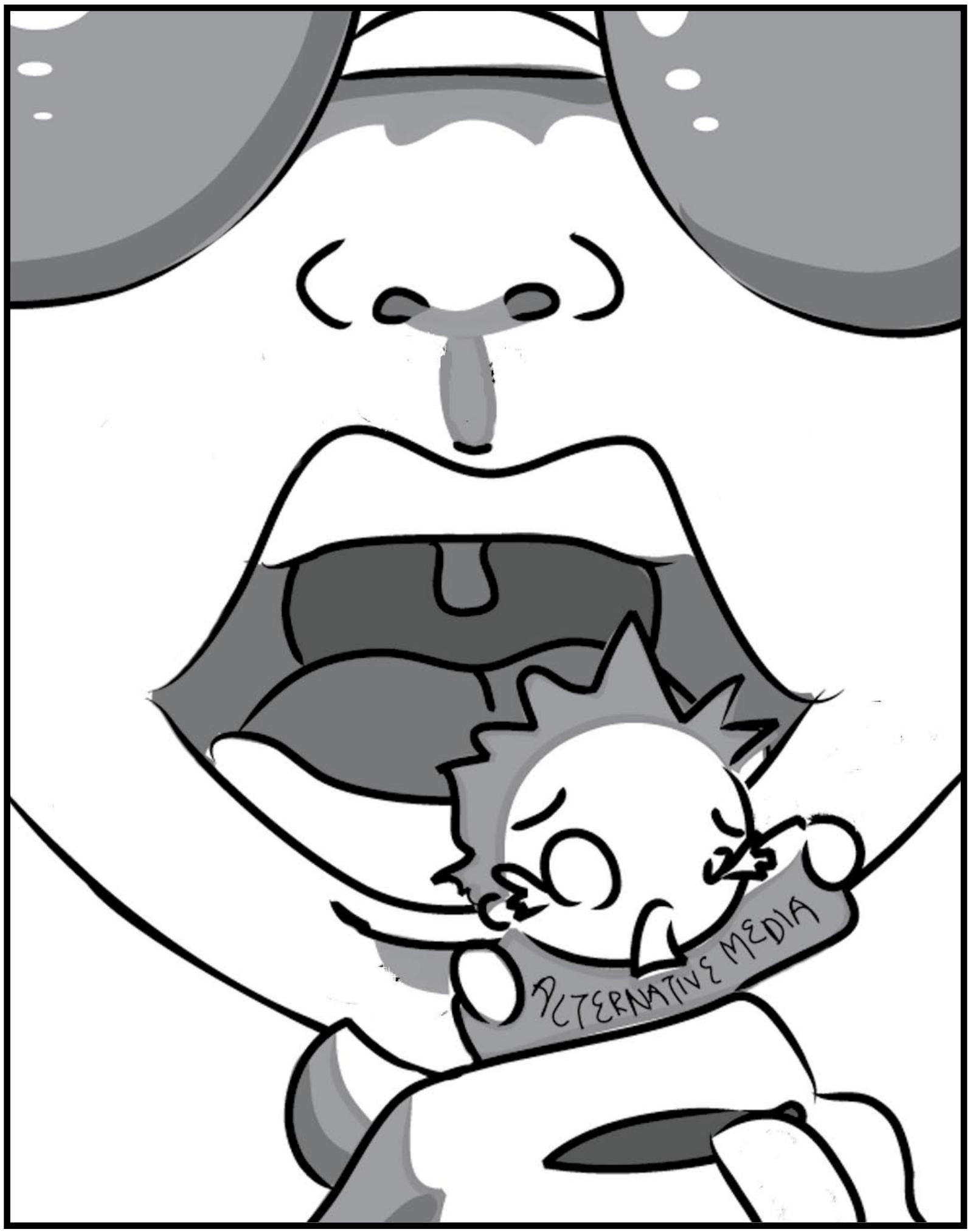
HARDBOILED

ISSUE 11.1 - OCTOBER - 2007



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october 2007

hb meetings
Wednesdays 6-7PM
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editor's notes

This summer I spent seven weeks with twenty-nine other students from various universities across the country. They were all students working for social justice in some way, shape, or form. Out of those seven weeks came a phrase that I heard nearly every single day: "Check your privilege."

As I type this, I am forced to think about my own privilege. It can be a lot easier to write and read about all the fucked-up things that happen. Yet, what does it take to actually stand up and do something pro-active about it? I am not insinuating that making yourself and others aware of an issue is a passive and unimportant action. In fact, it is critical that we stay informed. However, the next step from being informed is to be involved. In addition, only making ourselves aware can be a hidden way for us to cop-out and sit in our Ivory Tower where we are safe and our views are unopposed.

Having spent the last three years sitting on the sidelines, I am going to challenge myself to step up. So, here's to the marches for peace and freedom in Burma, to the rallies of support for the Jena 6, and to the protests against UC Berkeley and the BP deal. Perhaps, I will see you out there too.

pauline sze
story editor

in this issue

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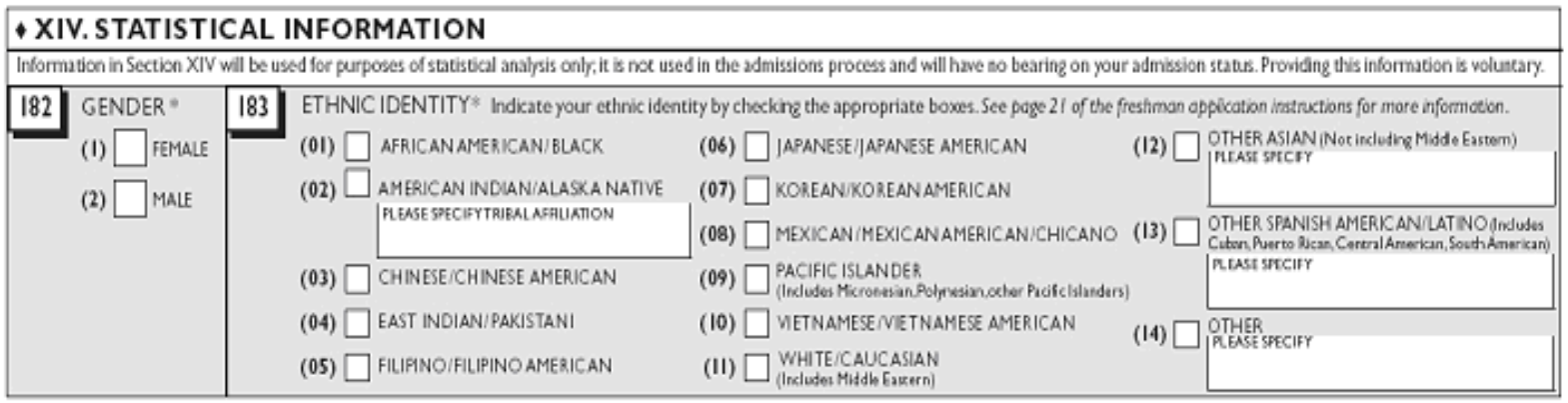
Count Me In!

by lina peng

Currently, the self reported ethnic data collection on U.C. applications (for those who have long forgotten the dreaded sight of a college application) looks like this:



♦ XIV. STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Information in Section XIV will be used for purposes of statistical analysis only; it is not used in the admissions process and will have no bearing on your admission status. Providing this information is voluntary.

