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# hardboiled

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# 16.3 hardboiled

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### ABOUT THIS COVER

To form solidarity, we must reflect on our own experiences and struggles that resonate with the Asian American identity. We reflect, lingering between what stereotypes expect from us and defiance of those stereotypes. From the misappropriation of our cultures at the "Racist Rager" to memories of the history that our Asian American community has fought through, we come to the consensus that we continue to progress as a community, and that all of our individual identities are valid.

## editor's note

To the esteemed reader of this **hardboiled** issue,

I hope you're fucking excited. From the outrage at Duke University's yellowface party to the misappropriation of Asian food, this issue covers a diverse set of topics you'd be remiss to ignore. Lying at the heart of these articles is a common theme of identity: Who are we, and who do we refuse to be? Whether it's that damned model minority myth that persists in society, or the racist oriental depictions that others continue to ascribe to the Asian American community, there are plenty of things to get pissed off about.

So read on. Learn about the issues that are trending in the community. Get angry when you see that the world is not all sunshine and rainbows. Most importantly, do something about it. Engage in intellectual discourse. Throw a tantrum. Write, draw, or even shout in the middle of Sproul. Whatever your preferred medium is, do something to have your voice be heard. Whatever the case, never let someone else speak for you.

In the words of Helen Zia, "Asian Americans need to stop being **SO FUCKING POLITE!**"

Many of us were raised to be humble, patient, quiet, and modest. That does not mean we have to put up with bullshit. We have to learn that it's okay to stand up for ourselves, that an off-handed racist remark was not okay with you, and that saying sorry is not enough when someone holds a yellowface party.

While we as a community are still figuring out who we are, we know who we are not. We are not just studious poindexters who slave away at our studies. We are most certainly not exotic third world rice farmers. We are a creative, artistic, athletic, and intelligent community that has more to offer than our stereotypes do.

So stand up for yourself. Be brave. **Be bold.**

Alex Lee  
Co-Managing Editor

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We have just entered the year of 2013, and already we face national uproar over a racially themed Kappa Sigma fraternity party at Duke University, one of the most prestigious schools in America. The Eta Prime chapter of Kappa Sigma sent a racist email to their listserv, in which they mocked the stereotypical Chinese accent seen in movies and television shows. According to a screenshot of the emails posted on the blog *Angry Asian Man*, they used phrases such as "Herro" and "Chank You" in their email in place of "hello" and "thank you," and invited the addressee to attend their "Asia Prime" party. When recipients of this email reported it to the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life, Kappa Sigma sent an email the following day cancelling the "Asia Prime" party and announcing that they would host an "International Relations: A celebration of all cultures and the diversity of Duke" party instead. The pictures taken at the party showed partygoers wearing Asian-themed costumes, such as a sumo suit, a rice paddy hat, and kimonos.

The national headquarters of Kappa Sigma suspended this chapter in order to hold an investigation, while the Duke University administration did not respond at all. Larry Moneta, Duke's Vice President of Student Affairs, dismissed the incident as nothing more than a "boorish and foolish" fraternity party. According to Duke's campus newspaper, *The Duke Chronicle*, the Asian Student Alliance (ASA) organized a rally, and several members of ASA placed posters all over campus with pictures taken at the party and descriptions that drew attention to the racism present in the partygoers' outfits. ASA demanded an "apology of action" from the fraternity and called for a Group Bias Task Force. That night, ASA and the Duke Student

# RAGING ABOUT DUKE'S RACIST RAGER

## WHY IDENTITY IS NOT A COSTUME

by patty chen

the formation of a Group Bias Incident Task Force, which would give students the power to "collaboratively decide and implement accountability or reparative measures." They wanted to include the phrase "I will value others regardless of race, gender, class, sexual orientation or other identity" in the Duke Community Standard, and to add three full-time Asian American Studies Duke faculty members. Moneta believed that this incident was an anomaly that did not reflect the "healthy culture" at Duke, and that, though

society. Second, it has a material effect on the lives of Asians and Asian Americans, who have to resist the media's reductive portrayal of their identity and culture.

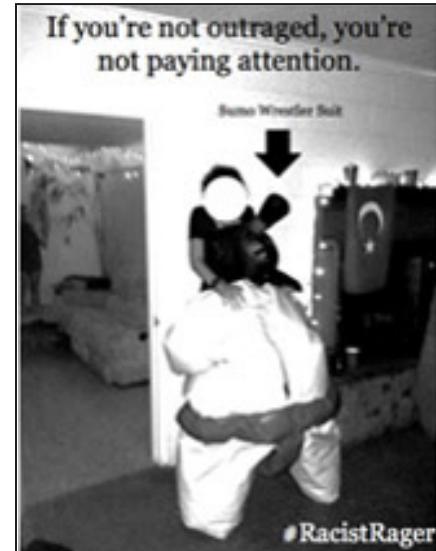
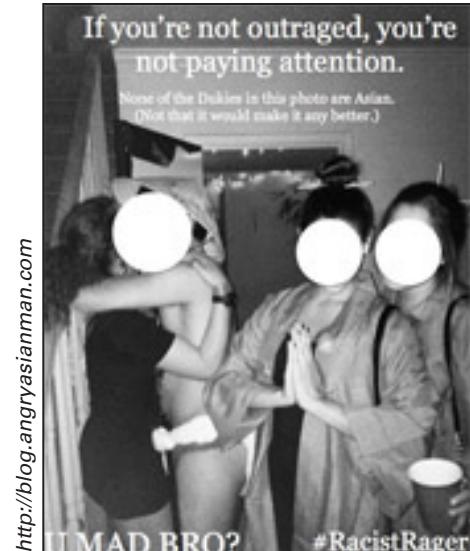
The partygoers distilled various Asian cultures into select Orientalized images of Asians as the racial "Other." They have reduced an entire plethora of Asian cultures into a stereotypical display of Chinese and Japanese culture as representative of all Asian cultures, an assumption held by many. They have placed an entire culture and

the Chinese culture can be summed up to rice paddy hats, and the Japanese culture by sumo wrestling costumes. By dressing in this manner, they have displayed why Asians are so different from the "rest" of America.

The partygoers presented Asian cultures as costumes fit for the drunken antics of a college fraternity party, thus stripping these representations of Asians from their historical contexts. By orientalizing the Asian identity, they have drawn attention to the differences between Asians and Americans, presenting Asian Americans as different from "normal" Americans. This narrative has been reiterated throughout the centuries, and has had substantive consequences for Asian immigrants and Asian Americans. Since the arrival of the first major Asian immigrant group in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Americans have marked the Asian body as the racial "Other," which Americans have used as justification for excluding different Asian immigrants and barring them from the naturalization process, further hindering their ability to function as productive members of American society. They justified the legal, social, political and economic discrimination against Asians by emphasizing the differences in their cultures and in their appearances. By putting on these costumes and mocking the different Asian cultures, the partygoers are reiterating this narrative that Asians and Asian Americans are irrevocably separate from American society.

