complimented on their accent when speaking English without an obviously foreign accent.

Perhaps this is only quasi-related, but I also distinctly

remember an experience when a South Asian friend (who is darker than me but also relatively light-skinned compared to many darker-skinned people of color) casually referred to me as a "white girl." The tone and context suggested that this was an offhand comment made as an observation of fact. Essentially, this person used the same tone someone might use to introduce me as their activist friend, rather than a tone that someone would use for an insult or sarcastic comment. This brief incident also made me more conscious of the fact that I definitely benefit from residual white privilege from my upbringing and socialization as white.

In another example of how I continue to benefit from conditional white-passing privilege, when I called the police to tell them that I would be leading a protest in their jurisdiction, my articulate, unaccented English combined with my name probably led them to assume that I was white, money-rich/upper-class, and educated—and therefore not violent and not dangerous and not a threat. If on the other hand, I had an accent on my English, a possibly Black or Latin@ (or maybe even Middle Eastern or South Asian) name, or did not sound as articulate when I speak, I might not have had such a cordial conversation with the police. They may have turned out in larger numbers to intimidate us the next day. They might have treated us as security threats either explicitly or implicitly. Even though there were darker-skinned people of color at the protest in question, because there were several white and light-skinned people (and more of them than dark-skinned people of color), and because I was the person who called in advance, we were probably not interpreted as a potential threat. (There may have been other factors in this presumption, but these were certainly part of it.)

I am also aware that as an Asian American novelist, if and when my novels are published, I may become the subject of dismissive criticism or extremely surprised acclaim among mainstream reviewers for writing about characters from Serbia, Pakistan, Iran, Yemen, Israel, and Germany on the basis that I am Chinese. Yet white authors who write about characters of races and ethnicities other than their own generally only receive similar, substantive criticisms from people of color, but often receive praise for realistic portrayals of their characters' cultural backgrounds and identities in mainstream media and similarly are assumed to be able to write from a "universal" perspective.

I am constantly learning and growing in my desire to be a better ally to Black and Brown folks in our quest for racial justice. At the same time, I am continually learning about the many ways in which my intersected experiences of privilege and marginalization have shaped me as a transethnic, transracially and transnationally adopted, Han Chinese American, East Asian person of color. I frequently learn where I have done wrong by my darker-skinned people of color friends, fellow activists, and colleagues, and am trying to learn how to hold myself accountable for my participation in racist and white supremacist structures.

For example, in an older post on Autistic Hoya, I referred to Black people/African Americans/Africans as "blacks" (I think while also referring to white people as "whites"), and more recently, a Black friend of mine corrected me. I learned that using the term "blacks" to refer to Black people is dehumanizing and carries racist, white supremacist baggage. Because I am not Black or darker-skinned, I benefited from the privilege of never having had to learn this. In fact, if I hadn't changed my language and acknowledged the fuck-up, I would have faced minimal to no social or legal consequences.

My experiences have been complicated by the fact that while I am visibly East Asian/person of color, I have been socialized as white and therefore have benefited frequently

from residual white privilege or conditional white-passing privilege, but also experience the reality of white supremacy and racism in my life. Living in the United States definitely impacts my experiences. For example, I know that my ethnic group, Chinese people, remains one of very few specific ethnic groups to have had a law specifically banning us from entering the United States in the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, along with Japanese people in the 1907 Gentlemen's Agreement, because of racism (and the myth of "yellow peril"). But in another example, I am also keenly aware that the form of white supremacy prevalent in the United States has historically and currently displayed its most overtly violent racism toward Black people/African Americans/Africans, Indigenous and Native peoples, and more recently, Latin@/Hispanic people. In Spring 2014, I spent a semester studying abroad in Jordan, where the racial and ethnic demographics and politics are radically different from those in the United States. Being a U.S. citizen also means that I must learn how to become accountable for my role (passive, inadvertent, unwanted, or otherwise) in perpetuating U.S. imperialism, especially in majority-POC parts of the world.

Most people who know me are familiar with my work for disability justice and civil rights. Sometimes, I experience the reductionism that happens when people hyper-simplify my identity and work to disability-only. But in the wake of continued racism (systemic and in microaggressions) in the disability communities, it is imperative for me to emphasize that I am not merely disabled but also racialized. It is impossible for me to separate my experiences as autistic and disabled from my experiences as East Asian, Chinese, Asian American, and person of color.

This is why I am frustrated and disappointed when much of the visible leadership of the disability rights community is white (or if not white, able to pass consistently for white). That includes many high-level state and federal government appointees, board members and executives in disability rights organizations, high-profile activists and public speakers with disabilities, and disabled scholars, theorists, researchers, and professors of disability studies. This is also true of the autistic rights/neurodiversity movements as well as the disability rights movement at large.

This is also why I am frustrated and disappointed, as well as profoundly saddened, when cases of violence, abuse, and murder with disabled white victims receive significantly more attention than those where the victims are disabled people of color. Don't get me wrong—I am happy that over 150,000 people signed the December 2011 petition demanding accountability after nine-year-old Chris Baker (who is autistic and white) was punished by being put inside a bag and left in a hallway. But how many people in the disability community paid attention to the 2011 case of Reginald "Neil" Latson (who is autistic and Black) when he was wrongfully tased, beaten, arrested, and imprisoned? His case received notice, to be sure, but at least a good majority of the people of whom I know attempting to publicize his case were also people of color.

This is also why I am frustrated and disappointed when disability activists speak about racism as though it's over, or dismiss racism as irrelevant to ableism, as well as when organizers for racial justice are completely ignorant to disability issues, or dismiss ableism as simply non-existent or unconnected to racial oppression and white supremacy. Just as I cannot separate my disabled identity and experiences from my racialized identity and experiences, I cannot recognize ableism without recognizing how it is affected by racism, or recognize racism without recognizing how it is affected by ableism. I frequently center my work on disability justice, but the struggle for racial justice is my struggle too.



DEAR WHITE PEOPLE

by katherine wang

I had high hopes for *Dear White People*. The movie featured an all-Black cast about race relations and Black experiences in a white society. The producing team is diverse, with Justin Simien, an African American, at the helm and a crew that consists of Black, Latina, and Asian American writers and producers. The movie was literally crowdfunded in its beginning stages. It seemed every bit a victory for communities of color, to be able to see a movie like this make it onto the big screen nation-wide. And it is—don't get me wrong. Yet, when I came out of Shattuck Theater that night, I was left with more than a few questions and a vague sense of disappointment.

I feel like I should make a disclaimer here—that I am not from the Black community and cannot speak directly for the experiences that were portrayed. But many underlying themes are prominent in our discussions here at hardboiled and in the API community—definitely including the racist frat parties (Duke University, looking at you). Both

the pressure to assimilate and the struggle to hold on to cultural identity is especially personal, as are its commentary on the racial barriers that still await young people of color in higher education and in the professional world. And of course, there was a sense that this movie could bring to the forefront the issue of race in America in a way few others have in the past.

But while *Dear White People* touches on many important issues, it never really pushes them. In the end, the movie about a racist blackface party proved to be no more than simply a movie about a racist blackface party—despite the movie's attempt to start a greater discussion. That's not to say that blackface is not a serious issue or that the fact that one of the largest entertainment companies has backed a movie so explicitly about racism, however limited in its scope, is not important. But blackface parties is merely one surface-level manifestation of racism, and the danger is that by narrowing the focus, the white audience might think that all that needs to be solved is blackface in frat parties (and maybe not touching black people's hair) when the Black community—and all people of color—continue to face systemic inequality in every facet of society."