182 GENDER *
(1) ☐ FEMALE
(2) ☐ MALE

183 ETHNIC IDENTITY* Indicate your ethnic identity by checking the appropriate boxes. See page 21 of the freshman application instructions for more information.

(01) ☐ AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK
(02) ☐ AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKA NATIVE
PLEASE SPECIFY TRIBAL AFFILIATION
(03) ☐ CHINESE/CHINESE AMERICAN
(04) ☐ EAST INDIAN/PAKISTANI
(05) ☐ FILIPINO/FILIPINO AMERICAN
(06) ☐ JAPANESE/JAPANESE AMERICAN
(07) ☐ KOREAN/KOREAN AMERICAN
(08) ☐ MEXICAN/MEXICAN AMERICAN/CHICANO
(09) ☐ PACIFIC ISLANDER (Includes Micronesian, Polynesian, other Pacific Islanders)
(10) ☐ VIETNAMESE/VIETNAMESE AMERICAN
(11) ☐ WHITE/CAUCASIAN (Includes Middle Eastern)
(12) ☐ OTHER ASIAN (Not including Middle Eastern)
PLEASE SPECIFY
(13) ☐ OTHER SPANISH AMERICAN/LATINO (Includes Cuban, Puerto Rican, Central American, South American)
PLEASE SPECIFY
(14) ☐ OTHER
PLEASE SPECIFY

"Count Me In!" is the simple cry of a campaign that has recently been gaining momentum on the UC Berkeley campus. The campaign's primary objective is to disaggregate UC admissions data in the "Other Asian" category in order to dismantle the popular perception that all Asian Americans are well represented in higher education institutions. The fight against the Asian American model minority label is not a new one for many Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community activists. This new campaign, however, formed in part, as a direct response to the recent resurgence of sentiments on and off college campuses that Asian Americans are "over-represented."

The campaign was initially launched in spring of 2007 by UCLA's Asian Pacific Coalition (APC). Candice Shikai, director of UCLA's APC states, "As AAPIs, we make up over 40 percent of this campus, and it's easy for everyone to think we don't HAVE any admissions issues. But the fact of the matter is Pacific Islander students make up less than 1percent of this campus, and as for Thai, Hmong, or Khmer students, we don't even know exactly what their numbers are because they're not tracked. We just know that those numbers are small…Many East Asians may be doing just fine, but when that starts to overshadow underprivileged portions of the AAPI community and their issues are ignored, it becomes a problem."

Since its initiation the campaign has been successful in gaining media attention and increasing support and awareness. On the ground level, the UCLA campaign held a high profile press conference in May and has collected over 1600 postcards and 20 letters of support from community organizations to date. The emerging Berkeley campaign, led by Cal's own alliance of AAPI student organizations, Asian Pacific American Coalition (APAC), has been working in close communication with APC and plans to adopt similar strategies, including a teach-in week to raise awareness. (October 8-12) and postcard distribution on Sproul. Additionally, APAC through working with ASUC Senator Maurice Seaty, who ran on a platform of Southeast Asian specific disaggregation, hopes to gain the endorsement of the ASUC.

According to Shikai, the campaign's largest target is the UC Office of the President (UCOP) which has the authority ultimately to implement disaggregation. Both the UCLA and Berkeley campaigns are ramping up their activity in preparation for the UC Regents meeting coming up this November, at which they hopes to gain the Regent's support in applying more pressure to the UCOP.

Who is being counted?

While "disaggregation" is the term most commonly used to refer to the goal of "Count Me in!", the campaign actually has three specific objectives promoted by both UCLA and Berkeley branches.

The first objective of the campaign seeks to break down (12) OTHER ASIAN into ten additional boxes for students of Bangladeshi, Cambodian, Hmong, Indonesian, Laotian, Malaysian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Taiwanese and Thai backgrounds.

Even with the scarce availability of data, it is blatantly obvious that certain populations within the larger Asian American category are more economically disadvantaged and less likely to attain higher education. Southeast Asian Americans, for example, according to the 2000 Census, have the lowest college graduation rates with just over 9 percent of Cambodian, over 7 percent of Hmong, over 7 percent of Lao, and over 20 percent of Vietnamese. The danger of these groups being lumped in a 40 percent or so Asian American population in the UC system is certainly self-evident. Paulina Tran, another organizer of the Berkeley campaign states "These communities need help yet they are not receiving it because of uncollected data. By disaggregating, the UC system will be able to see the reality of the composition of students on their campuses and know what communities they need to outreach to."

A closer examination of the ten ethnicities being added, however, reveals surprising inclusions. The particular ethnicities were included because they were the next ten largest Asian groups according to the US Federal Census. Using the federal make up of Asian Americans as the basis for dissecting the Californian Asian American population may perpetuate the very misrepresentation the campaign is fighting against. Furthermore, while the next ten may be counted in, what about the next twenty? At some point a line has to be drawn to include some and exclude others.

Part of the issue is the definition of a distinct ethnicity versus simply a different nationality. For instance "Count Me In!" proposes to list Taiwanese as a separate ethnic category, crossing the line into questions also of political leaning.

The internal issues of division within the AAPI community itself are further revealed by the inclusion of South Asian ethnic groups on the list. South Asians have typically identified separately from Asian Americans and their presence in AAPI coalition formations are often limited. Shikai says that while the South Asian community at UCLA has been generally supportive of the campaign, the Indian Student Union on campus has not been too invested. She also states that there is not a strong South Asian presence within APC. But from the Berkeley end, things seem to look better. Tran points out that Association of South Asian Political Activists (ASAPA) will be a member of APAC this year and has been an active participant in the campaign, signaling hope for a stronger alliance. She emphasizes, "In order to show the importance of recognizing that this is a vital issue for all Asian American ethnic communities, and that the campaign does affect everyone whether they are "represented" or not, we must have solidarity within our community. We have to dispel the rumor that this campaign will further create division, but show that this campaign will do the opposite and unite our community."

One has to wonder who is included in this community or even such a thing exists when it comes to Asian Americans, particularly when the campaign itself strives to dispel the notion? Calling for AAPI solidarity appears merely a formality and perhaps a misrepresentation in itself, in light of the fact that the campaign objectives, in a large part, directly reflect the fissures within the community. Pareja, who identifies as Filipino American, explains the second (somewhat less emphasized) objective of creating Pacific Islanders as a separate racial category, "Historically, the Pacific Islanders have a different background from Asians. Therefore, by creating this separate category we can recognize those differences. Since we are placed into this large API category the under-representation of Pacific Islander is often disregarded". While the reasons given for this second objective are the same as the first, the difference is that Pacific Islanders already have a box. The issue then is no longer representation or simple ethnic data disaggregation, but racial differentiation.