While this party is not unique in its racial insensitivity, it draws attention to the need for the inclusion of Asian American history in our textbooks, and the need for the recognition of Asian American history

## THE PARTYGOERS ARE REITERATING THIS NARRATIVE THAT ASIANS AND



## ASIAN AMERICANS ARE

## IRREVOCABLY SEPARATE FROM AMERICAN SOCIETY

Government hosted an open discussion, which 10 Kappa Sigma brothers attended. In this meeting, the Eta Prime chapter's president, Luke Keohane, stated that the fraternity did not wish to "defend" their actions, but came to "learn" from this discussion. Later, he wrote in an email that Kappa Sigma should not have hosted the party after the initial backlash over its racialized theme. Almost two weeks after Kappa Sigma hosted this party, a coalition of student leaders, including members of Kappa Sigma, met with administrators to present a list of demands. They called for

these changes would have a positive effect on the Duke campus, such measures were unnecessary.

For those who hold an opinion similar to Moneta's—that this incident does not warrant any punitive response or acknowledgement from the university—I would like to explain why this party, and others comparable to it, cannot be dismissed without any form of accountability. First, the racially themed party repeats the historical pattern of forcing an Orientalized identity upon Asians and Asian Americans, who are presented as the racial "Other" separated from general American

identity on display as the "Other" for everyone to look at as an object of ridicule. While it may seem as if these college students were participating in harmless fun by putting on those costumes, they are illustrating how they see Asians as separate from the partygoers' normalized view of the world. They put on these exoticized garments as a way of marking the different Asian cultures as homogenous and radically distinctive from the rest of the American public. They have reduced the term "Asian" to only refer to Chinese and Japanese ethnicities, while further reducing these cultures by implying that the entirety of

in order to ensure that our history is not swept aside or forgotten. This fraternity did not mean to offend anyone, but their ignorance does not excuse their behavior. I commend Kappa Sigma for being open to what the ASA had to say. I give a standing ovation to ASA and their affiliates, who promptly resisted Duke's refusal to react appropriately to this incident. I fully support the demands made by the coalition, and urge the Duke administration to handle this situation appropriately and to set a precedent that such racially insensitive behavior will not be tolerated.

# BRIDGING THE GAP

## A REFLECTION ON STAN LAI'S RETURN TO BERKELEY



Photos Courtesy of UC Berkeley's Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies Department

by **christian ting**

I was sitting at a coffee table inside Brewed Awakening when Philip Kan Gotanda, Visiting Professor and Artist-in-Residence of UC Berkeley's Theater Department, first mentioned the name Stan Lai to me. We spoke at great length about the state of Asian American playwriting in the modern age. He referenced Stan Lai's critically acclaimed work both home and abroad (recently, *The International Herald Tribune* described Lai as "probably the best Chinese playwright and director right now") as signifiers of Lai's success.

"He's coming here on February 6th," Professor Gotanda said after finishing the last bit of coffee.

At first, I didn't grasp the magnitude of his words. I had no prior knowledge of Stan Lai, his body of work, or his impact on Asian American playwriting. But as Professor Gotanda continued to discuss the work of the Avenali Fellowship winner, Artist-in-Residence, and Berkeley Alum (Ph.D. Dramatic Art, '83), I found myself becoming increasingly intrigued. Lai, who has penned over 30 plays, is one of the most prolific writers of Chinese-language plays in the world. As Kathleen Maclay of UC Berkeley's News Center wrote, "He has woven romance, science, fiction, spirituality, tragedy and comedy into artistic endeavors that often cross the boundaries of countries, cultures and style."

I could see Professor Gotanda and Mr. Lai happily conversing with eager students and faculty in Durham Studio Theater on the night of the talk. Gotanda, who served as the interviewer, focused on Lai's early work in China and Taiwan and the complex inner dynamics of writing stories in another language while maintaining a humorous banter concerning whether Mr. Lai's dreams were in English, Chinese, or a mix of both. It was fascinating to watch the two playwrights engage in a sort of poetic discourse. Gotanda, a Japanese American writer who inundates his stories with a strongly resonant Asian American perspective and sentiment, provided a neat artistic counterpoint to Lai, a Taiwan-based playwright who approaches his largely Asian-centric work from a Western perspective. A great example of Lai's transnational style is apparent in his affinity for combining improvisation with traditional Chinese "cross talking," a comedic performance style known as *xiangsheng*, in his work.

Though Lai's appearance was brief, his presence alongside Gotanda made me realize that, regardless of where we're based, or which culture we identify ourselves with, the art of writing carries no prejudice: it is a global commodity, its potential audience as vast as the Pacific. I found myself humbled by the recent influx of Asian American and Asian creative writers and directors to the Cal campus. Before our very eyes, UC Berkeley is becoming a hub—an artistic haven—for Asian American playwrights, writers, and artists to not only thrive, but to share their work and creative process with a curious, pensive new generation. Only a couple of months before Mr. Lai's visit, author Henry David Hwang, whose name has become synonymous with Asian American dramatic studies, stopped by to impart his wisdom on the state of creativity, art, and representation in contemporary theater. Less than a month after Lai's visit, graphic novelist Gene Yang (author of *American Born Chinese* and *Level Up!*) made an appearance to discuss his creative process as well as inspire a new generation of graphic artists to continue perfecting their craft.

In a year dominated by "Gangnam Style" as the ubiquitous demarcation of performance art straight out of Asia, and in an era of contemporary drama in which Asian American and Asian stories are but shallowly presented for mainstream audiences—and ruefully so—a certain urgency is attributed to the works of Hwang, Yang, Gotanda, and Lai: writers determined to share the Asian and Asian American perspective with audiences in any country, on any stage, and at any cost.



# David Gan

## lessons i learned at a dwinelle plaza bench

by Sophia Ng

The history we learn in our textbooks often appears detached and, to an extent, fictional. While many of us venerate American history and contributions, we do so with a certain sense of dispassion. The specific records of Asian American contributions in history are often overlooked or minimalized in popular discourse. Today, when one discusses Asian American leaders and trailblazers, the conversation is often grounded in the context of modern multimedia. Personally, as a daughter of immigrants from Hong Kong, I perceived older generations of American-born Asians as obscure. Moreover, while the older generations of my family do hold a wealth of experience and memories, my yearning for personal narratives of the "Forrest Gump" nature from my own family members was futile. Our linguistic differences prevented me from asking questions about my heritage and my family history. As the first American-born generation in my family, I cannot fully understand the muteness of my family's past. I further assumed that some memories are more painful than others, and thus attributed the blocking of these memories to Chinese tradition and veneration. In any case, I always yearned to meet someone relatable who exemplified their own narratives—narratives that were concurrent with the events I learned about in my American history classes.

