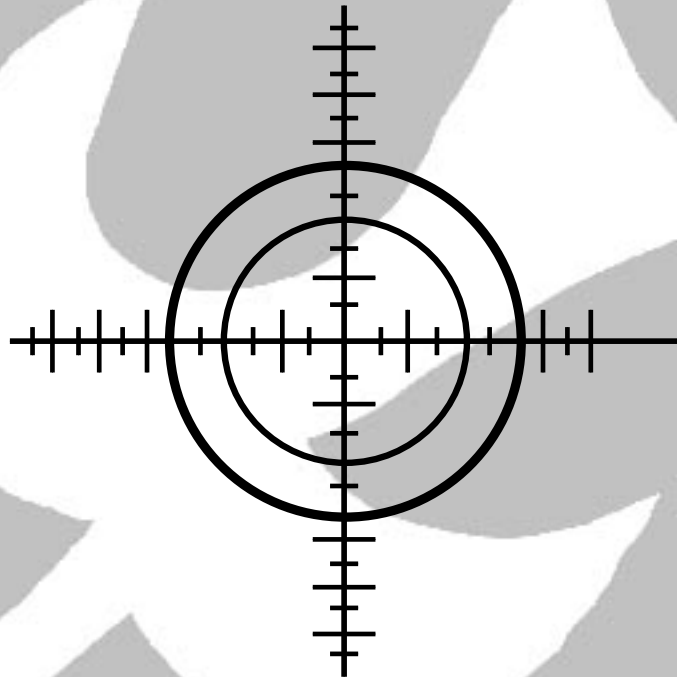
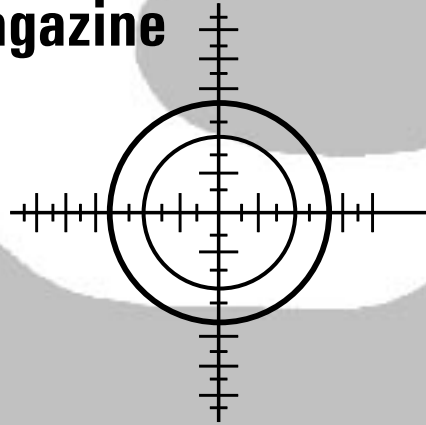


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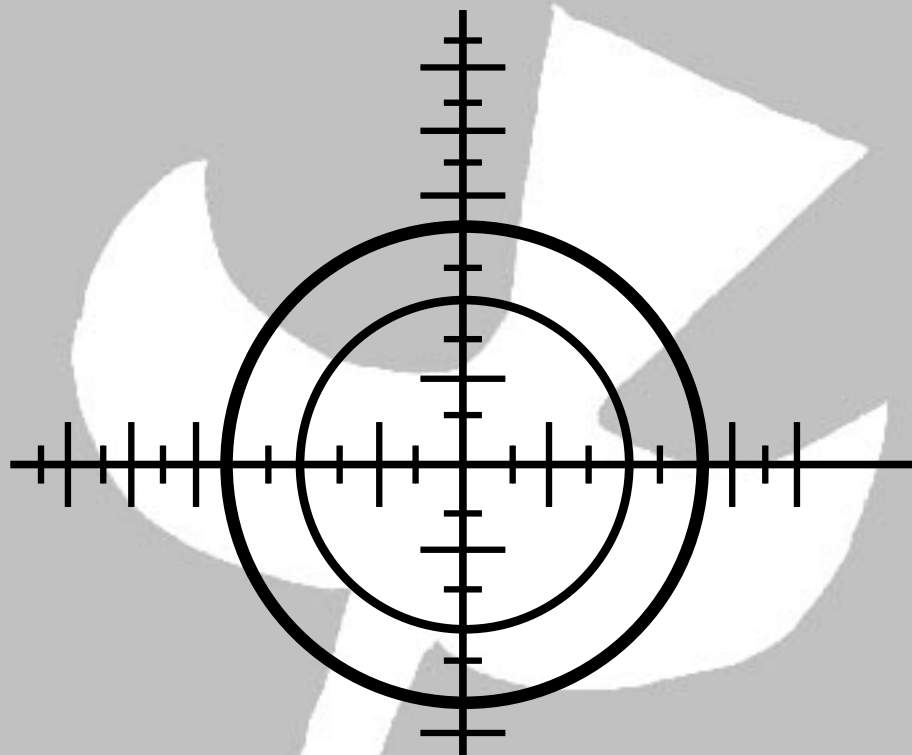
the asian pacific american newsmagazine



**The Patriot Act I
on Crack**

**Films Starring
People of Color**

**Profile of an
Evildoer with
Permed Hair**





editor's note

There is No Such Thing as a Healthy Lie

A few days ago my dad told me a story: In 1971, a group of 25 hunter-gatherers emerged from the rainforests of southern Mindanao in the Philippines. Wearing leaves, living in caves, using stone tools, and subsisting on scarce forest foods, they were believed to be aborigines, and this was their first contact with civilization. The discovery of the Tasaday tribe caused a furor across the globe: anthropologists and social scientists salivated at the thought of a civilization completely untouched by the Western world, and many flocked to the Philippines to document and investigate what was believed to be the most primitive people on earth and the most important anthropological event of the 20th century.