The third campaign objective strives to provide financial support for outreach projects targeting AAPI who are facing educational inequalities. This objective best encapsulates the important essence of what the campaign hopes to accomplish. Shikai states, "The ultimate goal, in the long run, is to enable underprivileged and underserved portions of the AAPI community to improve their chances of access through higher education (and of course, gain that access). By knowing the statistics of their admissions and enrollment through disaggregation, campus and community retention/outreach projects can gain the necessary funding to be able to help those communities." Indeed, in a world of limited resources, statistics and information is often the currency of power and political access.

But for many of those invested in the campaign, there is a personal stake beyond the statistical significance. Seaty relates "I grew up in Oakland, and for many Southeast Asian males, graduating from high school isn't as common for us as it is for other people. The graduation rates of Southeast Asian males in Oakland and Richmond hovers around at 50 percent. Of those 50 percent who graduate, how many are actually college bound, or even eligible for the University of California? Furthermore, what about the other half of the population that doesn't graduate, what happens to them? What kind of low-income jobs will they be relegated to? As a result of this low graduation rate, there aren't that many Southeast Asians here at UC Berkeley, yet no one really knows."

Are There **Too Many** Asians at Berkeley?

by stephan woo

Are there too many Asians at Berkeley? What's with all these Asians?

Have you ever heard someone say these things? It is a fact that Asian Americans at Berkeley have become an increasingly visible group. Furthermore, Asian Americans have become the largest racial group on campus leaving us to wonder, are there really too many Asians at Cal?

The answer to this question lies in the difference between visibility and representation. Although Asian Americans are a highly visible group on campus, our voices have been near silent when it comes down to making important decisions. This represents a serious imbalance. Asian Americans make up about 40 percent of the undergraduate student population, but we comprise only 6.8 percent of the tenured faculty and only 3 percent of academic administrators. Meanwhile, whites make up 35 percent of the undergraduate student body, but comprise more than 87 percent of the tenured faculty and 90 percent of the campus' academic administrators. While Asian Americans make up the largest demographic on campus, the decisions made, which influence the campus population, hardly include an Asian American voice.

Looking at examples from past eras of all-white dominated administrations, the disparity between visibility and representation has allowed campus administrators to make egregious decisions. In the late 80's, for example, it was discovered that UC Berkeley (UCB) was secretly employing discriminatory admissions standards solely against Asian American applicants. UCB statistics during this time showed a sharp drop in the percentage of Asian American applicants admitted, even though a higher percentage of these applicants met UC admissions standards compared to other racial groups. Similarly, in 1999, an all-white administration, led by Chancellor Robert Berdahl, decided that the Ethnic Studies Department, which includes one of the nation's top Asian American studies programs, was unnecessary and that a funding cut was in order. A hunger strike led by students and community members and a violent police crackdown finally convinced Berdahl otherwise.

> "As a group of quiet people, what need is there to seek representation? Why do we need a voice? Why rock the boat? Being viewed as a quiet and contented model minority gives people the excuse to ignore our voice."

So if Asian Americans on campus are given such a small voice on big decisions, why, then, do so many people on campus, and even around the nation, hold the common view that Berkeley simply has TOO MANY ASIANS? New York Times writer, Timothy Egan, has a field day "exposing" the sudden flood of Asians at UC Berkeley in his lengthy January 2007 article entitled "Little Asia on the Hill." If we are to believe what Mr. Egan has to say, it really does seem that UC Berkeley has proclaimed itself as "Little Asia."

Maybe this is true. Maybe there are too many Asians at Berkeley. Then how can we explain the fact that we are marginalized when it comes to making campus-wide decisions? If there are too many of us, then why do we not have representation?

Looking at how the campus community views the Asian American student population can give us some answers as to why Asian Americans at Berkeley have little to no voice.

1. The "Asian Invasion" – The implications of someone saying Berkeley has too many Asians is that a newly arrived population, a population of foreigners, is overrunning the campus. The "Asian Invasion" is threatening to take over the Berkeley campus and undermine its American values. This view, however, reinforces existing stereotypes that Asian Americans are not fully a part of the American population. It makes us seem like "perpetual foreigners."

2. The "Model Minority" – Not only are we viewed as something less than fully American, Asian Americans are also viewed as the model minority. UC Berkeley is perceived to house an entire population of hard working, studious, and complacent Asians. We work hard! We overcome adversity! We get into UC Berkeley! We are so thankful! …

3. A Monolithic Block – One underlying perception that pervades the previous two is that all Asians come from one, monolithic place of origin. This means, when referring to the Asian American population, one should refer to them as a singular entity. Hearing the voice of one Asian American can represent the voice for all of them. Of course, this has the wonderful effect of erasing all ethnic diversity or class differences, which exists in the singular grouping of "Asian American."

While many people may have stereotyped and racist views of us, that still does not explain why Asian Americans are so underrepresented in terms of campus-wide decisions. What effect do these racist and stereotyped views have on shaping the representation of Asian Americans at UC Berkeley? All right, let me break it down…

1. The idea of an "Asian Invasion" and the "perpetual foreigner" stereotype have the affect of making us feel like we do not belong. I am not saying that we all cannot fit in at Berkeley or enjoy the company of our peers. What I mean is that we are made to feel that we are here on borrowed time. We are given no reason to take ownership of this university. Not only are we foreigners in this country, but we are guests at this university. And this means that we have no need to seek representation in high-level campus decision-making because we are just here to receive our prestigious degree and then get out.

2. The stereotype of the model minority has the effect of portraying all Asians as people who are hardworking, over-achieving, complacent, and above all – quiet. As a group of quiet people, what need is there to seek representation? Why do we need a voice? Why rock the boat? Being viewed as a quiet and contented model minority gives people the excuse to ignore our voice.

> "The idea of an 'Asian Invasion' and the 'perpetual foreigner' stereotype has the effect of making us feel like we do not belong…we are made to feel that we are here on borrowed time."

3. The view that Asian Americans are a monolithic block allows policy-makers to ignore the complex voice that is contained within the term "Asian American." Asian Americans do not come from one, gigantic motherland and the views of one Asian American *CONTINUED ON PAGE 5*

Students from all backgrounds raise their arms in the air at the Spring 2007 SASC Benefit Concert to support the Southeast Asian Student Coalition - Summer Institute, an all expenses paid week of cultural, political, and community based workshops for Southeast Asian High School students who are undrepresented and bound by the refugee experience. Photo: Andre Nguyen

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5 cannot represent the views of us all. Within East, Southeast, and South Asia alone, there are twenty-five separate countries, each of which has their own language, culture, people, and history of migration into the US. Not only can the term "Asian American" be subdivided into many different ethnic groups, these groups themselves also subdivide into varying class backgrounds, giving us a rich and intricate complexity. However, when the campus begins to view Asians as a singular entity, those groups who most need representation are erased. The needs of the Cambodian refugees living in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco are hidden behind the shrouded image of the quiet, model minority.