Last year, I met an older Asian American man at a bench on Dwinelle Plaza. At first glance, I assumed that the man on the bench was a Chinese tourist, but upon taking a closer look, I was baffled by his stack of vintage books and a Doe Library centennial poster. Curious, I started a casual conversation. After quick small talk, I learned that this man's name was David Gan. David was in fact not a tourist, but a Bay Area native. A UC Berkeley alumnus, David had graduated within three and a half years with degrees in Public Health and Microbiology in the 1950s, all while holding a job and raising a family. He currently audits classes at Cal every day. Retired and now 87 years old, David has audited nearly 400 classes over the past 21 years, living by the virtue: "If you keep your mind active, you stay young."

A few months later, I ran into David again—he was auditing an American Studies course on World War II in which I was enrolled. Upon further meetings, David told me stories of his experiences in pre-World War II California and beyond. David, originally from San Francisco, was the oldest of 14 siblings. A fourth-generation Chinese American, David endured many of the "head of the family" burdens of Chinese tradition and the cultural disparities that resulted from his American nationality. However, life quickly changed with the onset of World War II. Following the attacks on Pearl Harbor in 1941, 15-year-old David and his brother George joined the Grant Union High School cadets in Sacramento. As concrete evidence over lunch at Peking Restaurant, David showed me a class portrait in which he and George were indeed the only two Asian faces in a sea of white boys in the cadets.

The war changed David's cultural identity. In a manuscript, David confessed, "I think that also re-inforced my thinking that being Chinese was not a good thing. At times I had even felt ashamed to be one. It was also World War II and people started to look at me as if I was the enemy. What's the difference, Chinese or Japanese,"

they are Orientals, second rate people." To assert his American nationality, David became active in the war effort. David was initially denied from the U.S. Navy at the age of 17 due to his 20/200 eyesight, but he was later accepted into the U.S. Army, passing the weight requirement by consuming bananas prior to his physical examination. Following basic training in New York, he was sent to Normandy with the 19th Infantry Division. After the war, David returned home feeling unsettled. He quickly re-enlisted in the army, despite having a disability exemption following a life-threatening injury in combat. However, that did not stop David; he returned to Germany, realizing that his job was not done. Directly after the war, he attended the Army Intelligence School and tracked Soviet interactions. His last assignments in Germany included re-educating the Hitler Youth on democracy. After eight and a half years of service in the army, David and his wife, a German woman, returned to California in 1952, where he attended UC Berkeley under the G.I. Bill. After earning his diploma, David was employed at the California Department of Public Health until his retirement in 1992.

When I asked David about the prevalence of racism in the U.S. Army, David said that he had witnessed little. I noticed that David deviated from using the word "racism," mildly suggesting that "prejudice" was the more common term back then. The acts of prejudice he personally encountered included getting passed over for job promotions and almost getting killed by a fellow American soldier from the south. David, however, noted his sympathy by adding that the man who had almost killed him in his army barracks had done so in reaction to his brother's death during the Korean War. His honesty, enthusiasm, and patience throughout our discussion exemplified a humble character that war and personal successes could not eradicate.

David's story reinforced my proud identification as an Asian American, and reaffirmed the service and history of Chinese Americans on a personal level. As much as I read and learn about history in academic settings, I have always come up short in relating history to the present. I often regard the

confusing tug of war between my Chinese heritage and my American nationality as a thing of the present, but my meetings with David have taught me that this theme of mixed cultural loyalties transcends generations. David's deliberate enrollment in the California High School cadets was his means of proving that he was a real American. Perhaps my interest in Asian American activism is my way of proving that I, too, am a real American.



photos by David Gan & Sophia Ng



# WALKING TOGETHER

by katherine wang

This February marked the 43rd year since the Black Student Union at Kent State University first informally celebrated Black History Month in 1970. Since then, Black History Month has been a celebration of the achievements of prominent African American figures and the Civil Rights movement. However, it is also a reminder of a time of great political activism and unity. Just the year before, in 1969, minority student groups at UC Berkeley—including the Asian American Political Alliance and the African American Student Union—united under the Third World Liberation Front and initiated the second longest student strike in US history, successfully bringing about the creation of the first Ethnic Studies Department in the country. Although the intersection of Asian American and African American history is often underplayed, Afro Asian history, as it has been called, remains a rich part of both movements and a reminder of a solidarity that needs to continue today and in the future.

The 1960s, in particular, were a period of remarkable solidarity. Although the decade was largely characterized by the “Black Power” Movement, many Asian American activists worked alongside African American leaders in the fight for civil rights. Yuri Kochiyama, a Japanese American activist, was a prominent member of Malcolm X’s Organization of Afro-American Unity, as well as a powerful voice for quality education and jobs in Harlem. Richard Aoki, another Japanese American and a leader of the Third World Liberation Front strikes, was a founding member of the Black Panthers. When black activist Huey Newton invited Aoki to join the Black Panthers, Newton told him, “The struggle for freedom, justice and equality transcends racial and ethnic barriers [and] as far as I’m concerned, you black.”

And in a way, Newton was right. Today, and even more so back then in a time when Asian Americans

were essentially invisible, there are often only two categories: white and other. In 2001, when John Liu became the first Asian American elected to the Queens City Council in New York, there was no Asian American caucus for him to join, so he joined the existing Black and Latino Caucus (now the Black, Latino, and Asian Caucus) instead. Furthermore, the Civil Rights movement inspired the Asian American movement in many ways. In her 1969 editorial, “The Emergence of Yellow Power,” Japanese American poet Amy Uyematsu wrote, “The ‘black power’ movement caused many Asian Americans to question themselves.” Indeed, it was in the late 1960s and early 1970s that the Asian American Movement took shape, and the very term “Asian American” was coined in 1968 with the creation of UC Berkeley’s Asian American Political Alliance.

This is not to ignore the racial tensions that have existed between Asian Americans and African Americans in the past. However, one can argue that it is often not racial hatred but ignorance that fuels these racial conflicts. As early as in 1935, W.E.B. Du Bois commented on the lack of dialogue between Asian immigrants and African Americans. Over 70 years later, the two movements exchange very little dialogue, and a multitude of misunderstandings still exist between them, preventing more solidarity between Asian Americans and African Americans. Stereotypes perpetuated by the mainstream media can frequently create an imagined divide between two movements that are actually more similar than their portrayals would suggest.