Fifteen years later, a month after the overthrow of the Marcos regime in 1986, the Tasaday discovery was revealed to be a hoax: in a plot to bring money and fame to the sagging Philippine economy, a wealthy Pilipino politician, in cahoots with President Marcos, had convinced a group of local farmers to pose as Stone Age cave-dwellers. He asked them to switch from wearing clothes to leaves, and equipped them with fake stone axes.

However, the most amazing part of the story to me was that some of the Tasaday had convinced themselves that they were in fact aborigines. After so many years of being told a lie about yourself, you eventually begin to believe it.

Lies like racism doesn't exist in the Bay Area, and growing up there in San Francisco in Asian American utopia gives you an excuse to be content with the status quo. Like that it's ok to get sexually harassed on the street because you ask for it when you wear stuff like that. Like affirmative action hurts hardworking Asian American students. Like it's ok to date a White guy, even though he only dates Asian girls and keeps asking you if you know kama sutra. Like you should be ashamed your dad was a postal office clerk for 36 years and you grew up in a working class neighborhood. Like a fourth-generation Chinese American isn't really Chinese at all. Like you need to support all Asian American things simply because they are Asian American. Like you should blend in and keep quiet because the nail that sticks out gets hammered down. Like it is possible to have a war without RAPE. Like you are not oppressed *every minute* of your life in some way, even now as you are reading this. Like you do not live in a WHITE WORLD.

What lies are you being told today, and, most importantly, which are you starting to convince yourself are true?

lisa macabasco
[hb] story editor

calendar

Benefit for the Asian Prisoner Support Committee

Bao Phi (HBO Def Poetry Jam)
Ishle Yi Park (HBO Def Poetry Jam)
18 Mighty Mountain Warriors (Asian Am. Comedy Troupe)
Yuri Kochiyama
Shailja Patel
Jason Mateo (8th Wonder)

Sunday April 20, 7pm
Locus, 1640 Post (@ Laguna), SF
\$7-10 (no turned away for lack of funds)

Some of the greatest slam/spoken word artists in the nation, the 18 Mighty Mountain Warriors (renowned Asian American comedy troupe), and Yuri Kochiyama (leading Asian American activist) will be performing/speaking at a benefit for Asian American prisoners & inmates.

The Asian Prisoner Support Committee was formed to provide services/support/assistance to Asian inmates and to raise awareness among Asian America about incarcerated members of our communities. The two cases we're working on right now involve a group of inmates at San Quentin State Prison who demanded Ethnic Studies courses in the prison education program and have subsequently faced severe retaliation from the prison system, and an inmate (Mike Ngo) who is taking the Dept of Corrections to court, challenging its explicit policy of racial segregation as a violation of the 14th Amendment. (see below for more info).

In addition to these incredible performers, family members of the inmates will be at the event to share information about the cases. This is a really amazing line-up -- an event you should not miss!



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GIVE US A HAND

Wednesdays, 7:00pm
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The Patriot Act, Part Deux

by mahin z. ibrahim

Everyone knows that sequels are a bad idea. This case is no exception, and its predecessor is just as deadly. If the government has its way, Patriot Act II is set to debut in a locale near you, coming on the heels of the USA Patriot Act I, which passed in 2001. Clearly, the Department of Justice (DOJ), with John Ashcroft at its helm, has been busy doing its best to continue to violate civil rights under the guise of national security, and the Patriot Act II is a product of this. This legislation, formally entitled the "Domestic Security Enhancement Act of 2003" and dated January 9, 2003, further empowers the government by loosening protective stipulations on domestic surveillance, wiretapping, and confinement and prosecution of criminals. At the same time, it gives the public less access to information. Basically, it's the Patriot Act I on crack.

Although the bill has not gone to Congress yet, it is itching to go in the near future. Government officials are being secretive about its passage, an ongoing irritating habit from the bill's inception. The public first received notice of the bill when the Center for Public Integrity, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to investigative research, leaked news of it in early February. Shortly thereafter, spokespeople from the Justice Department have denied its existence while representatives from the House and Senate Judiciary Committees professed total ignorance. In the midst of this, it was revealed that a copy of the "non-existent" bill was sent to both Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert and Vice President Richard Cheney on January 10, 2003. Hmm . . . something's definitely rotten in the state of Denmark.

All this exposed subterfuge comes as no big surprise, and it seems like after the passage of the Patriot Act I, a cautious public was just waiting for the other shoe to drop. Now, let's backtrack for a moment and revisit the original piece of legislation. The USA PATRIOT Act, an acronym for Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (a fairly clever acronym if I do say so myself), sailed through Congress in October 2001 with only one dissenting vote. Evidently, most members did not spend much time reading and comprehending the ramifications of the bill and viewed it as just another legislation attempting to combat terrorism, maintain homeland security, and do more of those kinds of buzzwords.

The bill allowed for such things like giving police freedom to secretly search homes of suspects, tap their home and cell phones, and trace their Internet usage and specific e-mails. It also gave the Attorney General power to imprison non-citizens if they seem "suspicious," and can deny entry to non-citi-

zens (even lawful permanent residents) back to the country if they exercise their First Amendment of freedom of speech. Furthermore, the bill let the police have access to library and bookstore records without the patron's knowledge, and allowed them to keep an eye on monetary transactions.

Basically Patriot Act I was a free-for-all for the police. Anything - private records of who you call, write, what books you ordered from amazon.com last week, became public information. It was the Patriot Act that spurred the current crop of INS Registrations (which resulted in its own accumulation of civil rights abuses), and the unjustifiable detainment of academic intellectuals such as Professor Sami Al-Arian. As one can see, the Patriot Act has already accomplished quite a bit. Let's see what kind of damage its sequel intends to inflict.