As the most visible group on campus and also as one of the most marginalized groups on campus, what sort of effect does this have on us students? How does this effect our identities? It is interesting to note that political involvement at the student level has begun to include Asian Americans, to a certain extent. Asian American leaders are beginning to be elected into the ASUC government and the first Vietnamese American was elected as ASUC President this year. It is great to see this inclusion; however, what have our leaders done with these positions of power? What issues have they chosen to focus on? You can say whatever partisan view you want on the actions of the student government for the past few years, but for the four years that I have been at Cal, no party has made Asian American issues the center of their platform. Not to single any one party out, but the Student Action party, whose Executive slate of four this previous semester included three Asian Americans, has taken the distinct stance of remaining completely neutral when it comes down to the politics of race.

With an increasing amount of Asian Americans in ASUC politics, will important issues impacting Asian American students continue to be underrepresented? Will issues such as the disturbingly low enrollment and retention of Pacific Islander students or the absence of Asian American role models in the form of faculty or staff remain unvoiced? What about health related issues specific to Asian Americans such as the large amount of Asian Americans with Hepatitis B or the fact that suicide rates among Asian American female teens is the highest in the nation? These are very important "Asian issues" that require special attention but have previously received none, despite increased Asian American senators in the ASUC.

Are we consciously omitting the issues that affect our community the most? My greatest fear is that the new generation of Asian American leaders will be so self-hating in a majority white dominated political world that such issues will disappear from their radar. This is the challenge for today's Asian American leaders.

RACE TO DISGRACE:

by davin chang

Countdown of Asian American Sellouts

#6 ROB SCHNEIDER

Asian American sellouts, oh how we loathe thee. For too long you've perpetuated racist stereotypes, degraded our communities, insulted our peoples. For too long you've mocked our parents, castrated our brothers, fetishized our sisters. All this, all for the love of the money, the power, the thrill. But no more! hardboiled is on to your scheming ways and we're calling you out. We're kicking ass and taking down names in our monthly feature, "Race to Disgrace: Countdown of Asian American Sellouts." So sellouts, beware! Your ass is ours.

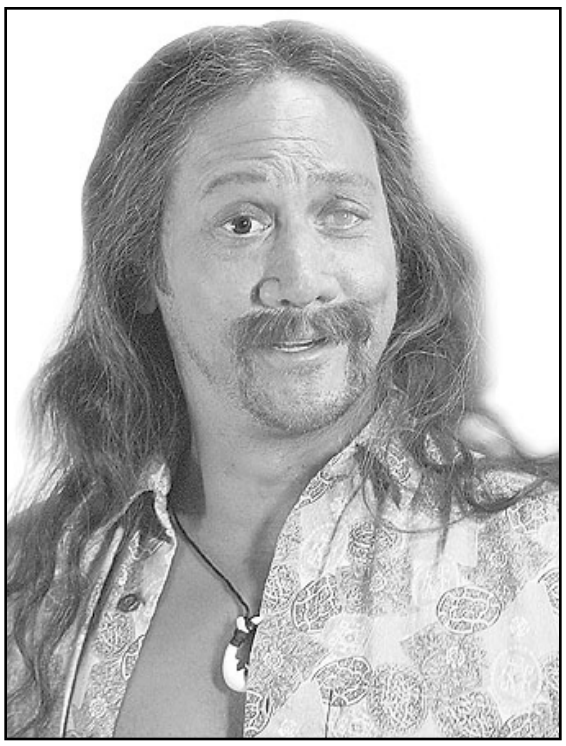
On August 2, 2006, Rob Schneider posted a one-page ad in Variety magazine stating he's half-Jewish and he refuses to take on any project with Mel Gibson, a virile anti-Semite, no matter how successful the project would be. It's great that Schneider stands up for his Jewish background and that he will not tolerate any anti-Semite, even for some much needed success for his own career. However, this anti-prejudicial side of Schneider seems incongruous with his many offensive and racist portrayals against Asian Americans, despite that he is half Pilipino. You may have seen Schneider's flashy headshot on the promotions from this year's Asian Excellence Awards supposedly "celebrating significant Asian and Asian American achievements in entertainment." But with a history of putting yellow make up on, Schneider is far off from being a "significant" Asian American. Get it straight- he's a sellout. Here's a collection of Schneider's multiple offensive characters over his storied acting career that makes him #6 on our countdown of Asian American sellouts.

Rob Schneider does a yellowface portrayal of a Japanese minister in I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry.

credit: www.angryasianman.com

I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry

Schneider puts on makeup and dresses up as a Japanese minister in a scene where he weds Adam Sandler and Kevin James' characters. His character is a typical "yellowface" performance, pulling back the skin around his eyes, donning the mushroom haircut, speaking almost-incomprehensible English, yelling in an annoying manner and acting feminine. If this portrayal does not show how much of a hypocrite Schneider is, I don't know what does.



Schneider, looking irresistible as usual, in 50 First Dates.

credit: www.honoluluadvertiser.com

50 First Dates

Schneider portrays a one-eyed, pidgin-speaking Hawaiian man named Ula in this romantic comedy starring Adam Sandler and Drew Barrymore. Schneider not only portrays a character that could have been given to a Hawaiian actor, but portrays a highly obscene, and horny Hawaiian man. Actually, remove the "Hawaiian" label and you've got a pretty accurate analysis of Schneider himself.

Deuce Bigalow: European Gigalo

Schneider co-wrote and starred in this terribly unfunny box office flop. Schneider makes fun of Asians by not-so-subtly implying that Asian men have small penises. In the movie, an Asian American gigolo says "I no more man-whore! Too much danger! I take my three inches elsewhere!" By writing a line like that into a movie, Schneider is subliminally making fun of his own manhood through the Asian character. This decision to have that derogatory line shows that Schneider has little pride in being Asian American.

conversations on aPath

by **jimmy huang**

In the second APATH seminar of the year, the student teaching assistants asked the rest of the class to name some Asian stereotypes. To the surprise of the teaching assistants, the class practically erupted. "Yellow!" "Squinty eyes!" "Plays at least one instrument!" "Smart." "Competitive." "Have Hello Kitty backpacks.""Have cell phone babies."

The APATH student-residents weren't always that excited in seminar, at least not when the year started. Perhaps the seminar was just uninteresting before. Or perhaps the students actually were as apathetic as stereotypes would have them be. Regardless, something must have changed in the past month to push the students in APATH beyond their apparent disinterest in Asian-America.