What people forget—or perhaps never realize—is how analogous Asian American history and African American history are. The model minority myth obscures the lynching, the racial hatred, the school segregation, and the racial laws that Asian Americans have faced since the first group of Asian immigrants came to the US in the 1850s as railroad workers. These

“coolies” have frequently been compared to slaves; many were kidnapped and sold by captors as a result of clan violence. Even for those who chose to leave their own country, the passage across the ocean was notoriously inhumane and comparable to the Middle Passage that brought millions of black slaves to America about a hundred years ago. Throughout history, Asian Americans have faced verbal and physical attacks, massacres of entire ethnic towns, internment, and severe racial hatred and stereotyping, and the model minority myth continues to obscure the struggles of Asian Americans today. The Pew Research Center reports that Asian Americans are currently the most highly educated and well-paid minority in the US, and yet these numbers essentially render the reality of a large group of Asian Americans invisible because of the diversity within the umbrella term “Asian American.” In fact, the poverty rates of many Southeast Asian groups today are at or above those of African Americans.

Such comparisons are not meant to take away from the progress that African Americans have made or the struggles that African Americans have faced in this country, nor are they meant to say that our movements follow the exact same path. The two movements each have their own unique struggles and history, and often very different objectives and obstacles. Yet, at the end of the day, our overarching goal for racial equality is the same. We are all part of one greater movement, united in the same struggle despite the differences between our histories and experiences. To quote Martin Luther King, Jr., “Their destiny is tied up with our destiny [and] their freedom inextricably bound to our freedom.” He was speaking of the white and black divide back then, but as we move past the black-white binary, his words become true not just for black and white or black and Asian, but for all of us today. We cannot walk alone.

# a celebration of solidarity



*photo credit: kungfupanda.wikia.com*

Ever remember watching *Sagwa, the Chinese Siamese Cat* or *Jackie Chan Adventures*? I remember that these cartoons were the highlight of my life when I was a kid. I would play with my imaginary cat, or pretend I was on some martial arts mission to collect talismans that restore world peace. Maybe these cartoons are a little out of fashion, unlike more recent animated favorites such as *Avatar: The Last Airbender* and *Up*. What I appreciate about each of these cartoons is not only that they have their own unique stories, but also that they portray API characters in a positive light. As a child, I was not aware of how these cartoons could represent the American view toward APIs, but fortunately there are many positive examples of API characters in cartoons today.

*Avatar: The Last Airbender* is a popular TV series that includes characters from multiple Asian ethnicities. It is a blend of Asian and American culture, which reflects the Asian American population in the US. The animated series promotes a panethnic identity, or the idea that all Asians can be lumped into one large group. Some problems

with this are that it leaves little room for appreciating the differences between smaller Asian ethnic groups, and gives those unfamiliar with Asian culture the misconception that all Asians are the same. However, the animated series still celebrates highly regarded aspects of Asian American culture, such as the beauty of Chinese martial arts.

Chinese martial arts appear in a variety of cartoons, such as *Jackie Chan Adventures*, *American Dragon: Jake Long*, and *Kung Fu Panda*. Even video games like *Beyond Good and Evil* appreciate it—main character Jade performs martial arts in order to defend her allies. And not all API cartoon characters have to know martial arts to be loved: take the chubby, overweight Russell from Pixar's *Up*, for example. Unlike the stereotypical Asian American male, Russell is not a socially awkward, lanky nerd, but in fact quite the opposite. He has a loud, outspoken personality that makes him both cute and lovable.

Though there are many positive representations of Asian American characters today, some negative portrayals persist. I cannot help feeling annoyed that the preview of the

*My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* season three episode "Magic Duel" presents the owner of an antique shop as a Chinaman stereotype who hands the pretentious magician Trixie an evil magical device. Despite the clip's short length, it still asserts the 1800s myth of the "mysterious, exotic" Chinaman and his apparent ability to succeed because of secret and perhaps evil acts. This idea is also reflected in the Xbox 360 *Kinect Dance Central* series, in which the old, apparently Chinese Dr. Tan stars as the bad guy.

The views toward APIs in American cartoons are as varied as the diverse aspects of American culture. Though positive views of APIs often receive more attention, there are still problems with those representations. Many dominant representations of APIs in American cartoons still ignore the fact that "Asian" can refer to groups besides Chinese, Korean, or Japanese people. Now is a time when the Asian population in America continues to steadily increase, and with this change in population dynamics comes the necessity of acknowledging the diversity of Asian cultures when we flip on the television.



# API CARTOONS

by **adelyn chan**

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# Theatre Rice: UC Berkeley's Modern Asian American Theatre Group

by jenny lu

Let's be real—I've been a fan of Theatre Rice since I first saw a Theatre Rice show last semester. The way each actor demands your attention, the humor that effortlessly slips from their lines, and the different emotions I was forced to feel as an audience member all made me fall in love with Theatre Rice.

Theatre Rice was founded in the fall of 1998 as a space for (but not exclusive to) Asian Americans to explore, participate, and contribute to the theatrical arts through acting, writing, dancing, producing, and directing. As the first Asian American theatre group at UC Berkeley, Theatre Rice (TR) has paved the way for Asian Americans interested in the performance arts by promoting the representation of Asian Americans in this context. TR Historian Amy Ma shared, "Theatre Rice gives us an opportunity to be on stage and be out there...this is a different side of the Asian American community."

Theatre Rice is also grounded in helping the larger community. A percentage of the proceeds from every show's ticket sales are donated to support charitable causes that range from other campus organizations' programs to nationwide relief programs. TR uses art to address issues that both the Asian American and performance arts communities face.

The new Theatre Rice cast members stay true to TR's time-honored traditions as they break new boundaries. TR is about experimentation and expression. Theatre Rice has expanded and grown physically and philosophically since its founding, but it stays true to its goal of providing meaning behind each show.

The cast of Theatre Rice never fails to provide meaningful messages behind their art, from satirical interpretations of politics to inspiring characters and empowering stories.

I was honored to receive a "backstage pass" to go behind the scenes of Theatre Rice's rehearsals for an upcoming show. I couldn't help but notice the atmosphere in every room I entered and every group I talked to: it was like they were a family.

Even though every member was hard at work putting the show together, there was time for interaction, laughter, and fun. Ian Fun explained, "It's TR magic. I'm doing it because I want to be here and I love everyone here. Going to TR makes me happy and [helps me] de-stress. It's rewarding."

Theatre Rice's sheer existence challenges the misrepresentation and underrepresentation of Asian Americans in media. As a collective of different voices and ideas that make up the

Asian American identity. TR directly fights underrepresentation by allowing Asian American students to represent themselves, their views, and their stories. There is no single representation of Asian American, and that is exactly what Theatre Rice exemplifies.