It is in his characters Simien tries to pack more, but they ultimately end up more as caricatures than human. One of the characters actually literally categorizes them for us. Coco is the "oofa," someone who adjusts her blackness depending on the environment. In Troy, we see the "nosejob" who rejects his blackness in the struggle to assimilate and to live up to his father's expectations. Lionel struggles with filling the expectations of both his Black and white classmates (oh, and he's gay and listens to Mumford and Sons). Other characters—the Black Student Union and Troy's father (the dean whose rivalry with the privileged, white university president allude to the challenges of people of color in the professional world)—remain even less developed. Despite moments of self-awareness, most of the characters end the movie as they were in the beginning. And the one character the movie does spend a lot of time with grows

in a way that seems to undermine the boldness of the movie.

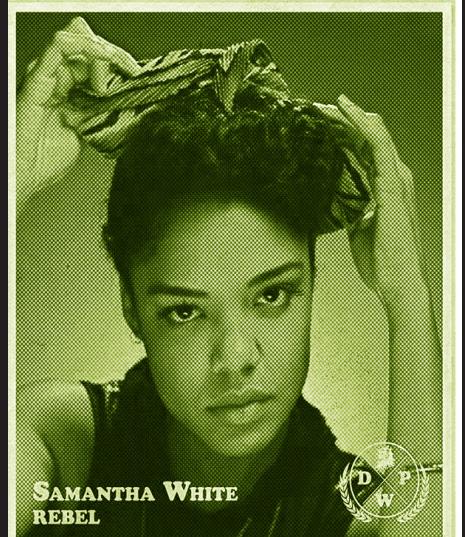
The most uncomfortable part of this movie for me was the growth of Sam, who runs the titular college radio show "*Dear White People*" and leads the Black Student Union, a group of black activists on campus. Sam, who is mixed race, struggle with having to "choose one side," afraid to openly date the white man she loves. But at the conclusion of the movie, her decision to accept this man into her life is coupled with the decision to turn her back on the Black Student Union and the radical space. Increasingly, the movie paints the Black Student Union—and with it, radical activism—as unreasonable and overly demanding. The trailer had put these student activists at the forefront, but the movie tore them down—and with it, pushed a message of moderation that left me with a bitter taste.

There are other things to address—most importantly the fact that the movie paints race relations as a binary when

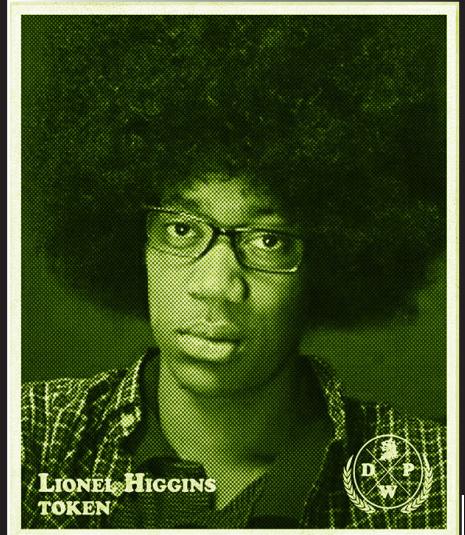
we as APA students understand it is not. There is an Asian American woman in the Black Student Union whose presence was not explained for much of the movie. The punchline when the students realize there is an Asian American Association across the street? "You guys have better snacks." The actress has stated that her role was meant to challenge the stereotype that

Asian Americans were apolitical, but she stays very much in the background. There is also a rare moment where the Asian American and Chicano organizations on campus support the Black Student Union as they charge into the blackface party, but we hardly even see the faces of the other students.

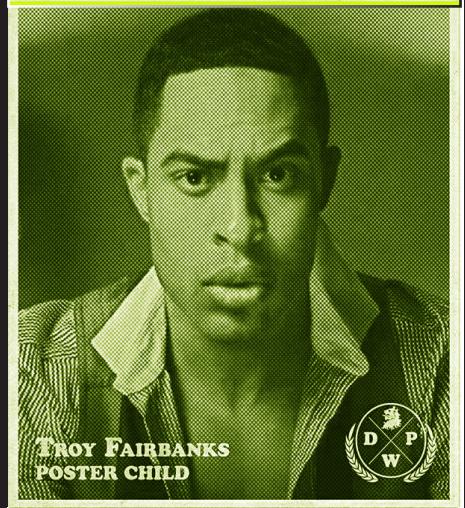
One thing is for sure. *Dear White People* lives up to the name: it truly was written for white people. It is clear the sacrifices that the movie made in order to fly under the radar, to be "revolutionary" without being controversial, to bring up race without making its white audience too uncomfortable with their own whiteness. All the same, I was honestly surprised at the amount of white people who did come to see the movie. Perhaps for a white person, this is a conversation starter. For those who never even think about race and their own part in racism in this society, maybe it'll bring up questions. Or maybe most white Americans will just pat themselves on the back for never having done blackface and move on with their lives. I could recognize the struggles that each character was going through, but wondered even as I watched it if the white members of the audience could similarly understand the difficulties of navigating a society that is filled with stereotypes and barriers for people of color. It's also important that the movie chooses to focus on micro-aggressions in the confines of a fictitious Ivy League school with an all middle-class cast and completely ignores socioeconomic disparities and a lot of other issues that continue to be invisibilized and discredited. In the end, the movie manages to be both too safe and too ambitious—carefully pushing a plot that won't ruffle feathers while attempting to allude to deeper struggles through its characters. Of course, I still do give credit where credit is due. *Dear White People* is certainly an important start, even if there is still a long way to go.



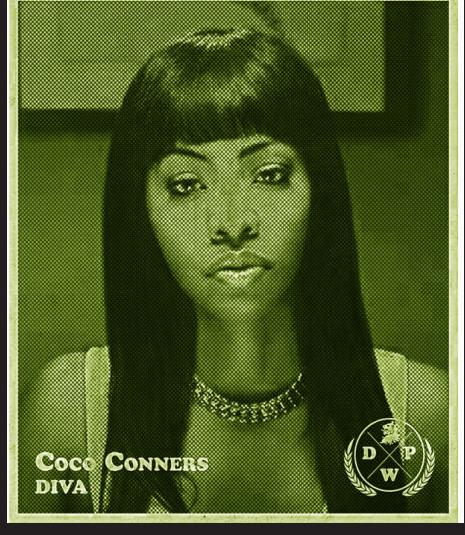
SAMANTHA WHITE
REBEL



LIONEL HIGGINS
TOKEN



TROY FAIRBANKS
POSTER CHILD



COCO CONNERS
DIVA



Bill Maher has made his career as a “comic” and television personality off of incessantly spewing bigotry. His ignorant remarks include racist comments such as calling President Obama a “blackie” in 2012; condoning and making light of misogynistic acts of violence towards womxn such as choking, slapping and rape (he once wrote that in order for Hillary Clinton to secure a presidential nomination, “She just needs to raise a lot of money, she needs to woo a key group of super delegates, and she needs Reverend Jeremiah Wright to rape a white woman.”); and making uneducated, slanderous claims about religion.

These offenses only scratch the surface of his charm. His most recent comments about Islam have generated severe mainstream backlash with high-profile actors, scholars and journalists such as Ben Affleck, Reza Aslan, and Rula Jebreal hitting back hard to assert that Maher’s

comments are racist, bigoted and offensive. In an interview with Salon.com on October 10, 2014, Aslan, a scholar on religion, stated that Maher’s “criticism of Islam has really crossed the line into what can only be described as frank bigotry.”