Patriot Act II, penned by John Ashcroft, includes all the other methods to spy and collect information that the government forgot to incorporate in Act I. Consider it a lethal postscript. It obliterates civil rights in three arenas: personal privacy, immigrant and constitutional rights. Within the personal privacy arena, the bill gives government secret access to credit statements, allows for the introduction of secret evidence in criminal cases, and lets the police spy on individuals for any given period of time, eliminating the time limit traditionally imposed by the court. Within the immigrant rights arena, it gives the Attorney General the power to deport an immigrant to any country in the world, and boots out immigrants perceived as being threats to domestic security without evidence of crime, criminal intent or terrorist connections. Within the constitutional rights arena, the bill takes away fundamental rights of citizens even remotely linked to terrorism. If suspected of supporting government-labeled terrorist organizations, an individual's citizenship will be revoked and he/she will be sent back and incarcerated in his/her own country permanently. Fifteen new death penalties were also devised, including one for a very broadly defined crime of terrorism. It also makes individuals more liable for the crime of giving funds to terrorist groups without previous knowledge of supporting terrorist activities. These are only some of the more frightening new powers the government bestowed on itself.

Clearly, the government is trying to keep Patriot Act II under wraps before its passage because they are well aware of its insidious implications on innocent lives and its blatant erosion of civil rights. For a detailed section-by-section analysis of the Domestic Security Enhancement Act of 2003, go to ACLU's analysis at <http://www.aclu.org/SafeandFree/SafeandFree.cfm?ID=11835&c=206>.

"Basically, it's the Patriot Act I on crack"

Better Luck Tomorrow



Director Justin Lin

Anticipated and critically acclaimed Asian American film *Better Luck Tomorrow* was released to select cities, including Berkeley, last Friday, April 11.

Picked up and distributed by MTV Films, *Better Luck Tomorrow* is an independently produced film that is groundbreaking in its mostly Asian American cast. It is written, produced, and directed by Justin Lin and premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2002.

The movie has since received positive reviews from critics such as Roger Ebert, Peter Travers of *Rolling Stone*, and David Ansen of *Newsweek*.

Centered on a group of successful Asian American teenagers living in Orange County, *Better Luck Tomorrow* follows their exploits as they turn—all while maintaining excellent grades, extracurricular activities, and active social lives—to dark subjects such as sex, drugs, and crime.

Instead of conforming to standard stereotypes of Asians and Asian Americans, Lin created a unique movie with characters who live double lives. On the movie's official Web site (www.betterlucktomorrow.com), Lin said, "I hope to present the insecurities, aggressiveness, and drive of the characters, while at the same time, connecting to their underlying feelings of angst, fear, and alienation."

The movie stars Karin Anna Cheung, John Cho, Roger Fan, Sung Kang, Parry Shen, and Jason Tobin.

by jonathan tsang

Pilipino American Among the Captured

Less than a week into the war, America received one of its toughest blows when it was revealed that five of its very own were captured by Iraqi troops on March 23. The soldiers, who were ambushed by Iraqi troops when their supply caravan took a wrong turn, are still considered prisoners of war. One of these soldiers is 23-year-old Army Spc. Joseph Hudson, a Pilipino American from Alamogordo, N.M.

Hudson's mother, Anecita Hudson, first heard about her son's situation from a Pilipino cable news channel, which aired a video received from the Qatar news channel al-Jazeera. The video showed Hudson and other captured soldiers being interrogated by their off-camera captors.

Americans marines raided an Iraqi prison on April 8 and found bloodstained Army uniforms belonging to at least six soldiers. Two of the uniforms had names on them, however Army officials did not confirm that they belonged to the soldiers captured on March 23.

The 507th Maintenance Company, of which Hudson was a member, took a severe blow in the ambush. In addition to the five soldiers taken captive, seven were killed, four returned wounded, six came away unharmed, and three were missing.

Jessica Lynch was recently rescued during a raid on an Iraqi hospital. During the mission Marines also found the bodies of nine soldiers, eight of which were members of Hudson's and Lynch's unit.

by marites l. mendoza

SARS

The mysterious SARS virus that experts believe likely originated in southern China has spread to other nations around the world, including the United States, and has killed over 100 people.

The severe acute respiratory syndrome (or SARS) virus has sickened more than 2600 worldwide since February and caused some governments, including Hong Kong's, to quarantine people infected with the virus. In the United States, there are 148 confirmed cases of SARS but no deaths.

While people with the illness, also called atypical pneumonia, display symptoms not much different from the common cold or flu, it has become serious enough that the World Health Organization has advised people to avoid traveling to Hong Kong or southern China (Guangdong province) if possible. According to experts, it is probably spread through close contact with others with the virus and has caused many in the afflicted regions to don surgical masks to prevent catching the disease.

Experts have not yet identified the virus as of April 8, and there is no known cure, although patients in Hong Kong have responded well to a cocktail of drugs, including the antiviral drug ribavirin and steroids.

The Chinese government has come under intense criticism for not disclosing more information about the virus when the first cases appeared in November 2002 in the southern province of Guangdong.