I can't even begin to explain how much love and respect I have for Theatre Rice. Through brave and creative performances, Theatre Rice challenges the many issues faced by the Asian American community. Whether its members know it or not, Theatre Rice debunks the "model minority myth" simply by defying what is expected and going against the various stereotypes that are placed upon our community.

Theatre Rice creates a presence for Asian Americans on stage and in art—places in which we are highly underrepresented and misrepresented—and does it with strength and love. In other words, Theatre Rice gives me hope.

Theatre Rice consists of students from a wide range of experiences, ranging from those with no experience at all to accomplished actors and directors. Theatre Rice is an open and inclusive space.

For more information about Theatre Rice, visit: <http://tr.berkeley.edu/>



## The Art, Philosophy and Practice Behind Kendo Club at Cal

by jenny lu

In the fall of 2010, five Cal students who felt the need to serve and share the art of Kendo with the community refounded the Kendo Club at UC Berkeley. Jessie Park, one of the co-founders and now an alumnus of UC Berkeley, still comes to practices. Park shared that "Kendo is a space to enjoy and grow as human beings."

Kendo, also known as Japanese fencing, is an art and sport that originated in Japan. The club aims to teach the art, philosophy, and practice of Kendo through rigorous training. Through these teachings, students and members develop discipline, integrity, and respect. Cedric Lamy, a second year at Berkeley, expressed, "Kendo focuses on spirit and form...it is unique in that it's about contact with other people—you spar (mock combat) with people—it's a good stress reliever."

Kendo Club may be about practicing a physical sport that focuses on combat, but it also offers a space and environment filled with support. Sophie Ha, a third year at Cal, shared, "I love Kendo because it's a place to challenge yourself. You're not scared of the challenges because everyone is so supportive."

Kendo Club President Steven Tseng stated, "We don't just promote how to defeat someone in a match, we teach the philosophy and understanding that everyone is equal. In the end, we are all students. We promote friendship, challenge, and support."

Although Kendo is a martial art, it is not under the UC Martial Arts Program at Berkeley. Kendo Club is completely run by students and their love and dedication to Kendo. Members of Kendo Club pay for their own materials and travel expenses; the entire club is almost entirely self-funded. Four student instructors, who dedicate their time and energy into teaching Kendo, facilitate the club. In particular, the student instructors focus on supporting and helping

the beginners develop and learn the art of Kendo. The students in Kendo Club continue to sustain the organization out of their love for the sport by sharing and allowing others to enjoy the art and philosophy of Kendo.

Since Kendo Club's re-founding in 2010, students from the club have gone on to compete as a group of individual students not affiliated with the school at the Yuhai Tournament at UCLA. In the spring of 2011 and the spring of 2012, students from Kendo Club placed second in the overall competition. The group is now looking to prepare for spring 2013's Yuhai Tournament, and Club President Steven Tseng aims for them to earn first place.

During my warmly welcomed observations of Kendo Club practices, I couldn't help but feel accepted and very happy. I could see the hard work every student put into his or her practice. I could see the dedication each student has to the space. Most of all, I could see the love and respect the members have for one another. I was also very lucky to have come on a special day.

One of the members of Kendo Club, Yuichi Hashiguchi, is an international student whose last day with Kendo Club was the day I visited. As a ceremonial good-bye, each student wearing armor fought for 15 seconds with Hashiguchi. It was a way for them to show their respect and love for Hashiguchi, and a reminder for him not to forget the people he met at Kendo Club.

The philosophy behind the practice of Kendo was clear: They are a team, and they are a family.

Kendo Club is completely open and accepting to all people interested.

To find more information about Kendo Club, visit: <http://berkeleykendo.weebly.com/>

# Take No Substitutes

## Combating Ignorance through Food Fights

by sam lai

This past January, I started my first figurative food fight. While browsing the Internet, I came upon a recipe titled "Fragrant Pho Noodle Bowl" at mynewroots.com/site. The blogger, Sarah Britton, had set out to turn the Vietnamese noodle *phở* into a healthy, vegetarian-friendly, and gluten-free version, but the result looked nothing like *phở* in its conventional form. For anyone who may be unfamiliar with it, *phở* usually consists of rice noodles cooked in a rich broth made from simmering beef bones at a low heat, all topped with herbs, sprouts, and slices of beef. Britton's take looked edible, but that shit had soba noodles and broccoli and black sesame seeds mixed in. Seriously? Not even Café 3 goes this far in bastardizing *phở* into such an unrecognizable state. I shared the recipe with a Tumblr friend, who in turn shared with it on his Tumblr, which led to a flurry of comments on Britton's blog expressing disgust, with one suggestion that she change the title to "Pho-Inspired Noodle Bowl." Britton complied readily, but the outpour of comments made me wonder: Why the hell do we care so much about food and get angry over it?

Chef Michael Hung answers this question better than I can: in San Francisco Chronicle's food blog, he stated that "food and cooking extend beyond just sustenance and form identity and social consciousness."

For me, growing up and eating out in San Gabriel Valley has played an integral role in my Asian American identity. In Los Angeles, I live a 10-minute drive from the 25-year-old restaurant Golden Deli, arguably one of the best places to score a cheap bowl of *phở*. My family may not be Vietnamese, but we are lazy, so we've frequented GD many times whenever we wanted something simple and quick to get the job done.

I recently turned into an herbivore, but over winter break at home, I could not resist ordering a meatless bowl of *phở* made with the same beef-based broth, a flavor that never fails to make me appreciate the area where my parents raised my siblings and me. I always attributed Golden Deli's popularity to their good food, low prices, and brisk service, not once questioning its appeal or authenticity.

Then I came to Berkeley and realized how privileged I was to have access to food that Southeast Asian immigrant families have been cooking at home for over a century. The few times I got to stay at my best friend's house in San Jose, I had the honor of eating homemade vegetarian *bún bò Huế*, nothing I had ever eaten before or would be able to find back in LA. Although I could not handle the spiciness, it tasted like home because my best friend's mom treated me like family. As someone who has been eating off of meal points for three years, I know other Asian Pacific Islanders would agree that nothing about the dining halls can transport us back home. If we ever complain about the blandness of the fried rice or

greasiness of the chow mein, we do so with a grain of salt, because cafeteria food requires less thought to consume than it does to produce. We can't hate on the pho bar because we already lower our expectations for it and anything else labeled "Asian," and we already know that no buffet could ever satisfy our need for one comforting bowl of *phở*.

I admit that fixating on and shredding apart Britton's

"Fragrant Pho"

leads nowhere. Even she acknowledges her lack of experience: "The only association I have with Vietnamese [sic] food was back in high school,

suffering through bowls of poorly made pho."