Aslan continued, “When he starts decrying how many babies born in Europe are named Mohammad, [saying] things about Muslims in America ‘bringing that desert stuff into our world’ – that is no longer just simple criticism of religious doctrine or practice. That’s a very specifically targeted animosity towards a particular group of people. You don’t see him saying things like that about other religious groups...”

On his HBO talk show, Real Time with Bill Maher, last month, Bill Maher claimed that, “Islam is the only religion that acts like the mafia that will fucking kill you if you say the wrong thing.” These are one of Maher’s many anti-Islam comments that create an extremely hostile environment for most Muslim, Arab, South Asian, and African Muslim communities who are monolithically marked as threatening and violent in mainstream discourse. Islamophobic racists also target non-Muslims because they often do not differentiate between certain religions and races, nor do they separate religion from race. These kinds of comments also justify perpetual US invasion, occupation, and meddling in the Middle East, North Africa, and parts of Asia.

Despite Maher’s racist and sexist history, UC



freedom of speech,” Navid stated, “In fact, I would argue that the students’ freedom of speech is being shut down by elevating [Maher’s] voice...You’re putting him in a setting where we can’t even question back...a commencement speech isn’t set up to have dialogue and that’s where the problem lies.”

In fact, on November 17, the Associated Students of the University of California at Berkeley (ASUC), which is the campus’ elected student government, has invited Bill Maher to participate in an open panel debate on campus to emphasize that the true preservation of free speech enables a

Bill Maher

by kitty lui

I hate Bill Maher because he is a hateful man. And this man has just been invited to speak at UC Berkeley’s fall 2014 graduation ceremony.

multifaceted debate with critics.

Additionally, through his HBO show and many other mainstream platforms, Maher’s voice is already significantly privileged over that of almost all student voices.

The student group that had originally chosen Maher to be the commencement speaker has now voted to rescind the invitation following overwhelming outrage on campus. However, in a blatant disregard for student democracy, Chancellor Nicholas Dirks refuses to honor this vote and is welcoming Maher to campus.

This move from Dirks is extremely hypocritical in light of the infamous email on “civility” that he sent prior to the 50th anniversary of the Free Speech Movement. Many regarded this email itself as an attack on free speech. According to the academic Vijay Prashad:

“Civility is the new term of campus debates – it has been a way to police faculty members whose academic records are strong, but

whose political values are not along the grain of the status quo. If you ‘rock the boat’ with your opinions, you are uncivil. The charge is to remember the FSM, an uncivil action, in civil

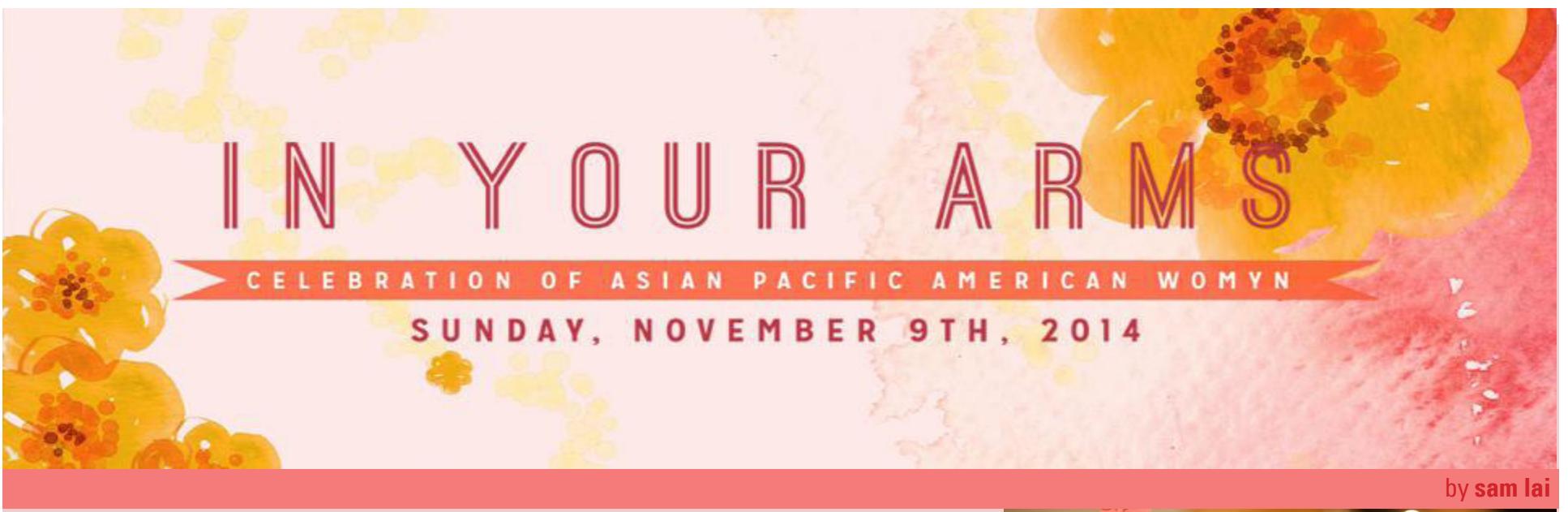


tones. It is to render the FSM mute.”

Even if we follow Chancellor Dirks’ civility logic, it is apparent that he is only selectively enforcing his criteria (one of the arguments against imposing “civility” on academic debate). As Nisa Dang argues on the blog-publishing platform, Medium:

[Chancellor Dirks] emphasized ‘the value of real engagement on divisive issues across different perspectives and opinions,’ [but] Dirks’ decision to move forward with the invitation shows him renegeing on his commitment to providing an environment where ‘debates will be productive and robust’ because it elevates Maher to the honored position of commencement speaker, where he will be inaccessible to students he has marginalized with his hate speech. There will be no opportunity for engagement with Maher. Dirks, in a separate email, invited students to reflect on ‘values that are the foundation of our great university: academic freedom, freedom of speech, and the unimpeded, reasoned and civil exchange of a full spectrum of viewpoints on every issue,’ [but] Maher’s hate speech is neither reasoned nor civil, and is an affront to this university’s values.”

UC Berkeley has absolutely no justification for bringing Bill Maher to our campus as a commencement speaker (and, in my opinion, for anything ever!). Anyone who cares about opposing an oppressive climate of racial, religious and gendered hate should stand with the student campaign against Maher’s invitation.



by sam lai

On November 9, the 8th annual Celebration of Asian Pacific American Womyn (CAPAW) took place at International House, with more than 150 attendees. The theme "In Your Arms" aimed to "recognize and appreciate all the figures that make sure we are still breathing and smiling today – whether it is a mother figure, sister, best friend, classmate or that one person that held the door for you." Drawing community members from student organizations including {m}aganda magazine, bridges Multicultural Resource Center, Southeast Asian Student Coalition, and Vietnamese Student Association, the evening banquet featured a variety of keynotes and performances by students as well.

CAPAW began in 2006, inspired by the annual Black Women's Appreciation Night which was founded in 2001. Hosted by the Asian Pacific American Student Development (APASD) office, CAPAW 2014 couldn't have been possible without the leadership of women in that space. CAPAW co-chairs and APASD interns Gaoki Vang and Siti "Putri" Rahmaputri oversaw the planning for the event, with a team of women who poured their hearts into the program. The planning team included Lisa Hoang, Sabrina Jueseekul, Linh Linh Trinh, Annie Xiong, and Pachia Xiong, who during CAPAW invited attendees to participate in the community project, in which people wrote about women in their lives who they were celebrating. Written on paper leaves, these descriptions then hung on small brightly lit trees displayed at a table near registration. In addition to the community project, attendees also took pictures with a rectangular photo frame decorated with yellow and orange paper flowers, holding up cute speech bubbles saying "I Love You!" or "YAY!"