Hong Kong has especially been hit hard by the disease, with at least 928 infected and 25 killed. Other countries that have been affected by the virus include Canada, Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, and Germany.

by jonathan tsang



THE BIG WEIGH

SPRING ARRIVES BRINGING PRETTY FLOWERS, BASKETBALL FINALS, AND PIVOTAL SUPREME COURT CASES ADDRESSING THE LEGACY OF RACIAL INEQUALITY by dharushana muthulingam

Reverend Jesse Jackson, Democratic Sen. Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts and Kweisi Mfume, the president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, lined up one by one on a rather pleasantly chill April 1st morning in Washington D.C. to address a crowd of thousands of civil rights demonstrators.

Stoking the gathering was the two-hour initial hearing of *Grutter vs. Bollinger*, the Supreme Court case that is to review the constitutionality of the University of Michigan's implementation of affirmative action, and presumably the very question of the government's place in addressing the legacy of systemized racial inequality.

The stakes are high and the equation murky. Those suing the University of Michigan for its affirmative action policies are invoking the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment as well as the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Court faces the formidable task of balancing the tensions among its desires to address race discrimination, ensure academic freedom and practice judicial restraint.

The last time the Supreme Court addressed this

have brought exactly that, as she was a nontraditional applicant, being 43 at the time, a mother, and having, along with solid scores, extensive work experience.

Specifically under assault is U-M's undergraduate policy that awards 20 points in a rubric of 120 points for being a member of an underrepresented minority. U-M's law school does not employ a point system, but also explicitly takes race into consideration for achieving what it calls "critical mass" of representation, a policy that many scrutinize as being a fluffed up quota. Admissions for both the law and undergraduate schools also give considerations to applicants with low-income backgrounds and those hailing from underrepresented states. The bulk of the university's defense in one way or another advocates the inherent value of diversity in its student body.

The Bush Administration, of the recent Patriot Act and aggressive bombings of Iraq, declared affirmative ac-

Justice David H. Souter, by depending on public schools being already racially segregated, which is a state of affairs that falls short of ideal. Furthermore, these listed states are relatively diverse, whereas Michigan is over 78 percent white (with its black and Hispanic population largely concentrated in urban Detroit), and many argue it would see its elite public university return to the homogenous composition it had three decades ago.

As to the players, the plaintiff's side was headed by Solicitor General Theodore B. Olson, a recently privately practicing lawyer who in the last decade successfully argued for the shutting down of affirmative action at the University of Texas (the federal appeals court, in that particular case, ruled the *Bakke* decision no longer held). Defending the U-M's Law School was veteran Supreme Court lawyer Maureen E. Mahoney, who also once served as a law clerk for Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist in earlier days.

Justices currently at the bench have been characterized as largely conservative (more so than a generation ago) albeit deeply divided regarding affirmative action. Two moderates emerge—Justices Anthony Kennedy possibly and Sandra Day O'Connor in particular—who may be pivotal "swing" voices. Thus far into the arguments, both have articulated strong doubts as to the plaintiff's case.

As the opening arguments unfurled, most analysts became intrigued by the rhetorical nuances employed by all the justices, including Justice Kennedy, who has regularly opposed affirmative action and called the University of Michigan's undergraduate policy a "disguised quota." Nonetheless, during proceedings he posed to the defense counsel: Should the court rule against both policies, would it be upon the court to order what the university ought to do, or ought the university find "some other system, say, more individualized assessment in order to attain some of the goals you wish to attain?"

Journalists and analysts have been thus far been intrigued by "individualized assessment," rather than, say, the "race-neutral alternative" as espoused by the lawyers of the plaintiffs as well as the Bush Administration. It seems such a formulation as "individual assessment" leaves room for considering race among the factors composing an applicant; in a way "race-neutral" clearly does not.

Causing the biggest ruckus was a brief filed by former military officers and the superintendents of military academies, endorsing affirmative action. This brief outlined the critical role a diverse officer corps played in national security, and how this was achieved by affirmative action in this nation's military academies. This incited a barrage of questioning from the Justices directed at the Solicitor General, which seemed to precariously wobble his position. His

"The Court faces the task of balancing the tensions among its desires to address race discrimination"

issue was 1978, in *UC Regents vs. Bakke*, when it ruled quotas as unconstitutional but left definitively ambiguous the issue as to whether race may be considered a factor among others as criteria for admissions. The result was high variability in subsequent decisions made by lower courts, throughout various regions of the country. This pivotal case would presumably clear the murkiness and finally set standards, with implications carrying deep into arenas other than public university admissions.

This landmark case is actually two cases posed by three plaintiffs. Jennifer Gratz, a white woman, is one of two suing the undergraduate division of the University of Michigan after being denied admissions. She claims, "This case is not about students being accepted or not being accepted, it's about students being treated fairly." Barbara Grutter, also white, is filing against the university's law school, from which she was denied admission. Her argument is that if the law school seeks diversity, she would

tion to be unconstitutional and unprincipled. However, two prominent members of the administration, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of State Colin Powell, both African-American, stated support for race as playing a role in admissions. Rice still professed support for the president's position, but Powell went so far as to publicly declare his position, calling himself a "strong proponent" of affirmative action. "Whereas I have expressed my support for the policies used by the University of Michigan, the president, in looking at it, came to the conclusion that it was constitutionally flawed, based on legal advice he received."