Yet for those who attach a sentimental meaning to the noodle soup, seeing it taken out of context and stripped of its essential ingredients can be insulting. In response to the "traumatizing memories" that Britton endured when she and her high school friends would stop by Chinatown for "totally boring" pho, one Tumblr friend reacted, "like that was the same thing...i read that and the comment afterward that included the word 'traumatizing' and i'm thinking you know what is really traumatizing is growing up and being teased by lil white children every time i brought Viet food to school and how that continues to be the case even into my adulthood with other people who should fucking know better."

On Facebook, friends took different stances, calling the recipe "some racist white foodie business..." or suggesting it be renamed "pho-inspired buckwheat noodle soup." Just as sushi and tikka masala have become a part of mainstream American culture, *phở* fever has spread across the United States: Today, more than 3,000 restaurants serve it, and California tops the list with 749 noodle joints. Now, in big cities like San Francisco, Los

Angeles, and New York, *phở* has achieved hipster status. In 2012, DJ Sabzi of the hip hop group Blue Scholars released a music video titled "WASSUP PHẠM / Phở 99," in which he

raps about contemporary *phở* culture.

The current trend of "Asian hipster cuisine" calls into question whether Asian Americans need to commodify classic foods like *phở* in order to gain acceptance. Heated arguments over who gets to appropriate from whose culture has sparked interest among the current generation of chefs who grew up savoring a combination of Western and Asian food. Two Asian Americans who tackle the debate head-on are tastemakers in their own right: Eddie Huang started his own restaurant, Baohaus, in New York, and his friend Francis Lam blogs at Gilt Taste, an online culinary magazine.

For Huang and Lam, the issue goes beyond any single dish, centering more on entitlement: Who gets to claim whether or not something is "authentic," and who gets to be the purveyor of food drawn from Asian Pacific Islander cuisine? Huang started Baohaus in an effort to recognize the "food my Mom raised me on," such as beef noodle soup and baozi, steamed buns filled with meat and vegetables.

"You can be successful like...Baohaus [by] serving largely unadulterated food that is true to the pantry and palate with better messaging," Huang commented.

For all his machismo and foul-mouthed language, Eddie takes pride in his Taiwanese identity in a way that I still struggle to now. I know that confidence does not come easily to any of us who have ever felt ashamed or self-conscious when we brought food from home to school. Every time my mom packed me zongzi for lunch in high school, I wished she had given me something easier to eat and explain to people, although at home I gobbled it up without hesitation.

In the case of the "Fragrant Pho Noodle Bowl," food plays a substantial role in how people understand API culture and, by extension, the experiences of APIs in America. The outrage from respondents who identified as Vietnamese

reflects a common attitude towards food in the API community: uprooted from their homes, marginalized in their new American environment, food symbolizes a place of comfort and safety. For someone to even carelessly use "curry" or "dumpling" without consideration the origins of such terms goes beyond ignorance: it can be read as a form of oppression.

The food fights that emerge when one group misappropriates a cultural object from another sprouts not from oversensitivity, but rather feeling threatened by a lack of solidarity. Food should never be the easy way to introduce oneself

into a culture. Let the food fights happen, engage in them, build a shared understanding, and mix well to grow respect and open-mindedness.

"We have to be cognizant and respectful of the people and cultures we take from, and America is a place where we co-opt the shit out of everything and there's no easier place to do it than food."

- Eddie Huang

I AM A  
VIETNAMESE AMERICAN  
WRITER



RECONNECTING WITH  
HERITAGE  
THROUGH LITERATURE

Before attending UC Berkeley, I did not really think much about what it means to be Vietnamese American. Although my family did not embrace Vietnamese culture, my parents occasionally gave me lively accounts of their experiences as children in post-war Vietnam, teenagers in re-education camps, and adults in the United States. After one semester at Berkeley, I became aware of not only the negative racial stereotypes against Asian Americans, but also the positive cultural openness about diversity from the student community. In response, I reached out to my Vietnamese heritage, as it had been buried away for years under self-refusal and Western culture.

Coming to college made me revisit *Catfish and Mandala*, a memoir I read for English in high school. After my first semester, I began to critically think about both my parents' sacrifices as immigrants and my identity as a Vietnamese American student. Berkeley made me realize that the experiences described by the author, Andrew X. Pham, are not exclusive to him. They have affected so many other first-generation students and Vietnamese Americans such as myself.

In his beautiful and tragic memoir, Pham, a Vietnamese American, writes about re-exploring his homeland by bicycle. While traveling across the villages of Vietnam, Pham recalls his experiences growing up in both America and Vietnam. During the Vietnam War, Pham's family—consisting of him, his parents, and his four siblings—journeyed out of Communist-controlled Vietnam by boat. As he and his family escape from Vietnam, Pham encounters the individuals derogatorily referred to as the "boat people," and witnesses the perils they face and their bravery. Later, Pham moves to the United States after staying in a refugee camp for a year, but things do not look brighter. His adolescence in America consists of a dysfunctional family life, struggles with other minorities at school, and feelings of estrangement from mainstream American culture. When he comes back to Vietnam almost two decades later, Pham is split between his Vietnamese and American upbringings, though he realizes that his Vietnamese roots have started to fade.

The memoir is significant to me for two reasons. Firstly, *Catfish and Mandala* illuminated my family history.

Though my parents' immigration process was not similar to that of Pham's, their childhood and experiences with the re-education camps were similar. His vivid descriptions of the re-education camp that his father stayed in reminded me of my parents' retellings of their struggles, stories that I rolled my eyes at when they reprimanded me for being wasteful and lazy. My parents, witnessing Saigon's destruction, tried to escape with their families from Communist Vietnam, only to be put into labor camps and have their possessions removed from them. They worked in construction, tobacco rolling, and planting, receiving meals of rice and sand as compensation. At the same age I was jamming along to Hilary Duff and complaining about the SATs, my parents witnessed beatings, bribery, and corruption. To them, immigration was both a blessing and a curse. Though they escaped corruption by immigrating to America, they, like Pham's parents, couldn't fulfill their dreams of higher education or professional careers. Knowing this fact makes me feel privileged to attend a top-notch university and obligated to share our family story.

Through Pham's story, I also began to understand myself. As a writer who is Asian American, I rarely connected with the authors on my reading lists in high school, who were all dead white men. I was shocked that a community of Asian American writers existed, let alone Vietnamese American authors. When I picked up *Catfish and Mandala*, I couldn't stop reading it because it resonated so much with my life as a first generation Vietnamese American. I was shocked to find out that Pham grew up in San Jose, my hometown, and faced the same socioeconomic struggles. The hardships that his parents went through were familiar to me, as both my parents had transitioned from promising, affluent backgrounds in Vietnam to being labeled as low-income in America. The traditional, tough-love discipline that his parents used strongly reminded me of my own upbringing. However, the glowing effects of these similarities washed away as high school passed by, until Berkeley came along.