Each speaker and performer interpreted the theme "In Your Arms" in their own way. APASD interns Henna Kaushall and Viviane Nguyen served as emcees for the evening. Opening up the program, dancers from the Fei Tian performing team impressed the audience with their Chinese classical fan dance to the song, "Spring Mountain After the Rain." Then APASD director (who hardboiled featured last issue!) Dawn Lee Tu shared a story about the strong women in her Chinese American family who taught her to how to be a mother and a leader in her community. Cal's only Asian American theatre group Theatre Rice presented an all-women cast who portrayed generational differences and conflicts between immigrant mothers and their daughters. Student speaker Sam Lai reflected on the marginalized gender identities and sexualities that tend to be ignored alongside women's contributions to social movements. Following the keynote, ASPIRE (short for Asian Students Promoting Immigrant Rights through Education) activist Akiko Aspilla gave a riveting spoken word performance about the women warriors in her life. Then the tears came out when CAPAW planning team members Linh Linh and Sabrina played a video featuring members of the community talking about women in their lives who matter to them. Nearly all of the faces in the video did not refer directly to who they talked about, such as whether the person was their mother or best friend, but the ambiguity highlighted the emotions expressed in how they talked the women in their lives. The final performance by Cal '14 alum Jade Cho left the audience in awe at her lyrical way with words and ability to bring to surface strong emotions through her deeply personal account about the most important woman in her life.

In all, the night infused a sense of warmth and healing among attendees who hopefully took away a renewed sense of appreciation.



Photos courtesy of Celebration of Asian Pacific American Womyn

Let this come as no surprise: Asian American women have played and still do play active roles in the Asian American movement. This year marks the 45th anniversary of UC Berkeley's Third World Liberation Front strike, which grew out of demands for a Third World College initiated by students of color at then-San Francisco State College. So often folks who first learn about the Asian American movement and its early formation in the Bay Area will hear about the work of men: Richard Aoki, Harvey Dong, Yuji Ichioka, and Ronald Takaki. Now, I am not out to criticize any of these men, because each of them has a special place in my heart; rather, I want to emphasize how sexism in social justice circles limits our understandings of who gets to be recognized as a "leader." When sexism and homophobia continue to run rampant in the Asian American community today, the need for feminist frameworks and practices seems more urgent than ever. This article begins with and explores the burning question: Is there a future for feminism in the Asian American community?



that Asian American feminism draws heavily from the work of Black women who coined and popularized many of the terms now commonly used by activists today. Anytime you deploy "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy," you invoke the work of feminist author and social activist bell hooks. Anytime you refer to "intersectionality," you draw from a theory first put forth in 1989 by law professor Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw. These Black scholars continue to set the feminist agenda for people of color today because of the accessibility of their writings and their ability to articulate issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality. All too often, we don't know the origins and context of the language we use to give meaning to our struggles, and when we forget, we disrespect the work of Black women who labored to find the right words so others would not have to. So much of the feminist literature produced by non-Black women of color has been informed by the lived experiences of Black women who found themselves caught between two movements that either denied them their racial identities or their womanhood. They had to choose to be Black or a woman; society would not recognize how they endured oppression as both identities. The racialized and gendered treatment of Asian American women shares some similarities to that of Asian American men and Black women, but ultimately the specific differences must be honored and respected in order to do justice to the narratives of Asian American women. An important distinction must also be made: while grassroots movements both influenced Black feminism and Asian American feminism, the former has become more institutionalized as a valid school of thought whereas the latter has yet to. Thus, despite substantial literature produced by Asian American women who are feminists, their work has not become mainstream even with current Asian American activists.

So it might be helpful to understand contemporary Asian American feminism as a radical grassroots movement, one that comes from the bottom-up rather than top-down. It also might be helpful to understand feminism from bell hooks' definition of it in her 1984 book *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*: "Feminism is a struggle to end sexist oppression." Thus, the question of feminism's future in the Asian American community is a question of Asian American's commitment to ending sexist oppression.

Building from bell hooks' definition of feminism, the struggle to end sexist oppression for the Asian American community requires more education about the negative effects of sexism as a result of the "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy." Yes, it sounds wordy and inaccessible, but the phrase "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" brings together multiple forces of oppression that work together in a system that marginalizes people of color, the poor, and women. hooks and other feminists of color have pushed for greater awareness about the ways in which simply referring to racism, sexism, or classism can center conversations about those in power rather than how vulnerable communities can internalize and reproduce dominant ideas. As a community that holds many identities within identities, Asian Americans should reflect on the ways in which the white supremacist capitalist patriarchy functions to silence voices of women, as well as queer and transgender folks.

Jade Cho, Ethnic Studies '14 alum (who was also featured in hard people last year!), wrote her honors thesis about Asian American women involved in Bay Area grassroots movements during the 60s and 70s. She asks, "If women were so important to movement building, why do we primarily think of men when we remember these histories?" Jade draws from the book *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left* by Laura Pulido, who states that movements led by people of color during that period have a "de facto masculine perspective insofar as it either was authored by men or, more typically, focused on them." Pulido explains how the emasculating effect of racialized violence and criminalization toward men of color changed their organizing: "one of the main impulses of [these] movements was to restore their manhood and privilege." Granted, Pulido studied radical Third World groups in Los Angeles, but on top of their resistance to systemic racism, Asian American women have also had to address sexism and homophobia in ethnic-specific spaces.

By coincidence or not, this issue of hardboiled caps off a year where great gains and losses have been made for Asian American feminists. Bad news first: on June 1,

Is there a future for feminism in the Asian American community?

civil rights activist Yuri Kochiyama passed away at age 93 at her home in Berkeley. I remember getting a phone call that day from my best friend Vy who just said "Yuri." And then I knew. Her death followed those of great political figures in communities of color: Fred Ho (who I wrote about in issue 17.4), who died April 12, and Maya Angelou, who died May 28. Months later, grief still hovers over the community, but an outpouring of appreciation showed different generations' gratitude towards a Japanese American woman whose involvement in the Black Power movement continues to define her career. So much has already been said about Yuri symbolizing more than just the Afro-Asian solidarity depicted in Life magazine's black-and-white photo of her holding a dying Malcolm X on the floor of Audubon Ballroom, February 21, 1965. So much has already been said about her friendship with the young leader of the Black Power movement, with whom she also shared the same birthday: May 19. As fundamental as Yuri was in radical movements with Black and Brown folks, I wish I heard more about her work as an Asian American woman and the challenges she faced because of her gender. What lessons about Asian American feminism have we learned from Yuri?

The tendency among Asian American activists to highlight race over gender also happens with Grace Lee Boggs, a Chinese American who is now 99 years old and has recently shared news of her declining health: "I am coming to the end of a long journey – a journey that began over 70 years ago at the beginning of World War II." Grace's star rose late in her life: only in the past ten or so years has she become branded as an Asian American icon for her organizing in the heart of Detroit, where she has lived for over 70 years. Yet what I don't hear talked about enough in the community are the revolutionary frameworks that Grace was an outspoken advocate of: Communism, Marxism, socialism, and Black militancy. Self-aware of her identity as a Chinese American woman, Grace noted in the preface to her book *The Next American Revolution*, "Women's leadership in the public sphere didn't come from the White House or from CEOs. It came only after millions of women came together in small consciousness-raising groups to share stories of our 'second sex' lives." I love this quote so much because it sums up the work of women of color as well as queer and trans folks: so much of what they do starts out small because of fear for their safety, but gradually builds into a broader movement. The imminent loss of community elders like Grace remind young generations of the valuable lessons they pass on, and asks of everyone, "what is the work left for us to do?"