President Bush's statements (controversially made on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day), clearly advocated "race-neutrality" and his administration's brief called for the university to achieve diversity by some other means, such as plans employed by universities throughout Texas, Florida and here in California. But many note crucial differences between these states and Michigan. The University of Texas, for instance, admits the top 10 per cent graduating from each high school. Diversity is thus achieved, noted

response was a delicate one: "We respect the opinions of those individuals, but the position of the United States is that we do not accept the proposition that black soldiers will only fight for black officers." Furthermore, "Race neutral means should be used in the academies as well as other places."

To this Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg inquired, "But you recognize, General Olson, that here and now, all of the military academies do have race preference programs in admissions? Is that illegal, what they're doing?" Olson's reply was a "we haven't examined that" and mumblings about needing to know the specifics of each academy.

Olson received further grilling from Justice Kennedy regarding his position on diversity, as to whether it was a

continued on next page

continued from previous page

“permissible governmental goal.” Olson stated since the law school treated diversity as an end, then “obviously it’s constitutionally objectionable.”

Justice Stephen G. Breyer fired back, asking whether the ten percent plan employed in Texas (Olson’s historical battlegrounds) was also obviously objectionable then, since its purpose was also “to have diversity in the college”?

Olson denied this was the “stated motive,” and declared its purpose was to break barriers, and the program did exactly that in a race neutral manner.

Mahoney, speaking for U-M, held much better under the burning glare of the bench’s inquiries. Justice Antonin Scalia delivered the accusation that the U-M’s problem is one of its own creation, and whether or not she thought that Michigan decided to create a “super-duper” elite law school, and now was tossing out the Constitution, complaining such legalities impeded its need for diversity? Did it really need the said “super-duper” aspect of its law school? In response to the Harvard Law degreed Justice, Mahoney said, “I don’t think there’s anything in this court’s cases that suggests that the law school has to make an election between academic excellence and racial diversity.”

Outside the courthouse doors, the flurry continues, with academics, politicians, various civic leaders, and students themselves, mulling over the unforeseen ramifications of this far-reaching decision.

Illustrating such is the possibly effects on primary school education. Notes Julie Underwood, general counsel for the National School Boards Association, “The worst-case scenario would be a sweeping opinion that would re-segregate higher education. The worse worst-case scenario would not allow any kind of race consideration in K-12. We would see a re-segregated society very quickly.” Several cases of K-12 race-based decisions controversies litter courts throughout the country, including Maryland’s Montgomery County, where courts struck down a diversity policy that kept a white student from transferring from a school predominantly composed of students of color to another composed of largely white students; Boston, where courts ruled against a prestigious 7 to 12th grade public school’s policy which based roughly half its admissions on some race based factor; and San Francisco, in which the district, in response to a suit filed by Chinese American students denied admissions to their preferred school, repealed the policy that capped racial and ethnic group compositions at 45 per cent at each school, and 40 per cent at magnet schools. Lawyers have stated, though, that these Michigan cases would not affect those desegregation plans federally ordered to address past discrimination.

A decision will be made by this coming July.

who is kim jong il anyway?

by julie carl

To say that current North Korean leader Kim Jong Il’s life is shrouded in mystery and mythology would be quite true. It seems as though no one really knows much about this man, who nonetheless is portrayed as the crazy, evil destroyer of mankind and its most precious offspring, capitalism. In fact, the only things that people know about him are things that have no bearing on him as a political leader of one of the last communist nations in the world. According to Asia Source, a website that specializes in all Asian knowledge, he apparently perms his hair and wears platform shoes to appear taller. He loves movies and has one of the most extensive film collections in the world. Oh, and of course, it is apparently well-known that he likes to drink foreign wine.

According to official North Korean biography, Kim Jong Il was born on the highest peak of the Korean peninsula, Paektusan, on February 16, 1942. At the moment of his birth, thunder and flashes of lightning filled the sky. And, amidst the thunder and lightening, two bright rainbows appeared. It is even claimed that Kim is not only the son of the “peerless leader” Kim Il Sung, but also his reincarnation. Perhaps this is where the idea of the North Korean leadership being something of a personality cult comes from. However, with all myth aside, it is believed that Kim was actually born in Siberia. The fact that the true leader of Korea was born outside of Korea would be embarrassing, so official records were “modified” in order to prove Kim’s legitimate claim as the leader.

Politically speaking, he is known to be a daddy’s boy, fol-

Although Kim is often portrayed as a mindless lunatic by the western media, he has been described as “a pragmatic leader with good judgment and knowledge” by Kim Dae Jung, the former South Korean president, as told to the FOX news channel. In fact, during a summit meeting in June 2000, possibilities of better relations between North and South Korea were tangible. As the closing to the implementation of the Sunshine Policy, the summit brought together the two leaders of Korea and also western diplomats. The Sunshine policy focused on the engagement of North Korea economically and

not necessarily on the reunification of the two countries. North Korea would receive aid for its bankrupt country, if they agreed to at least be on friendly terms. Madeline Albright, the former secretary of state under the Clinton administration, said to the *Washington Times* that after the summit Kim seemed comfortable with the idea of improving relations with the rest of the world.