In fact, it seems only a fraction of UC Berkeley students are even aware of the Asian Pacific American Theme House (APATH), on the third floor of Beverly Cleary Hall. Every year the program helps guide and introduce over 50 first-years to the world of Cal – with a uniquely Asian-American take. APATH, like the five other residential theme programs, distinguishes itself from any other community organization in that it has an academic component. In APATH, students are required to take Asian American Studies 20A along with the theme program's own weekly seminar. As APATH faculty advisor Jere Takahashi put it, Asian-Am 20A grants APATH students some grounding in the history of Asian-Americans. "It's allowed APATH [seminar] to change and focus more on contemporary issues," Takahashi said. Included in the APATH curriculum are current issues like the portrayal of Asian-Americans in the media, the glass ceiling in the professional world and the curse of the model minority.

> "I think we [Asian-Americans] are kind of missing from the history books. Everything you read in high school: we have, what, a paragraph?"
> --- Crissy Chong

So whether the residents want to or not, the theme program tackles Asian-American issues head-on. Through seminar, through events, and even through community service, APATH pieces together an Asian-American-based education. Sophomore Chrissy Chong heads up APATH as its theme program assistant, ensuring that the program helps its residents socially and academically. "The role of APATH," Chong said, "is to provide first years with a living-learning environment, where they can become educated on Asian-American issues and transition into UC Berkeley life."

Noble purpose aside, Chong concedes the job isn't necessarily easy. Many applications to live in APATH come in from prospective first years. Thus Chong and the rest of the APATH staff, consisting of other former residents returning to APATH for their second year, have to turn down some. Applicants that get eliminated are ultimately those who neglect to mention an interest in Asian-American issues or those who express that they just want to be in APATH to live with Asians. Of course, what you say in an essay may still not be your real reasons. "A lot of people who might not care about Asian American issues – they do get into APATH," Chong said.

Educating apathetic students on Asian-American issues could very well be a waste of time and effort for a theme program. But somehow APATH pulls it off. A quick glance at the logistics alone of APATH reveals the active Asian-American community the theme house generates. This year, ten APATHers returned to the floor from last year's APATH program to help run the theme program. Four actually serve as teaching assistants, leading the weekly seminar. "Students can shape the curriculum and play a major role in its teaching." Takahashi said. "It's been a really positive space for development of leadership."

The ability of APATH to motivate students previously unconcerned with Asian-American issues helps make the theme program a real student-run, self-sustaining community. "The thing that I liked about seminar is that it was taught by students," Chong said of her experience taking the seminar her freshman year. "It wasn't always lecture style. In seminar, we had people who went through the seminar come and they'd try to make things interested and relate it to our lives."

APATH webmaster Felice Seto is another resident who returned to APATH to serve as a staff member. "[APATH] got me interested in Asian-Pacific-Islander issues," Seto said. "Before, I didn't really think much about it – stereotypes, different perspectives. It kind of opened my mind." Seto also highlights a time she had to interview one of her own relatives for Asian-Am 20A and then compare the biography of a Japanese immigrant to her own family's experiences. "Writing an essay – it forces me to have my own ideas and opinions," Seto said.

Both Seto and Chong point out the opportunity to relate Asian-American issues to their own lives as a crucial draw towards becoming active in APATH. And indeed, more often than not, APATH asks its sometimes-indifferent sometimes-inspired residential community to relate Asian-American issues to themselves.

Enter the weekly seminar. In the first class on Asian-American issues, APATH teaching assistants Susan Kim and Erin Tanimura immediately asked residents to write down the definition of "Asian-American." But soon afterwards, the class broke up into discussion groups so students could speak – about their own experiences with the term.

Teaching assistant, Paul Li, posed the question to his group: "When someone asks you what you are, what do you say?" Almost immediately, ethnicities were rattled off by the group: "Chinese." "Korean." "Vietnamese." "I assume they ask for my ethnicity, so I say Hmong. Then the question they ask is, what is Hmong?"

And then someone said "American."

Ah, the natural question then arose. "Do you consider yourself an American?" Li asked the group.

"I don't like that question. Whenever a Japanese person asks 'are you an American?', it sounds like they're mocking me."

"I like to say I'm Cambodian-American, because here, people look for the 'Cambodian'. But when I go to Cambodia, I get seen as the 'American'."

It's admittedly a tricky question: what really is an Asian-American identity. "A lot of [the term Asian-American] is how you define it," Chong said. "For example, we have a lot of people who come here who've just come from China like four years ago, who haven't really been in America their whole life. Do they consider themselves Asian-American? The term is really ambiguous."

Meanwhile, in seminar, the APATH discussion groups concluded and the class convened again as one large group. And then the APATH teaching assistants asked once again that same question – but framed a little differently. "Stand up if you consider yourself an Asian-American," they proposed. Immediately some students stood up. Some hesitated. And some students stayed seated. Perhaps one APATHer really had it right when, amidst the shuffling, he exclaimed in near confusion, "I don't even know anymore."

Confusion is probably the natural reaction for the first class on Asian-American issues. The APATH curriculum however progresses through the semester, discussing stereotypes, pop culture, identity, and generational gaps. "As each seminar went on, you just understand it more," Seto said.

"I think we [Asian-Americans] are kind of missing from the history books," Chong said. "Everything you read in high school: we have, what, a paragraph? There's not really anything about Asian-American studies. Even if there is stuff about Asian people, it's about China – not about things in America."

Troy Gilbert, director of Academic Services in the residence halls, goes further to argue that a program like APATH is the best place for such an education. Gilbert, who oversees all six theme programs, asserted, "What is an Asian-American

identity? And how do we help students grow and encompass that identity? I can't think of any place that does that better than a living-learning community."

It's a valuable assertion, given an increasing number of Asian-Americans on campus and an abundance of Asian-American groups geared towards seemingly every issue and interest. Takahashi, as faculty advisor, raised the same point. "We have lots of opportunities for students to explore Asian-American issues in the various clubs," he said. "I sort of felt that the residential community presented a unique environment for students to come together . . . with a common interest in Asian-American issues." Takashi also adds, "[APATH] provides a source of leadership development for students who want to be active in the larger campus and the Asian-American community."

On a campus that's becoming increasingly Asian-American, the idea of a living environment for Asian-American studies may seem at best, cliché, and at worst, oppressive. However, both Gilbert and Takahashi contest the idea. "There is a history of marginalization of Asian-Americans overall," Gilbert said. "I think it's important for students at Berkeley to have that opportunity to learn the history and remember that history, even if they don't experience marginalization per se day-to-day."

"Within the context of the program, the issues certainly pertained to identity and community [but] the issue that it was geared towards only identity isn't accurate," Takahashi said. "One of the areas of concentration has to do with the position of Asian-Americans in the larger society."

And despite such a large pool of Asian-American students for APATH, the fact that the program annually still has to confront disinterest and apathy may demonstrate the persisting need for APATH, on an increasingly Asian-American campus. The fact that the program still manages to generate student leaders who want to return and continue APATH demonstrates the program's value.