#NotYourAsianSidekick

Leaving this piece off on a sad note would be too self-indulgent: as cynical as I have grown about the ability of Asian Americans to fully embrace feminism, there are some signs of hope. Beyoncé aside, the greater access to Internet and social media networks has enabled more conversations to take place among Asian American women. In December 2013, Korean American writer and activist Suey Park started a hashtag #NotYourAsianSidekick that generated thousands of Tweets from Asian American women about the stereotypes they face in everyday settings. While Suey's other hashtag campaigns have not been as well received (#CancelColbert only served as an example of white liberal media's not-so-progressive stance on race and gender) as seen by the personal attacks made on Suey, #NotYourAsianSidekick brought out many voices that weaved together a narrative of women's resistance to oppression.

With greater resources and communication facilitated by social media, the stories and organizing of Asian American women has grown in visibility. Organizations like API Equality – Northern California are archiving stories from different generations and spreading them to communities: created in 2012 by historian Amy Sueyoshi, the Dragon Fruit project is an "intergenerational oral history project that explores queer Asian Pacific Islanders and their experiences with love and activism in the 1960s, 70s, 80s, and 90s." Co-founder of Hyphen magazine Mia Nakano also created her own arts and media project, The Visibility Project, that profiles queer Asian American women, trans, and gender non-conforming folks across 50 states. So there is a wealth of creativity demonstrated by Asian American women who utilize media and grassroots social justice organizing to build community (much like the people at hardboiled!).

The question of feminism is one that we as a community must live out and explore answers to, and women must be leaders of the movement, as well as queer and trans folks directly oppressed by the white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. Not everyone will jump on board with pushing for more intersectional understandings of feminism, especially if they have to confront their own privileges. I'll leave it to Helen Zia to say what I mean: "People come to consciousness – I mean my notion is people come to consciousness and awareness at their own time. You cannot force somebody to be into politics or into a certain political framework, if they're not ready, if they're not into it, if it's not their experience. On the other hand, the fact that you bring it to them, later they might become ready. And you – young activists, any activist – you've planted a seed. It's not like it just goes in one ear and out the other. Somewhere it lives." All I can hope for through this article is that it has planted a seed in our readers.

by sam lai



DAMMIT JANET

UC'S NEW TUITION INCREASE PLAN

by sophia ng

This November, the UC Board of Regents passed a tuition increase plan with a 14-7 vote. The plan increases UC tuition by up to five percent every year for five years to pay for administration, staff, and faculty pensions, raises, and overall costs. Following this proposal, UC President Janet Napolitano defended the plan, suggesting that the tuition increase would allow more students into the UC system. Napolitano argued, "This is a plan that is integral not only to the stability, but also to the vitality of the University of California." Through this plan, California resident fees will be raised by \$612, bringing the total to \$12,804 for the 2015-2016 academic year. For out-of-state students, who pay the same tuition fee in addition to the nonresident fee, would see an increase of \$1,756. In five years, systemwide tuition may rise up by more than 25%, coming out to \$15,564 in 2019-2020 as reported by Daily Cal. Nonresident students would pay as much as \$44,766 in 2019-2020.

These tuition fees adversely affect Asian American and Pacific Islander students. While the university may argue that they provide financial aid and the Middle Class Scholarship Act to alleviate the high cost of tuition, we all know that the burden of tuition increases continue to exist. The dominant narrative of Asian Americans is that we are a model minority. Yet, it neglects differences in regards to socioeconomic status in our communities.

Pew Research polls show that Asian Americans led all others in household income. In 2013, the median income for Asian Americans was \$66,000, which starkly contrasted from the national average of \$49,800. This statistic suggests that Asian Americans predominantly fall under the middle class. Given the rise in tuition, the middle class will receive the brunt of such costs.

Disaggregated data shows that our communities are more socioeconomically diverse than the model minority myth proposes. For example, APIA Health Forum data shows that over 17% of Bangladeshi, Cambodian, and Tongan families are in poverty in the United States. Overall trends show that Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander communities are from under-resourced and low-income families. The rise of tuition has impacts on the overall cost of college – a cost that financial aid cannot fully cover.

Current API community-endorsed ASUC Senator King Xiong says, "The financial strains endured by students in the community are often invisibilized and silenced because of this notion. In addition, there is a misconception that students from low-income background are less impacted by this tuition hike because of the support they receive from financial aid. This misconception is problematic because it [in]validates the reality that A/PI students, in addition to students of color as a whole, do face tremendous financial struggles despite receiving financial aid."

For UC Berkeley students, the fight against tuition increases is no new tune – many may remember the 2009 Wheeler occupation, 2011 Occupy Cal protests on Sproul Plaza, fight to pass Prop 30 in 2012, and No 2 Napolitano rallies led by students of color in the past year.

This legacy of protests against tuition increases is grounded in the fact this university used to be free. It is important to remember that once upon a time at UC Berkeley, public education was accessible to all (although this wasn't and still isn't true for women and people of color). At least at that time, students didn't have to worry about owing boatloads of debt after they graduated.

Once upon a time, UC Berkeley undergrads could take risks with their career choices, and not feel burdened to repay their college loans.

Once upon a time, public education was really a right – not a privilege.

However, in 1970, Governor Ronald Reagan imposed tuition (masked as "fees") on UC students for the very first time. He left us a painful legacy – from 1992 to 2010, tuition soared from around \$4,000 per year to over \$12,000 per year.

Prior to the UC Regents' vote on November 20, students from all UC campuses protested the day before outside UCSF Mission Bay. UC Berkeley students boarded buses at 6 a.m. and protested in the rain to reiterate to the Regents that access to public higher education must be a priority. Governor Jerry Brown was in attendance at the meeting, and reminded Regents that a tuition increase would break the state's budget deal – a promise for increased funding to the UC system in exchange for a tuition freeze.

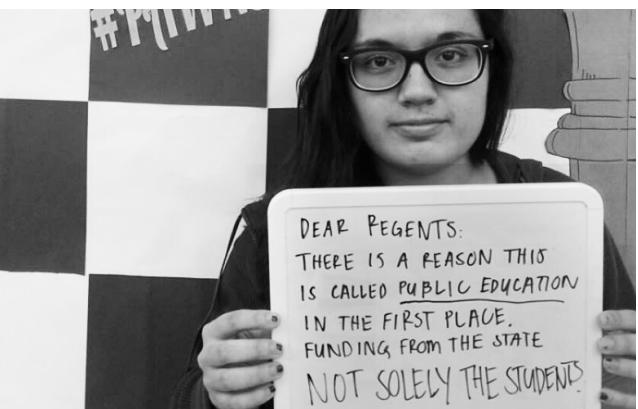
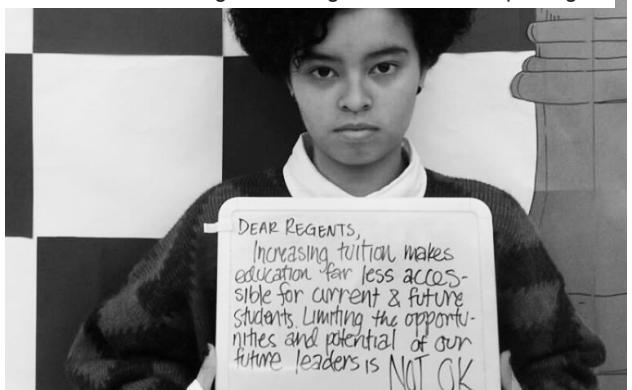
UC Student Regent Sadia Saifuddin voted no against the proposal, reminding Regents that they needed "to understand the real effect this has on students."