When I finally got to college, my consciousness of my own cultural identity was amplified when I heard things like, "Asians aren't writers." "Asians are demure,

methodical, quiet, and 'book smart.'" "Your parents are so Asian." "That's not the Asian way to do it." "Well, at least they get the best stereotypes."

Pham, who felt disconnected from both American and Asian culture, said, "I am a mover of betweens. I slip among classifications like water in cupped palms, leaving bits of myself behind. I am quick and deft, for there is no greater fear than the fear of being caught wanting to belong. I am a chameleon. And the best chameleon has no center, no truer sense of self than what he is in the instant."

And I felt the same way. I did not fit into any box that society prescribed, and that angered me. Should I be proud of such limiting stereotypes? My parents are anything but demure. And I certainly don't identify as "methodical, quiet, and 'book smart.'" Did other people mark me as Asian, American, or Asian American? What did these terms mean? Was I a walking stereotype rather than a person with a unique background? Like Pham, I was lost in my mind.

But anger could only resolve so much. Substantial social change starts from compassion. Being passively angry wasn't enough, because I knew better than to be trapped in socially constructed boxes. I started to break down stereotypes by doing what I did best: sharing stories of my Vietnamese heritage and writing to my heart's content.

Of course, not all of the lessons that I've learned from the book are as culturally charged as the ones that I've discussed. One of my favorite quotes from the novel is:

"Adventure is but a collection of detours. He asks me how I got the courage to go. I say I'd realized that the surest way forward was to burn all the bridges behind."

What I've learned from Pham's journey is this: Go on adventures. Don't let yourself be crippled by ignorance or boxed in by stereotypes. Embrace the complexities of the past and the complexities within yourself. Just do things for the hell of it, because you never know what you'll discover about yourself.

by stacey nguyen

# Asian American Womyn in film

UC Berkeley's own Professor Edward Frenkel's Risqué Film "Rites of Math and Love"  
The Racial Implications: Men Do Math While Women Sit Around And...Get Math Done On?

by vi vo

As we all know, Berkeley has a reputation for academic brilliance and straight up weirdness, paradoxically. From tree sitters, to AIDS denying scientist, to finally, sexy professor turned erotic film star, ladies and gentlemen I give you genius mathematician Edward Frenkel and his costar Kayshonne Insixieng May in "Rites of Love and Math," an erotic film which pays homage to Yukio Mishima's "Yukoku." Math has finally made it into the bedroom, but not just any bedroom, a Japanese bedroom.

Now, for some folks, this news might be old, but for many new students who came from less liberal backgrounds the thought of your teachers naked is mindblowing (and sometimes disturbing) enough, let alone them getting down on camera. Nor have I found an article formally critiquing the film from an ethnic and sex related angle. When I first discovered this juicy bit of gossip, not only did the notion of a math solving, butt flashing, professor all in one highly impress me, the thought of a hot professor you could perv on during office hours, proved even more amusing. But once the really bad math related sexual innuendos died down, and I finally got around to watching the trailer, I noticed right away why the film would offend people. The controversy wasn't over whether Frenkel made an erotic film or not, but over the content of his erotic film; I found this incredibly funny; at Berkeley professors don't face heat for appearing naked on camera, because that would be too conventional, here instructors face heat for what they do while naked on camera.

The sexist and racial implication gets worse during the heart of the film. The film takes place on a Japanese Noh theater stage, where the mathematician who had just discovered the formula for love, and consequently had "bad guys" after him and the beautiful Mariko engage in passionate love making after which Frenkel tattoos Mariko's abdomen with the "formula of love," as Mariko tilts her head back crying out in pain and ecstasy. Take this into consideration, as the Mathematician tattoos Mariko, her kimono appears to be made out of a paper like fabric, she also has no makeup on, in a nutshell Mariko is a giant, fleshy, white piece of paper, a blank canvas subjected to the will of the Mathematician, in other words, the man.

According to Carol Ness of the UC Berkeley News Center, Robert Bryant the director of the Mathematical Science Research Institute (one of the film's sponsors), publicly announced the withdrawal of the MSRI's support due to email by those who saw the premise as: "depicting a male fantasy of sexual domination of women" and "sending a message that men do mathematics while women are reduced to passive sex objects."

Personally, I don't think Frenkel's intentions were to aggressively assert his white male privilege; but the film sure doesn't do him any justice, the

sexist content of this film is in no way specific towards to Asian women, the submission to the man, but it is especially relevant to Asian women. Due to the lack of discourse regarding the subjugation of Asian women and men, it is very easy to perpetuate, intentional or not, these harmful images without realizing it.

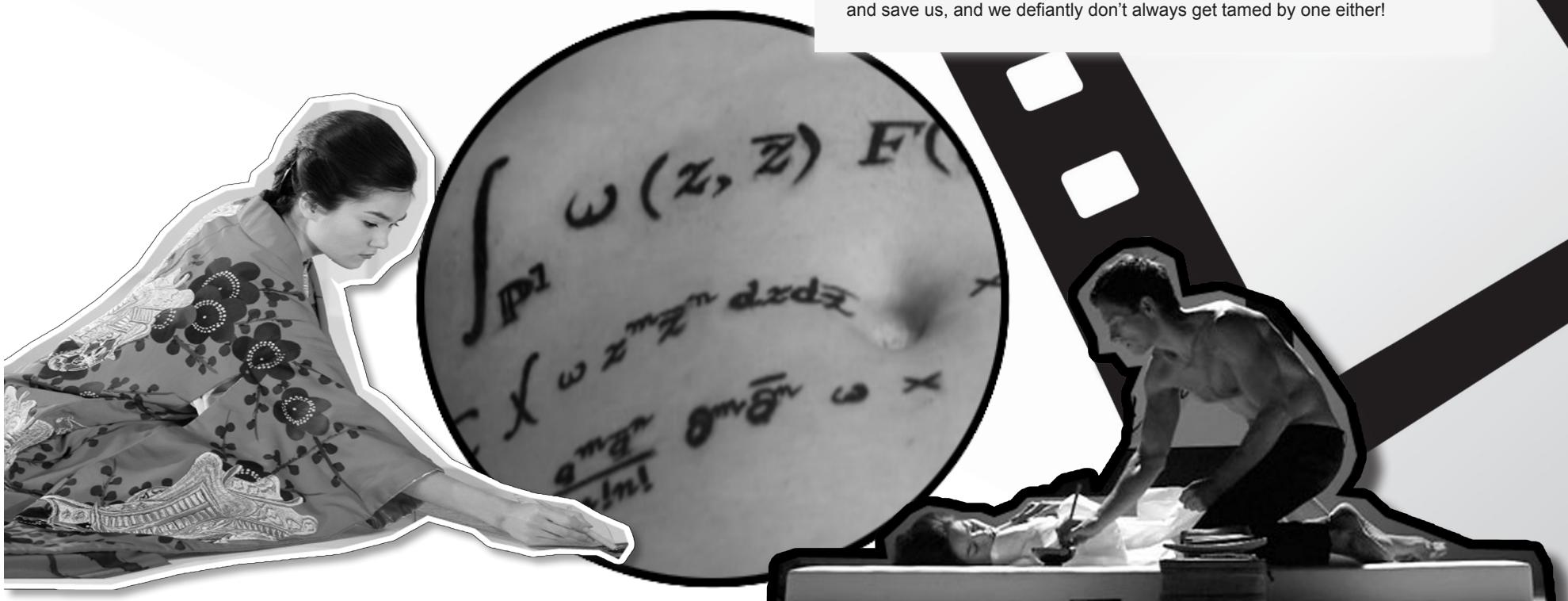
The objectification of Asian women as passive, speechless, objects of sexual perversion has always been a staple in the mainstream media. Think about it, where did the idea of the quiet fragile Asian come from? Where does the "Me love you long time!" come from? Personally, I think that if you want an accurate idea of where our culture is headed, you look at the type of porn people are watch. We see this "Asian fetish." Go to any porn site and under the category "Asian" you are sure to find subcategories such as "submission," "rape," "exotic," "freaky," or "I serve you master!"