As for how successful APATH is generating that Asian-American interest and leadership, the APATH theme program assistant herself provides another example. "Originally I joined because I wanted to live with Asian people," Chong admitted. "I heard that people on APATH become really close to each other . . . It says a lot about the program as someone who just came here to live with Asian people and now I want to teach other people what I've learned."

America's Tanning Fetish:

What does it mean for Asian Americans?

by **jennifer phung**

"Extend your summer glow" was the headline for one of the latest beauty tips in a magazine I saw recently. Inside the magazine, there was advice on how to self-tan like a pro and walk out with sun-kissed, glowing skin. In the last few years, skin tanning has been promoted in magazines, commercials, and the media in general in the United States. Many people have been trying to get healthier, better looking skin by using tanning beds, sprays, lotions, or bronzers, or by going to salons and spas. The valuation of having dark, bronze skin has become a media trend that reverses beliefs regarding skin color from the past. Darker skin has traditionally represented the working class and lower status. In the 18th and 19th centuries, tanned skin was strongly connected to the idea of outdoor manual labor, often paid for with the money of wealthier people. However, the association has transformed into showing a kind of fashion style, wealth, beauty, and health. Most importantly, now that many jobs are done indoors, having tanned skin in the U.S. can reflect a person's ability to afford leisure time and his or her upper-class privilege.

While some people are focused on getting that glowy tan look, many others strive for lighter skin tones. Fair skin remains the standard of beauty and has caused skin-lightening to be extremely popular outside of America. In Asia, there are many people who prefer light skin due to the implication of better social status, opportunities, acceptance, and identity. People with darker skin tone are often denied their identity and treated differently because they have the wrong complexion for their ethnic group. The color of their skin can determine whether they are accepted for who they are. Sometimes, people with dark skin become outcasts of their communities and are marked as inferior. Thus, many people, especially women, have used different treatments and facial products to bleach their skin. Even in Asian American communities, they continue the use of skin-lightening products, playing a role in skin-tone discrimination. The honoring of light skin is molded into them through their cultural backgrounds, which have had much contact with the Whiteness of Europe and America as a result of colonization and Western imperialism.

Oftentimes, the beliefs of skin color can cause one to have self-doubt and feel insecure.

Thus, we have two different trends from the United States and Asia towards skin tone preference. This divergence can lead to a kind of cultural clash that some Asian Americans may face. Many second and third generation Asian Americans are caught in the middle of both influences. As Joanne Rondilla and Paul Spickard, authors of Is Lighter Better: Skin-Tone Discrimination among Asian Americans, put it, "Rare indeed is the Asian American who has not heard an aunt or grandmother say something like: 'Don't go out in the sun. You'll get too dark.'" Thuy Mai, a Vietnamese American student at UC Berkeley, has also experienced a similar situation. "My parents always said, 'don't get too dark; no one will like you.' They believed that having lighter skin will make you look more American and gain acceptance." In addition to the force that is pushing for lighter skin, fashion magazines and commercials for Venus razors promote tanned skin. Hence, many Asian Americans are also drawn into having the healthy, tan look. This shows the conflict between the desire for light skin and the current American worshipping of tanned bodies, both of which affect the views of beauty and class. People who are influenced by these ideas may be confused about how they are supposed to look and have trouble fitting in different social groups. However, we must ask ourselves whether this conflict is real. How do Asian Americans play a role in the mainstream of tanned, golden skin?

"People who are influenced by these ideas may be confused about how they are supposed to look and have trouble fitting in different social groups."

A recent study points out that tall immigrants with lighter skin earn 15 percent more than short immigrants with darker skin in the United States. A possible reason behind this is that skin color can reflect a person's country of birth, English proficiency, and experience of working low-paying jobs from outdoors. The question then is "Why does this totally conflict with the American trend of dark, tanned skin?"

Perhaps it is because mainly non-whites are affected by issues of skin tone. The study shows unfair treatment towards immigrants with dark skin, which mostly affects the non-white population. Standards of beauty and class are set by the dominant white members of our society. For Asian Americans, skin color will always be a factor because we are non-white. Due to the fact that we look distinctly different from the white population, we will be judged regardless of our dark or light skin. The cultural clash of skin tone does not really exist, because in the end, we are still treated unfairly for having darker skin tone. Generally, non-whites are still being pushed to the preference of light skin, even with the popularity of tanned skin in the United States.

Quoting from Is Lighter Better, "These discriminations are made by members of the dominant White group as they view people of color, and they are also made within communities of color". The preference for light and dark skin only hurts the people within our families and communities. From this realization, we are challenged to withdraw ourselves from playing a role in skin-tone discrimination. Moreover, skin color and its association with the elements of beauty are socially constructed. Whether the trends favor light or dark skin, we should be the ones who define the meaning of beauty and identity for ourselves.

An advertising image in Asia, showing a woman unzipping her blemished, darker face to reveal a light one.
http://thesituationist.wordpress.com/

Due to the popularity of tanned skin, many people like to go to the beach for that sun-kissed skin.
Tanning, Millionedibaci.

The Secret War.

Not in your history books cuz it isn't history

by yer yang

After listening to the Hmong radio on June 4 this past summer, a number of first generation Hmong elders were hospitalized for severe health issues while others passed on, no longer able to contain the emotions they had withheld for over the past 30 years. These heartbreaking losses were due to the arrests of General Vang Pao and nine other men, accused of plotting to overthrow the sovereign government of Laos. To most Americans, General Vang Pao is just the name of another criminal, but to many members of the Hmong community, this name means hope and is the reason they are here today.

Many would argue The American War in Southeast Asia, aka "The Vietnam War," to be a part of the past, but to the Hmong, it is still very much a part of their present. In the 1960s, they were recruited by the United States CIA to disrupt transportation of materials from Communist North Vietnam to South Vietnam by interrupting travel along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. About 40,000 Hmong men along with other indigenous peoples in the mountainous regions of Laos were recruited and trained by the CIA. This covert operation initiated by the CIA has been coined, The Secret War. General Vang Pao was delegated as one of the leaders of this secret army whose mission was to engage in combat through guerilla warfare while also rescuing American soldiers. There were many situations where 20 Hmong soldiers were sent to rescue just one American pilot. Even if only half of those soldiers returned with the American, they called their mission a success. When there was a demand for more guerilla soldiers, Hmong boys as young as the age of 13 were trained to fill their fathers' positions. Despite being hurt by the loss of his people, General Vang Pao continued to command his soldiers. He knew lives would be lost but staying loyal to the US was the only way he could save his people. For this reason, many of the Hmong fought alongside their commander and had hope for his plan.

Photo courtesy of www.sacbee.com

Hundreds of Hmong gather around the courthouse in Sacramento on June 11th, 2007. They wear white as a sign of peace and solidarity while bearing the American flag in symbolism of their loyalty to the U.S. government.