Following the committee vote on Wednesday night (the Regents as a whole approved the tuition hike proposal the next day), students at UC Berkeley mobilized. Over 200 students occupied Wheeler Hall to organize a list of demands that included stopping tuition increases, adding more students to the UC Regents committee, and releasing a student who was arrested after protests earlier that morning. Students demonstrated dissent against the Regents' vote with chants and posters such as, "Whose university? Our university!" and "Dammit Janet!"

As students of this university, we are all affected. The UC administration has made it clear that students' voices are not valued. Despite constant protests and appeals, tuition routinely increases. The increase of tuition squeezes out students, especially middle-incomes students who may not qualify for financial aid. Whether or not students received financial aid, the rise of tuition affects us all. It sets a precedent to the privatization of higher public education – who knows how much tuition will cost for future students?

ASUC King Xiong's office has been mobilizing students to fight against these tuition increases. Xiong says, "My office has been pushing for more awareness within the Asian/Pacific Islander community in addition to the larger student body about the current tuition hikes. We have done this through organizing a photo campaign for community members to express their discontent with the UC Regents' decision to raise tuition. In addition, my office has been outreach to various members within the community to be present and engaged in the ongoing action, including Occupy Wheeler."

Our silence in the face of tuition hikes perpetuates the model minority myth. It leaves the burden on our generation and future generations to suffer the rising costs and privatization of our university. The rise in tuition makes access to higher education even more difficult for communities that have been historically marginalized and kept out of the system. We need to be vocal about our demands. In this way, education can once again be a right, rather than a privilege.



WOMYN SOLDIERS OF THE VIETNAM WAR:

A narrative of the undocumented voice of a war hero's wife

by mai zong her

The Vietnam War was a tragic phenomenon for many Southeast Asians. From 1959 to 1965, the United States' role in the Vietnam War was cryptic; they secretly supplied weapons to soldiers in South Vietnam to battle the Vietcong, the military group driven by communists in Northern Vietnam. As the first US troops landed in Vietnam in 1965, they soon identified the Hmong as advantageous in defeating the communist regime in Southeast Asia. The CIA recruited them to be guerrillas and spies to obstruct Northern Vietnam's supply of weapons to the Pathet Lao, the communist military in Laos. The undisclosed collaboration between the United States and the Hmong people is what is known as the Secret War, and this expanded the Vietnam War to the other Southeast Asian countries. The recruitment went beyond grown men; Hmong boys were recruited and taught to hold and shoot deadly weapons. After the war ended in 1975 and the United States troops were extracted, the Hmong people's secret collaboration with the United States made them the target for a massive genocide in Southeast Asia where more than 300,000 Hmong were hunted and killed by Communist soldiers.

It is very often that the struggles and experiences of war heroes from the Vietnam War are documented and praised. Most of those narratives are about American soldiers and are not very inclusive of Southeast Asians, especially the Hmong. In all of my years of being in primary education, I have never heard or seen the term "Hmong" in any history curriculums or

in any of the U.S. History textbooks. It is not until 1997 that a copper plaque was placed next to the Tomb of the John F. Kennedy Eternal Flame in Arlington National Cemetery to honor the Hmong soldiers who fought in the war. Even though this kind of acknowledgement appears to be so honorable, it is not enough. It does not take back the horrifying experiences the Hmong people experienced and continue to experience today. It does not undo the separation of families and bring back the thousands of lives that were lost. It most definitely does not take away my father's bullet wound, nor does it take away the trauma that my mother had experienced which still affects her today.

What I find the most lacking are the undocumented narratives and struggles of Hmong womyn during the Secret War; the Hmong wife who remained courageous and cared for her starving children with her husband away at war, and the Hmong womyn who fought against the structured genocide to protect her children.

I break that silence by speaking to my very own mother, Yer Fang.

I called my mom one afternoon. When I asked her to tell me HER story, she laughed and said she does not know where to start or what to talk about and that she just might cry. We continued to talk and joke around and finally, she was ready.

Back then, your father and I lived in Laos, in the city of Muang Phin. That was where we got married and started our family. I had many children.

After General Vang Pao (General Vang Pao was a former General of the Royal Lao Army and he is seen as the leader of the Hmong people) left to Thailand, we were so poor. We had no money, no food, and no leader. Our lifestyle was not stable; we were continuously trying to escape persecution by seeking refuge in various hills and mountainous forests. Hiding in the mountainous forests, we dug up yams to eat. We ate things that we did not know whether they were poisonous or not. We just needed to survive another day.

Communist soldiers hunted us down; burnt our homes and our farms; killed our chickens and our animals. We ran from hills to hills. Every time, as we finally built our homes, the soldiers have already caught up to us. We moved again, built new homes, and they bombed us again. The cycle never stopped.

I had a total of 13 children. Seven of them died; three boys and four girls. They died of unknown diseases and starvation. We had no medicine, no doctors, and no hospitals. There was nothing that we could have done.

I cried so much that I started losing my eyesight.

After your father recovered from being

shot, he left us in Laos to Vinai, Thailand. He said that he would come back for us after reuniting with his family and your step-mother. When your father left, I cried day and night. I was clueless on what to do. My second oldest son got really sick and had just passed away. All my children were so young; the oldest son was probably 13 years old and all the others were younger and only walking toddlers. There was only me.

I cried so much that I started losing my eyesight.

I continuously told myself that I would make it to Vinai, with or without your father's return. My parents and siblings were already in Vinai too. I did not struggle this much to stop here. Therefore, I prayed and prayed to our ancestors for guidance and protection.

One night, I told my children that we are leaving. I packed some rice and clothes and strapped a little of each onto one of my children. I strapped my youngest child, who was still a baby, to my chest and we left that night.

My mother paused. She began to cry.

It was such a difficult way to live. I had to take on the role of not only being the nurturing mother, but to be the courageous father figure of the family. As we hid in the forests and ran away from the Communist soldiers, all I see are the small, tiny eyes of all my children; staring at me in fear and desperate for affirmation that we would be okay.

We travelled and hid for months. We finally came to a Hmong village where I came into contact with some men who were sneaking refugees to the Mekong River. I paid them to guide me and my children there. I worried that they would say no because I had a baby. I have heard of stories how families were forced to leave their crying babies behind to keep the Communist soldiers from finding them. But, I refused to leave any of my children behind.

For six days and six nights, we slept on dusty grounds and starved. We finally reached the Mekong River where we met up with a few Thai officials who hid us on a boat and transported us across the river. When we landed in Thailand, a few more Thai men came and hid us in the back of a truck. That was the first time that I heard myself breathing.

Today, so many of our relatives still wonder how I made it across with all my children. There are wives who were with their husbands and yet, they did not make it safely in Thailand.

My mother's courageous story demonstrates such strength, bravery, and heroism in the utmost undesirable and daunting conditions. My mother serves as an epitome of a soldier. She may not have been a soldier who combated in war against the Communists, but she combated the struggles of being the wife of a soldier who gave up her means of protection to fight for the right to freedom. After my father left her in Laos, she fought against the life-threatening dangers that were placed against her and her children, and she strategized ways to protect her children and led them to safety. More importantly, she combated the patriarchal system that has always deemed womyn weak and incompetent, and she proved that the strength and bravery of womyn is not a trait that cannot be oppressed and tamed by men.



photo courtesy of mai zong her

Mai Zong's dad and mom, Num Tshaab Hawj and Ntxawm Faaj, at a veteran community event.