The prospects of changing relations for the better came to an abrupt end when George W. Bush came into office. The first change that the Bush administration made in the Sunshine policy was to not only toughen the investigations on nuclear plants but also to demand a decrease in non-nuclear weapons in North Korea. North Korea responded with refusing to participate in a relationship in which the United States was going to be antagonistic. With the relationship dwindling, both countries refused to compromise. This building tension exploded with the September 11, 2001 attack on the United States. No longer was the United States going to wait around for North Korea’s cooperation. They were going to force it out, or else add North Korea to the “Axis of Evil” list right next to Iran and Iraq. That is



“Everything from his wardrobe to his protruding belly is made fun of. From Mad TV to Asian American theatre troupes, Kim seems to be a gift to the comedic world.”

lowing directly in the footsteps of his infamous father. When Kim Il Sung passed away in 1994, he had already chosen his son to take over the leadership role, a rather un-communist thing to have done. However, Kim Jong Il did not come into power until 1997, which implies that there was somewhat of a power struggle within the People’s Party in North Korea.

Kim’s main political policy has been to promote the idea of “juche,” which can be translated into “self-reliance.” This ideology of “self-reliance” indicates a pull away from South Korea’s policy of democratization through the intervention of the United States. As far as the North Koreans are considered, their brothers on the southern end of the peninsula have been corrupted by greedy Western capitalists. Under “juche,” North Korea was also able to pull away from the Soviet Union and its influence. Juche can be found in everything in North Korea. Everything from Juche Tae Kwon Do to Juche operas celebrates North Korea as the center of the world. In fact, Kim wrote six Juche operas himself.



il na na kim jong il with a nicely shaped pair of eyebrows

exactly what George W. Bush did on January 29, 2002.

With the recent revelations of North Korea carrying fully functioning nuclear warheads and their intentions to use them if the time is right, a nationwide frenzy in turning Kim Jong Il into a silly clown has also developed. Everything from his wardrobe to his protruding belly is made fun of. From Mad TV to Asian American theatre troupes, Kim

seems to be a gift to the comedic world. This only seems to show the American way of turning the unknown and uncertain elements into pure comedy. There is no attempt to understand Kim as a leader of a nation; even respected news organizations cannot seem to get past the temptation to peg him as a buffoon. This objectification of him as a “character” merely renders him harmless in the eyes of the American public. This may only lead him to resort to more drastic measures in order to be taken more seriously. If the *Washington Times* represents the North Korean leadership as “crazy or crazy like a fox,” would it be appropriate to render the Bush administration as “dumb as a doorknob?”

REACH!ing for Activism

by lauren quan-madrid

I came to this campus as a first year, Los Angeles rooted, multicultural student in search of all those key “words” that are known to define Berkeley. I looked for protests, coffee shops, Birkenstocks, poetry and vegetarian cuisine and I found it all. However, I did not find the political activism my “American Born Chinese (ABC) political” mother and “Chicano Power” father praised Berkeley to be all about; at least not right off the bat. Call me old fashioned but there’s nothing like bay area Asian American cultural awareness/social and political activism, or at least I am told. Sadly, at Cal, there seemed to be a lack of it.

I searched around a few campus organizations I thought would advocate social change, got my name on a few list serves, and yet my first semester at Cal left me dissatisfied. I found organizations with good intentions but they concentrated more on socials and pizza nights than activism. That’s when I stumbled into a REACH meeting at the beginning of the spring semester and realized “Cripes! There is an Asian American movement on campus.” REACH (Asian Pacific Islander Recruitment and Retention) and the four other Recruitment and Retention Centers are all about provid-

ing high school students of color access to higher education. REACH in particular focuses on immigrant/refugee and urban Asian American youth.

The fact is, although APIs are a majority on this campus, we are a definite minority in America. It was only in 1965 that affirmative action was implemented to increase Asian American representation in institutions such as higher education and employment. As a majority on the campus, Asian Americans feel little threat of blatant racism or stereotypes within our campus communities. We’re everywhere: in every major, playing sports, on the stage, heading organizations and we’re very comfortable in our niches- maybe a little too comfortable.

A good number of us might be coming from financially stable and domestically sound situations and didn’t find it THAT difficult to get into Cal. Yet we don’t have to look far down Telegraph or up the 880 freeway to see huge pockets of poor Asian American children who don’t see college as an option. Forget the white picket fence and “American dream”, that’s not a reality for these kids. Where some of us may view college as a natural step on the road to adulthood, these children do not. We are truly privileged to be attending the “best”

public university and with that comes responsibility to give back and help our communities. What are we going to do with our time while in college?

REACH implements various programs such as mentoring, sponsoring Shadow Nights, Senior Weekend, working on retention of API students, outreaching to students all over California and spreading political awareness. The people at REACH don’t see what they do as community service or charity work; however, they are understanding and passionate about their involvement with making REACH work.

All the RRCS, (Black Recruitment and Retention Center, RAZA Recruitment and Retention Center, Native American Recruitment and Retention Center, Pili-pino American Student Services and REACH) are united under BRIDGES, which serves as a umbrella coalition. These RRCS are outreaching to students and making positive change in our communities.

Check out these RRCS in action on 5th floor Eschelman. They do their separate things yet they all have the same underlying goal: making higher education accessible to students of color. I guess I didn’t have to search far to see some inspiring Asian Americans y más with positive social/political consciousness. Bettering our communities through progression and education- that’s pretty good 21st century bay area activism. Not bad at all.

“I looked for protests, coffee shops, Birkenstocks, poetry and vegetarian cuisine and found it all.”