Although the "Vietnam War" ended for the Americans after the signing of the 1973 Paris Peace Accord between the United States and North Vietnam, many of these groups that aided the US still live in a state of war, constantly hunted and persecuted by the Communist Lao. Since 1975, over 300,000 Hmong-Lao have lost their lives to the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) government. This ethnic cleansing, declared on May 9, 1975 by the Pathet Lao to wipe out the Hmong-Lao who sided with the US during the war, still continues to this day. The most frequent victims of the Lao PDR military are women and children foraging for food.

While the numbers of Hmong still in Laos is currently unknown, the number of Hmong-Lao in Thailand is estimated to be 8,000. These refugees currently seeking refuge in Thailand are being forced to go back to Laos on a daily basis. Aware that consenting to repatriation could mean detention, forceful interrogations and even death, the Hmong-Lao in Thailand continue to resist. M any Hmong in America know that if it had not been for General Vang Pao and his ties to the CIA, they would all still be back in Laos and hunted down by the Communist Lao PDR as well. For this reason, many of the Hmong in America are grateful to the general. Although not all members of the Hmong community are followers of General Vang Pao, there are a large number of them who do respect and acknowledge him as their leader.

Photo courtesy of www.neeg.org

Desperate and hungry, Hmong soldiers in Laos plead for help from the U.S. government.

> "It isn't just about these 10 men. It's about our community as a whole. The lives here in the US and those in Thailand and Laos whom are being repatriated and murdered. It's like you've lost a part of yourself because it's your community." --- Sue Vang

The June 4 arrest of General Vang Pao, who is recognized as the head of the Hmong community, resulted in an immediate loss of hope for many members of his community, especially those of the first generation. Sue Vang, a current Hmong student at Cal expresses her father's sentiments about the arrests, "I saw how my dad changed his feelings towards the American government after the arrests. He already felt betrayed when the US pulled out of the war. The second betrayal was the welfare reforms in 1996 because Hmong veterans were promised benefits for fighting alongside the Americans. The prosecution of the general he felt, was the third betrayal. In all, I'd say the older generation felt disheartened and didn't know how to react."

Despite the discouraging sentiments that resulted after the arrests, the many supporters of the general and advocates for the Hmong community did not allow the accusations to go in silence. On June 8, hundreds of community members gathered outside of the Fresno County Courthouse dressed in white to symbolize peace. Many held picket signs reading "democracy" and "freedom," the same language used in past policies that have affected our histories. The following Monday, June 11, hundreds of supporters arrived at the courthouse in Sacramento. That same day, Hmong communities in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, and North Carolina held rallies voicing their support. This unity showed by the Hmong put pressure on the judicial system as well as exposed the genocide of the Hmong still occurring in Communist Laos (Lao People's Democratic Republic).

Moreover, it is also important to acknowledge the broken promise of the US government. Although the Hmong were promised resettlement and protection from the government because the US lost the war, the genocide of the Hmong still continues. Intervening in the human rights violations of the Hmong by the Lao PDR would have to be handled at a federal level and then taken to the UN. However, if the US is to keep its end of the deal with its former allies of the "Vietnam War", it would adamantly pursue the cause. The question that needs to be asked is, "why is the US not advocating for the human rights of the Hmong?" A possible answer to this question may be the desire to spread capitalism. In 2003, H.R. 3195 was passed. This bill opened trade between the US and the Lao PDR. If taken into consideration, being in "good" terms with the Lao government is necessary for keeping the market open between these two countries. Interfering with the Lao government's affairs with the Hmong may jeopardize this established relationship and possibly sever ties between the US and Lao economies.

As ambiguous as this entire situation with General Vang Pao is, it is important to see the interconnectedness of events and recent bills and policies that have been passed. The series of events that have occurred decades ago still affects/ the Hmong community. Although the Hmong in America are not personally facing persecution by the Communist Lao government, they cannot help but be affected by it. As Sue Vang wholeheartedly states, "Despite the community politics with who represents and believes in Vang Pao, it just hurts. You can't but not hurt because your parents are hurting. It isn't just about these 10 men. It's about our community as a whole. The lives here in the US and those in Thailand and Laos whom are being repatriated and murdered. It's like you've lost a part of yourself because it's your community."

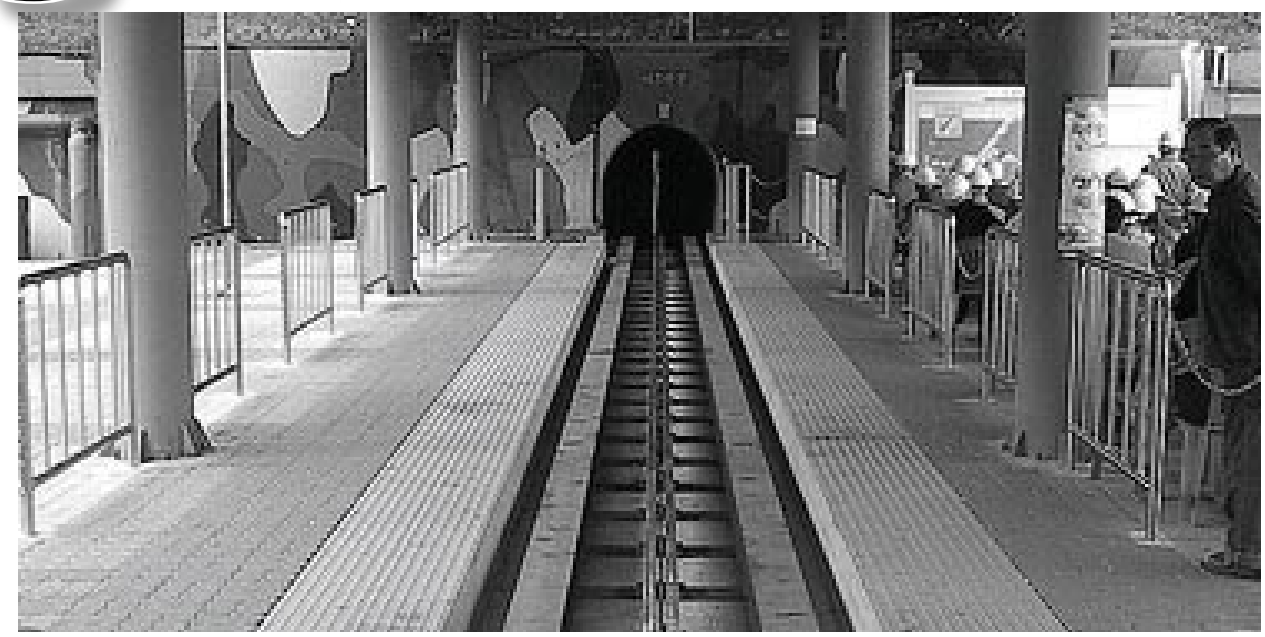
Injustice & Ignorance

by annie noguchi

Questions about starving children in North Korea and human trafficking will most likely get you a blank stare, but North Korean refugees might get a non-committal answer. “I think there are some organizations to help them. . . ?” says one Asian American junior. “I heard that some women are forced into prostitution,” another student tells me. And, from most students, a simple, self-explanatory, “Ummm . . . ”

While these uninspired answers from students may at first seem hopeless, some students do know something about the issue, often because of the student group on campus Liberty in North Korea (LiNK). On the local level here on campus, LiNK is dedicated to raising money and awareness about the plight of North Korean refugees. At the national level, LiNK works in Washington D.C. and in northeastern China to help North Koreans.