Nplaaj Suav Hawj, standing in the center of the photo and a very close relative to Mai Zong's dad, to lead a group of Hmong refugees in Laos away from Communist persecution.

photo courtesy of mai zong her

Navigating Relationships Through a Social Justice Lens: An Interview with J

As students who juggle endless obligations, we here at **hardboiled** understand the struggle to find love and intimacy at a campus with over 30,000 students. So often we hear folks in activist circles complain: "the need for #PADS (Progressive Activist Dating Service) is real," "he's cute but he hasn't read bell hooks" or "she's so fine and so color-blind" or "they would be a good partner if they weren't ableist." Comrades, if you're tired of searching for a love life in Daily Cal's Sex on Tuesday column, if you wish UC Berkeley could just rank #1 for public universities with the most dateable prison abolitionists, then look no further. Here's an interview with J, a current student who shares their dating and relationship experiences from a social justice perspective.

How do you identify?

I identify as someone who is a disabled queer and trans person of color, specifically as an aromantic asexual API person who is polyamorous and nonbinary.

How do you balance your relationships with your partner(s) and your life as a student? How do you make time for your partners, especially if they aren't fellow Berkeley students?

Ooo, this is a toughie. Well, I'll be lying if I said it was easy. Some friends and acquaintances of mine are shocked how I manage to make time for my partners, my homework, and the duties I have with work and the three clubs I'm a part of. It can be a bit easier if one of my partners has more flexibility in their schedule to make time to come see me and check in on me. It is about sharing calendars with each other so that we can look for a time where it is possible to meet up or to try to make time for each other. It requires compromises to be made. It is harder when one of my partners isn't a UCB student because of the time it takes for them to travel to UCB or for me to travel outside of Berkeley. But it's a give-and-take where they aren't the only person coming over to my place but that I also make a similar effort of visiting them. It's about having open communication where we're honest when we're too stressed out to visit each other. It's really a give-and-take thing that requires balance.

Does it matter to you if someone you date doesn't have a strong understanding of social justice issues?

Oh boy, I've pondered this myself. I tried dating people who didn't really care about social justice issues but it wouldn't really work out since [social justice] is a big chunk of my life and what I care about. There are so many microaggressions that can be directed at me that the person wouldn't notice unless they have a strong understanding of social justice issues. It also matters that this person would be willing to have open communication about any social justice topic without making assumptions on my views. It is about being able to talk about controversial topics without tearing each other down. It is about being willing to admit you're wrong and not have the other person jump on you. I have dated someone who had a strong understanding of social justice issues, but we had a hard time having open communication with each other [to a point] where I was scared to disagree with them. In a healthy relationship, you don't have to be scared to disagree with someone and meet each other where the other person is at to really have an open talk of the subject, whether it's controversial or not.

The thirst is real: how difficult is it for you to navigate sex and intimacy as a polyamorous aromantic asexual?

So far, it's not like it's easy. But I think it's because no one pursues me that I feel that it's freeing at times that I don't have to think about someone else falling for me. Usually, I have to do the work of looking for someone. A lot of people are surprised at how many people I've dated. I know that I date enough people when one friend of mine didn't remember who was the last person I dated. For me, I only date people one at a time and I'm not always dating someone. I need times to reflect and recharge my energy. Some people read it as selfish, but I need some time for me and to do some self-care whether it's just listening good music or something else. I mean, I don't see myself dating multiple people at once. I do date people when I feel like the partner(s) I have are pretty solid. That way dating to me doesn't feel like it's emotionally draining. I am careful with myself and my emotions. Emotional pain is physical pain and I do a lot of emotional work for my partners and my friends. I try to spend the same time working on healing myself and investing in my growth.

How does identity play into the way you navigate dating as a Berkeley student? (specifically your life as a student and a partner)

I try my best to navigate with the identities I have by acknowledging privileges and oppressions I carry with me. Like, I am wary of power dynamics that develop because I am a poor person of color who worries financially about covering health costs per year, sometimes out of pocket. I am thankful that I am currently working one job but sometimes I wish like my other partners that I had somewhat supportive parents who I could lean on when I'm having financial issues. I ponder how age has a role when I do date people older than me because I am wary if the relationship becomes unhealthy when the other person doesn't see me as equal. I try not to replicate that unhealthy dynamic when I date people younger than me. I also ponder about when to disclose my disabilities to people I date since I do have a psychiatric disability and a learning disability and some may see that as an additional burden of dating me just as it is with me being poor.

I'll never forget what one person told me, which is "you are beautiful, you are loved, and you are deserving of love." It is important to never forget this because I need to know that I am worthy of having healthy relationships that make me feel safe, respected, and loved.

What are the reactions when people find out you have more than one partner?

Some people are surprised that I'm polyamorous because I'm an aromantic asexual. They feel like they're conflicting identities when they aren't. It's because when some people think about polyamory, they think of threesomes but that doesn't necessarily have to be a part of polyamory.

In what ways do your multiple identities play into who you look for in a partner? How do they play out in your current relationships?

My multiple identities come into play in what I look for a partner in the ways that I want to find someone who is open-minded and open to new experiences because not everyone starts on knowing how to be supportive of me when I'm dealing with life stuff. I know we are all on our own strugglebuses, struggleboats, and other vehicles of struggle. I want someone who is willing to be mutually supportive even if it means that we're hugging each other while crying it all out since we both have our own issues to deal with. I want to have open communication where we're both honest with each other about how we're feeling, saying what we need, and what our boundaries are.

How do you set and respect boundaries? Why is it important to do this?

I will be honest and say that setting and respecting boundaries wasn't always something I'm strong in. I think it's still something that you can struggle with despite how many workshops you've been to about creating your own boundaries and how to voice them. I find that this process is made a bit easier with a partner who respects me, has patience with me, and who practices open communication with me. I try to do the same back. With some people I date, they may not know what boundaries they have. I mean, my boundaries can change with each person. But how I go about this is giving examples of boundaries such as how often someone can text me. I mean, I voice this with friends about what my boundaries are with how they should and shouldn't get ahold of me especially when I'm busy. It may be hard to think what your boundaries are, but asking friends how they set them can be helpful, or even Googling it online. But once you say what one boundary you have is, it makes it a bit easier to think up other boundaries you have. It doesn't mean that it is necessarily etched in stone. But that your partner or whoever you're dating should respect what you've said your boundaries are and remember to check in with you if they've changed. It is important to have people respect your boundaries because it's part of healthy relationships and you need to be able to feel safe in your relationships and be able to trust the other person.

How do you work through jealousy, especially if you have multiple partners?

For me, I've learned from my first partner who I'm still with that it's ok to be honest [about being] jealous. When you admit it, you can then work on it. It took me some time to ask myself questions of why I'm jealous and work on unlearning some things. I know I'm not perfect and the same goes for the relationships I'm in. But they do feel healing. I'm willing to work through anything with the partners I have currently. In some way, having them in my life makes life a bit more breathable, livable, and easier.



LET'S

BE

by steven cong

REAL

My experience with graduate students at Cal was oftentimes mind-blowing and memorable. For example, I'll never forget the conversation I had with Ariko, the graduate student instructor (GSI) for Elaine Kim's class on Asian Pacific Islanders (API) and the media, about the extent of blackness and an API third space. We spent half an hour on a Tuesday night discussing whether blackness should be extended to encompass APIs or whether APIs should further develop a unique sociocultural space that's neither black nor white, and beyond just "Asian" or "American." It was so stimulating that I almost forgot I had already been sitting in a lecture hall for three hours. Conversations like these have led me to see graduate students as role models for the critical and progressive thinker that I aspire to be. When I found out that I would be attending UCLA as a graduate student, I was ecstatic at the prospect of working towards that goal and having conversations with others like Ariko. Little did I know how wrong I would be regarding the latter.