The problem starts when people don't realize that they are perpetuating racial or sexually offensive images just because it might be in a more watered down form such as this film. It doesn't matter if it is not considered a porn or not, it still has racial and sexual overtones and it needs to be called out; these images have always been associated with our people, and still are because we as a society have allowed them too. Understanding this social context is a part being a well informed person; even the most educated, intelligent individuals can fall prey to normalized yet bigoted behavior.

Perhaps if the film used the same plot, but in a different setting, then the insult might have been lessened. This perpetuates the historical and sociological association of Asian women (especially Japanese women) with images of the submissive, yielding, passive, exotic, delicate, porcelain doll, awaiting the liberating touch of the foreign white man as opposed to the emasculated, scheming, Asian men. That is why the image of a kimono clad woman sexually, emotionally, and even intellectually, submitting legs wide open to a white man makes me slightly cringe because it's a complete throwback to the good old days of Madame Butterfly who waits forever for her beloved white lover to return, and when he doesn't she cuts her own throat.

Now in the end, why should we and everyone else care? WE AS A SOCIETY should care because it's the decent thing to do, the right thing to do, the good thing to do! Because of this box, hopeful, talented Asian Americans everywhere face a cruel reality where the only roles they can plan in film are the roles that have been ordained to them by the white man, we can only play what the white man thinks is appropriate for us to play, how we fits into his world, not where we actually are.

The point of this article was not to bash professor Frenkel or any other specific individual in any way. We don't always need the white knight to come and save us, and we defiantly don't always get tamed by one either!



# API COMMUNITY CALENDAR

compiled by **sam lai**

Ever feel like you have so many obligations that you just can't win? We here at **hardboiled** newsmagazine feel your pain, because we suffer that on a daily basis. We attend concerts, conferences, culture shows, fashion expos, socials, and workshops more often than we go to class. For all of you who aspire to lead hectic lifestyles like ours, please enjoy the calendar packed with events in the Asian Pacific Islander community on-campus!

## MARCH

### Theatre Rice! Midsemester Show: Uncommon Sense



**When:** March 15 & 16, doors open 7 pm  
**Where:** Dwinelle 155  
**For Whom?** \$3 presale, \$5 at the door  
**Why:** The show will consist of comedy troupe, drama, adaptation, music videos, and more! A percentage of the proceeds will go towards charity.  
**How to purchase tickets:** visit the TR table with the bright green banner on Sproul and talk to the nice people!

### Empowering Women of Color Conference (EWOCC)



**When:** Saturday March 16, 2013  
**Where:** Wheeler Hall  
**For Whom?** free for UC Berkeley students, \$15 for non-UCB students, \$20 for general public  
**Why:** This year's theme, "Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Bodies and Souls Building Life," seeks to honor a multiplicity of women's experiences around labor, marked by stretches of struggle and moments of victory.  
**How to register:** visit [ewocc.wordpress.com](http://ewocc.wordpress.com)

### REACH!'s Southern California 2013 Outreach



**When:** March 23-28, 2013  
**Where:** San Diego, Westminster, LA  
**Why:** Since 1997, REACH!, the Asian Pacific Islander Recruitment and Retention Center, has visited under-resourced high schools and community colleges in California to educate students about higher education. They inform students about social inequalities as well as college admissions, financial aid, etc.  
**How to get involved:** contact [caloutreach@gmail.com](mailto:caloutreach@gmail.com)

## APRIL

### Hmong Students at Berkeley's 5th Annual Pursuit of Higher Education



**When:** April 12-14, 2013  
**Where:** TBA  
**Why:** To amplify the Hmong voice in higher education, the Hmong Student Association at Berkeley initiated the Pursuit of Higher Education in 2008. The program ensures a space for students to critically dialogue about issues pertaining to the Hmong community by creating a pipeline to develop future community leaders.  
**More info:** visit [hsab.berkeley.edu](http://hsab.berkeley.edu)

### Cal Vietnamese Student Association's VISION Program: "Growing Success"



**When:** April 18-21, 2013  
**Where:** TBA  
**Why:** VISION is an all-expense paid, 4-day, 3-night program meant as an opportunity not only for high school students to gain the necessary tools to harness their leadership potential, but also for mentors to grow as facilitators. This year's theme, "Growing Success," signifies the Vietnamese American community's growth from humble beginnings into a large and diverse group of individuals  
**More info:** visit [calvsas.com/vision/](http://calvsas.com/vision/)

### Cal Vietnamese Student Association's Culture Show



**When:** Sunday April 21, 2013  
**Where:** TBA  
**Why:** Cal VSA's annual Culture Show always aims to bring to attention the domestic and global issues that affect the Vietnamese community as expressed through the show's storyline. This year, VSA strives to continue the tradition of sharing Vietnamese history and culture by focusing on the Operation Babylift program, an event that is important to both Vietnamese history and adoption history.  
**More info:** visit [cultureshow.calvsas.com](http://cultureshow.calvsas.com)