BEND IT LIKE BECKHAM

PART CHICK-FLICK, PART CROSS-CULTURAL EXAMINATION by irene wan

Over spring break, some friends and I decided that it would be nice to support a film starring people of color. (SIDE NOTE: BETTER LUCK TOMORROW COMES OUT APRIL 11) Usually, these films can go one of two ways—amazingly good: “I’m selling my house to pursue my dreams in idolization of the movie’s main character,” or horrifically bad: “the director should be tarred, feathered, and exiled to Siberia.” Fortunately for this director, *Bend It Like Beckham* falls closer toward the first category: enjoyable and inspiring, with a Disney-esque feel-good ending.

ational conflict flick, gender bending “girl power” flick, and young-love-overcomes-obstacles flick, all of which amazingly mesh together to form a coherent story.

Throughout the movie, a few themes come up repeatedly. One is the issue of women in sports and how this act breaks gender molds dictated to them by their culture, their family, or their society. This is shown in several scenes where Jess plays soccer with the boys while her trendy, made-up Indian friends sit on a bench and watch the boy while filing their nails and yakking on their cell phones. The issue of women in sports is not eth-

relocated to Britain, they retain many of their Indian traditions. This often creates a divided Jess, who must decide between obeying her parents’ wishes and their traditional expectations or following the cultural customs of the British and their spirit of individualism. Many things exacerbate this divide in Jess’

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Bend It Like Beckham is a diasporic film which tells the story of a British Indian family in London. The parents try to raise their younger soccer-playing daughter, Jesminder (“Jess”), in a traditional way. Unlike her elder sister, Pinky, who is preparing for an Indian wedding and a lifetime of cooking the perfect chapatti, Jess’ dream is to play soccer professionally like her hero, David Beckham. Jess is forced to make a choice between tradition and her beloved sport. Her family must decide whether to let her chase her dream...and a soccer ball.

This movie might best be characterized as a collection of formulas—underdog sports flick, culture clash flick, gener-

nic-specific, as Jess’ new friend, Juliette “Jules” Paxton, clashes with her mom over her athletic interests. Jules’ mom continually forces ideas of “femininity” on her daughter, such as shoe-shopping, and finding the right bra to enhance cleavage. At one point, her mom assumes that she is a lesbian and utters the cheeky line “there’s a reason why Sporty Spice is the only single member of the group.” This elicits a laugh from the audience, but does not detract from the issue at hand of the extra challenges women athletes face against perceived societal norms.

Another obvious issue in the film is bi-culturalism and the straddling of two cultures. While Jess’ family has

consciousness: one is her love of soccer. Another is her love for her young Irish soccer coach, Joe, played by Jonathan Rhys-Meyers, whom she is certain her parents would disapprove of.

Overall, the script is effectively entertaining, although somewhat formulaic at times. The acting by Parminder K. Nagra, who plays Jess, is stellar and it is her skill that carries the movie through. Most of the other characters have a kitschy slap-stick appeal, which gets the job done in this case. Jess’ parents are sometimes one-dimensional,

and Jonathan Rhys-Meyers’ (Joe) saving grace is the “smoldering” way he looks at the camera by pursing his lips and looking pensive. The overall feeling that I got from this movie was an echo of *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*. It’s not intellectually breathtaking and doesn’t add to the dialogue of race relations of the Indian Diaspora, but it is a pleasant coming-of-age story.



Jess (Nagra) and a teammate share a Disney-esque enchanted moment.

SARS:

CANCELS CAL BAND CHINA TOUR

by miguel de leon



The University of California Marching Band's upcoming performance tour of China scheduled for this summer has been cancelled, due in part to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic and, to a much lesser extent, the current political situation of the country. The Cal Band, which was supposed to send approximately 100 members to Beijing, Shanghai, and Hangzhou for a performance exhibition, was going to China to provide inspiration and insight for a marching band performance for the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

The band's executive committee, a six-person panel of five students and the band director, made the decision to cancel due to the fact that the fast-spreading SARS epidemic was becoming more prevalent and could risk the lives of potentially 100 band members.

"We didn't want to put anyone's life in danger, particularly since there's not much information on SARS," said Janice Mochizuki, executive secretary of

the Cal Band. "The CDC (Center for Disease Control) recommendation was also a factor."

While no official government body barred the Cal Band from continuing with its performance plans, the unsaid concern was prevalent. The Band's Senior Manager Patricia Seo remarked that after talking to head doctors at University of California San Francisco and looking at the current actions of the government (e.g. military officials were not allowed to step into mainland China), the Executive Committee decided to cancel.

"We didn't know how accurate the CDC was being," said Seo. "They were very vague. The concerns that many students and parents had also advised us to think about this decision."

Surprisingly, the war in Iraq was not much of a factor in the decision to pull out of the performance.

"[The war] had been on our minds, but when we made the decision the real issue was SARS," said Shereen Madjd-Sadjadi, the Band's public relations director. "We're obviously disappointed that we had to cancel, but also obviously the health and safety of the Bandsmen always comes first."

When the band's drum major, Jonathan Stan, traveled to China to scout performance locations, he said for the most part people did not agree with the war, but the sentiment was not too bad. He also said the war was secondary in the decision to cancel the tour.

"The decision was mainly based on safety and our responsibility with the lives of one hundred people," Stan said.

Student concern was one of the most important factors that the Executive Committee had to consider because a few people had dropped out from the tour or intended to if things stayed the same or got worse. The issue then impacted performance.

"If there's not enough people who go, we sound poor and look poor," said Madjd-Sadjadi. "If we're going to China to represent the university, we want to look and sound as strong as possible, and we want to have the best performance possible."

Along with the cancellation of the performance tour, the band has also decided to cancel its Preview Concert, originally scheduled on April 25th.