I'm currently in my first quarter as a graduate student at UCLA in its Asian American Studies department. The people in my cohort all have tremendous experiences and ideas that remind me of the graduate students at Cal. They're not the problem. The problem is the spaces I enter when I sign up for a class outside of the Asian American Studies department. To be totally transparent, I've only had one of these classes

so far (it's my first quarter). However, these classes can be an unfortunate indicator of things to come. Plenty of second-year students in the Asian American Studies department at UCLA have talked about the cringe-worthy things they hear in some of their classes, and one of my professors at Cal had warned me that I might be the only "progressive" voice in a discussion. I learned the truth of that statement on day one.

My sociology class is on family and social change, and we began our first discussion with people arguing for the biological truth of gender roles by comparing us to primate "societies" in an attempt to establish evolutionary linkages. This went against everything I've learned over four years at Cal about the social construction of identities, the harmful impact of scientific racism, Eurocentrism, and the retroactive projection of contemporary ideals. Sure, my peers in that class are only responding to readings that were assigned for the week. However, I found it highly questionable that they did not adapt a more critical lens to articles written in the 1950s that had been soundly refuted by later scholars in multiple fields who championed the revolutionary ideas I learned at Cal. And that is only one example of the things I already experienced.

I understand that not everyone in the world is "progressive," and that a lot of people have different ideas of what that even means. While this is all true, graduate

students often aspire to devote their lives to the production of systemic knowledge, and will sometimes be in positions of academic authority to wield great influence over many youths' intellectual development. Moreover, we have the privilege of being exposed to discourses about race, gender, and class — along with the historic progression of these conversations — that not everyone holds. In short, graduate students have too much academic influence and should know better about the histories and impact of the ideas they engage. While we don't all have to agree, it would be nice for our sociology class to at least assess the idea that there might not be a link between how primates function and how people function.

So my romanticized ideal of graduate school was quashed pretty quickly. Where does that leave me? Well, I started by bringing up the idea that gender is learned and that it changes alongside gender roles, which led to subsequent weeks of fruitful conversation about similar topics. Bringing up that point was a helpful in initiating conversations about the social construction of people's identities and the expectations placed upon them. Being in this space is a powerful reminder of why the knowledge produced in Asian American Studies is vital, and why it is so necessary to articulate these issues in academic environments where harmful, sexist theories from the 1950s still hold sway.

ABOUT

GRAD

SCHOOL



JEFF chang

AUTHOR OF **WHO WE BE**



interviewed by tracey fung

For this issue of **hardboiled**, I sat down with Jeff Chang, a writer, activist, and UC Berkeley '89 alum whose newest book has been making waves as an extensive discussion on multiculturalism in the U.S. today. *Who We Be: The Colorization of America* examines culture shifts and perceptions of racial identity, as well as racial discourse in America since the election of Barack Obama as the first multi-racial president in the U.S. Jeff is also co-founder of ColorLines and CultureStrike, two preeminent news sites that contribute a race-centered lenses on current events. Jeff currently serves as the Executive Director of the Institute for Diversity in the Arts at Stanford.

In this interview, Jeff discusses his experiences as an API writer and activist. He also calls upon other members of the API community to take a role in racial discourse and politics and points out the importance of coalition-building between multiracial groups in seeking a just society. For a full transcription of this interview, please visit hardboiled.berkeley.edu.

Photo courtesy of Jeremy Keith Villaluz

What do you consider as your role in the AAPI community and how did your experience in Cal help shape this?

Since my days at Cal, I've been an activist, organizer, and over time, I've adapted into being an artist. Back in the day, I was DJ-ing a lot and I was involved in radio. At the same time I also got involved in doing Asian American work. The way I liked to describe it was that I was a DJ by night and an Asian American activist by day, and somewhere in the midst of all that I managed to get a degree.

The Asian American admissions controversy that I was involved in for most of my career at Cal was a question of policies that were put into place specifically to discriminate against Asian Americans in the admissions process, basically about 20% of the population. We wanted to emphasize that the issue was about under-representation, that we were pro-affirmative action, that we wanted to improve underrepresentation of Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans, Filipinos, Southeast Asians. We ended up winning and we were able to bring the state legislature and the chancellor to the campus and they changed the rules. But in the larger media debate around the issue, the right wing took control of the debate and made it about affirmative action by saying that what's discriminating against Asian Americans are not specific policies put into place deliberately but the presence of affirmative action itself. So we won the battle but lost the war, and for me, that was a formative political experience.

Your previous book, Can't Stop Won't Stop has made its rounds in Cal's Ethnic Studies departments as an engaging history of hip-hop and racial politics. As an AAPI writer who has broken into both of these spheres, what do you think might help foster dialogue across multiracial groups, and what is lacking in this dialogue today?

Well, it's about this thing they call "ally-building," which I think may not necessarily be a completely adequate term to talk about what it is that we're trying to do. We're asserting an agenda that's about racial justice for all, so if we're arguing around immigration, that impacts questions about militarization against youth, for instance. Look at Ferguson, for example, and you look at the militarization of the police there, which began with the fear that the right raised after 9/11 of Arab American, Muslim American, South Asian American communities. So they develop these apparatuses to begin deportation and raise fears about the border, which brings in the question of immigration of Latinos. And then they attach to that this expansion of the prison-industrial complex and militarization – the actual hardware of military that they put into people's hands that are about fighting the war on the Middle East but also fighting this war that is developing at home. So you can't talk about militarization in Ferguson or any of these segregated suburbs without talking about immigration, and so for me, for a lot of us, it's about trying to draw the connections out between these issues. It's not just about being an ally, or about acknowledging our privileges where we have it. It's about how they're using the language of illegals to establish these kinds of forces in the state that are mitigating or working against young people and people of color all the time. It's beyond ally-building, but drawing connections between different issues and articulating what an actual racial justice agenda looks like for all and then articulating how this agenda is creating the kind of society we want to get to.

In your opinion, what do we need to improve in racial discourse in popular media and otherwise?

For us, it's about supporting these people and these characters that fit outside the box. We need to foster images that run counter to what the mainstream is portraying us as. We need to be out and be proud about the racial justice agenda. There's a way in which corporate multiculturalism reduces us to the lowest common denominator, and I think as writers, we always have to overspill their categories, we always have to pour out of their glass. We don't fit into their little cup of Asian-ness.

What hopes do you have for *Who We Be* in affecting or changing discourse about race and culture in America?

I have pretty modest hopes. I just hope to spark conversations around racial justice, to be able to bring attention to the really weird place where we're at, where we are culturally desegregated but are seeing rising rates of re-segregation. I am about trying to figure out how to create a culture that points to racial justice, how to tell the stories that aren't being told, how to draw attention to the plight of the undocumented immigrant, how to draw attention to Asian American in the ghetto and how they are being exploited and the structures that are set up to exploit them.

Lastly, in **hardboiled**, we have a motto - "always in bold." What does this mean to you?

To me, "always in bold" means always having the courage and always having the vision to challenge the way things are, and not doing it quietly as everybody would expect Asian Americans to do, but to do it loudly and proudly. Because again, the default setting in society, at least right now, is every person for themselves, so we're always having to figure out how to get beyond that in finding community, connectivity, and commonality that takes us higher without sacrificing our individuality. And that takes courage, takes vision. It takes being loud and being proud.