"One thing good to come out of all of this is that the band now has so many connections in China and the International Relations office, so a trip to China in the future might be a lot easier and much more feasible," said Seo.

The Cal Band has 200 members and is one of the few entirely student-run bands left in the nation. The band's director is the only paid university employee, and members of the band receive no academic credit. The last tour the band participated in was in a Bicentennial American Tour, and the last time the band was out of the country was in 1987, to play for the Coca-Cola Bowl in Japan.

SAYLI

Not Your Typical Student Organization

by elaine

As an international student, I find it difficult to join student organizations on campus. I'm Indonesian so I joined the Berkeley Indonesian Students Association (BISA) but I'm not sure what the organization really does. We set up a food stall at the Spring Festival, plan graduation banquets and barbecues, but the activities have never gone beyond fun and games. I want to do something meaningful, something productive. I considered joining the Asian American Association and the Asian Political Association but I'm not American. There is no way I can really identify with their way of life. I don't even understand their lingo. I'm itching to do something but I cannot find a medium that can help me do this.

I heard about the Southeast Asian Youth Leaders Initiative (SAYLI) from an email forward, and I felt compelled to go. On a Saturday morning in March, I drove to Stanford, knowing and expecting nothing, although I was hopeful about the possibility of meeting people who are passionate about their countries and Southeast Asia as a region. I don't know how much can be done by a bunch of Southeast Asian students in the United States to create change in Southeast Asia, but I was nevertheless excited about the idea of meeting people. There were at least thirty people gathered in the room, all of them coming from different countries: Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia and even Indonesia! My initial skepticism quickly turned into enthusiasm as we began our morning activities.

After getting to know everyone, one of the founders of SAYLI, Leng Lim, began to brief us on the history and mission of the organization. A group of six Southeast Asian Stanford students met and started to casually discuss the current conditions of their respective countries. They began to fantasize about the things they would do to improve the region if only they had one billion US dollars to fund their propositions and *voila*, SAYLI was formed. The idea of an organization mobilized by Southeast Asians for Southeast Asia excited me especially in this age of abusive politics because I always thought that international students cared about nothing but maintaining good academic standing and exploiting the chance of living away from their parents. After all, international students aren't necessarily affected by the political climate of their home countries because

they have the option of staying to work in the United States after graduation. Nevertheless, I was moved and inspired by their passion for a better future for Southeast Asia, regardless of whether or not they will be there to reap the benefits.

Our first group activity was called "What Do You Want From Me?" Assuming that each person was a representative for his/her own country, we began asking each other what each of us want from others. This particular discussion proved to be challenging and enlightening at the same time because most of us discovered that we really didn't know much about our neighboring countries. My Thai partner had to bear with my ignorance as I dug my brain for one factual question. I was appalled when I realized that my knowledge of other Southeast Asian countries were limited to food, art, and pop culture; I wasn't adequately informed of their economies or political systems.

We then proceeded to fantasize about the things that Southeast Asia can create together as a region. Somebody suggested the establishment of a single currency, and another dreamed about a digital media artist collaboration, but my favorite was the idea to set up on e-Bay a shipping system that actually works. All of us realize that these ideas are far fetched and probably impossible to do but we also agree that these ideas are great goals to aspire to achieve. In fact, one of SAYLI's goals for holding this conference is simply to get a bunch of imaginative people to brainstorm ideas and introduce possibilities.

During lunch break, I had the opportunity to talk to one of the committee members, Terence Chia. I barraged him with questions about the structure of SAYLI as an organization because I was curious to find out about their concrete plan to actualize the ideas that they had. He told me that the conference was actually the first one they ever held. SAYLI's long term vi-

sion is for it to become a platform for projects in Southeast Asia but for now, their main focus is to expand their reach and have a national conference at the end of the year. He added that the purpose of the conference was not to instruct the members but rather to invite suggestions and opinions from educated Southeast Asians. The committee wanted to make the organization as egalitarian as possible, which explains the absence of a formal structure. In order to make the effort a collaborative one, the committee felt that an organizational hierarchy would defeat the purpose of getting all of the members to actively participate.

I still didn't get it. The thought of an organization operating without a hierarchy was mind-boggling. But I withheld my questions for the afternoon discussion on SAYLI as an organization. The source of funding was the burning question in everyone's mind. The committee is currently working on obtaining grants from foundations in Singapore. They're also working on setting up an advisory council, which consists of well-known Southeast Asian national figures. Aside from that, SAYLI hopes to establish a Brain Trust in which Southeast Asian professionals may gather and pool all their resources together for the collective benefit of Southeast Asia.

I was happy to discover that there was more to this organization than mere talk. By the end of the conference, I felt that SAYLI was a promising forum for enthusiastic youths to possibly create a change. SAYLI might not be a thoroughly established organization but that is actually what makes it appealing for youths like me: it is not tainted by missions driven by political self-interest. Most of the students who attended the conference were not necessarily political science buffs but we were all there because we do care about the future of our countries and of Southeast Asia as a region. I did not feel intimidated from voicing my opinions because I knew that the organization was set up to cater to the needs of common citizens. The conference not only allowed me to voice my humble opinions, it also introduced me to admirable individuals who in spite of their western education, are still very much attached to Southeast Asia. It was definitely a rewarding experience to be able to interact with such distinguished individuals. I wish SAYLI all the best in the pursuit of their goals.