The humanitarian conditions in North Korea are horrific. During the famine of 1995-1997 it is estimated that anywhere from 300,000 to 2 million starved to death in North Korea. Food was so scarce that people resorted to cannibalism, killing their children or digging up fresh graves for meat. Due to extreme malnutrition, a 15-year-old North Korean child today is on average the height of a nine-year-old South Korean child.



Entrance to one of the four infiltration tunnels discovered that lead out of North Kore QuiteLucid, *DMZ- Tunnel*, 2006

China still arrests and deports North Koreans because China doesn’t recognize North Koreans as refugees, but as “illegal economic migrants.”

North Koreans are severely persecuted politically as well. Anything from owning a radio to speaking out in opposition of Kim Jong Il will land a North Korean in a labor or prison camp. Sixteen known camps imprison at least 200,000 North Koreans, including children who are victims of the “three generation” rule. The rule mandates that it takes three generations to cleanse a family of subversive thought, and therefore a prisoner’s grandchildren will be imprisoned as well. The prison camps themselves are reminiscent of Hitler’s concentration camps during WWII -- gas chambers, forced labor, and chemical experimentation on prisoners. In addition to public executions, prisoners are beaten and starved.

To escape prison camps, utter poverty and political oppression, desperate North Koreans cross the border to China. If they are caught by Chinese authorities or reported by Chinese citizens, North Koreans refugees will be sent back, put in prison camps, tortured or executed. Even though China agreed to the 1951 Convention Related to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, China still arrests and deports North Koreans because China doesn’t recognize North Koreans as refugees, but as “illegal economic migrants.” The Protocol defines a refugee as a person who has a “well-founded” fear of being persecuted because of race, religion, nationality, social group, or political opinion and is unwilling or unable to return to his own country. North Korean refugees fit the bill.

A number of UC Berkeley students have personal experience working with North Korean refugees. Two summers ago, sophomore Jane Cho traveled to the border town of Yanji, China to help care for Korean orphans. While she says she couldn’t be sure whether they were North Korean or ethnic Koreans living in China, the presence of North Korea was apparent. “I was terrified,” she said, “when our car was stopped by Chinese officials. I didn’t have any documentation on me and they gave us a really hard time. I thought they were going to confiscate my things.”

The anxiety and terror that Jane felt is something that North Korean refugees feel every minute that they are in China. To help these refugees, organizations like LiNK operate safehouses in China. Comparable to 19th century Underground Railroad for slaves in the United States, these safehouses house North Korean refugees until they have gained enough body weight to pass as South Korean tourists to journey out of China, usually to another Asian country like Mongolia or Vietnam. Ordinary citizens -- housewives, office workers by day, brave North Korean refugee aid workers by night -- are also in danger for deportation. For helping North Koreans escape from China, LiNK director Adrian Hong was pulled from his hotel room in Beijing last December and jailed for ten days before being deported to the United States.

UC Berkeley student, Ki Hong Lee, is a fourth year at UC Berkeley and the LiNK Outreach: Bay Area coordinator. During the summer of 2006, he traveled to South Korea with LiNK to spread awareness of the human rights violations happening in North Korea. Named Project Sunshine, the campaign aimed to raise awareness among the students and citizens in Seoul, because in part experiences LiNK has found that there is an overall lack of knowledge and apathy of the issue of North Korea refugees. Although Seoul is located only thirty miles from North Korea, most North Korean human rights activists do not live in South Korea -- of the ten or fifteen members of the Seoul branch of LiNK, only three or four are South Korean citizens. At a mock funeral procession which served as the kickoff for Project Sunshine, no South Korean media attended, although there were a few Western media outlets. Project Sunshine was also held in the summer of 2006 because the timing was crucial -- there were regional elections, college festivals, and the World Cup going on. “We tried to use all these events to our advantage, to shift the people’s perspectives to paying attention” to LiNK’s message.”

To get South Koreans’ attention, Project Sunshine held screenings of a North Korean refugee crisis documentary called “Seoul Train” at major universities in Seoul—Seoul National University, Ewha Women’s University, Kyung Hee University, and many more. Also, Project Sunshine facilitated symposiums at universities, where a variety of speakers shared their experiences with North Korea -- Kang Chul Hwan, a North Korean political prisoner incarcerated because grandfather had committed a “crime”; Son Jong Hoon, a North Korean defector whose brother has been condemned to execution in North Korea; Tim Peters, founder of Helping Hands Korea; Kim Seong Min, the head of Radio Free North Korea, a radio station that broadcasts from South Korea to North Korea for one hour each day, denouncing the “Stalinist” regime in North Korea and giving news and accounts from defectors.

However, since Project Sunshine was denied protest permits, they resorted to impromptu demonstrations and crashing events attended by media in order to get attention. Demonstrations included a Drop Dead Campaign, mock funeral procession, and an “arrow” campaign where LiNK members put statistics on arrows and pointed them at people. “For this person’s subway ticket, a North Korean child could have been fed for a month,” one sign read. Another: “If this woman was in China, she’s have a 70-90% change of being sexually trafficked.”

The reactions from South Koreans varied from very encouraging to very hostile. “One time, we were doing a demonstration in a shopping district and his old man bought us snacks and alcohol,” Lee remembers. However, “other times, people would shout and yell at us saying, ‘Mind your own business, you are from America and this is Korea.’” While passing out fliers, a LiNK member was punched in the head by a South Korean man. At a seminar on peaceful reunification at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, one student denies the existence of concentrations camps in North Korea, claiming to have been to the capitol five times. When LiNK members were attacked when they revealed their LiNK shirts and banners saying things like “Our hearts break for our brethren in North Korea,” they are attacked and dragged outside.

In general, Lee says there is a “disconnect between what [South Koreans] know and how they react to the information. They really don’t know what they can do within their power.” Lee himself was surprised at the impact he had made as a LiNK: “At first I was scared it was a waste of time. I thought we were coming here to paint stuff on walls, but I’m surprised at what we could do.”

You don’t have to be a politician to help North Korean refugees. You don’t have to operate a safehouse in China to help, nor do you have to travel to South Korea to educate South Koreans to help. By educating yourself about the issue you bring awareness to the deeply disturbing humanitarian issue that is ignored by our government and unknown to the general population so then when someone asks you “What do you know about North Korean refugees?” you will be able to answer.

LiNK raises awareness

HMONG REFUGEE WINS WSOP

a symbol for america?

by **susan moua**

Yang holds the WSOP bracelet behind 8.25 million. *(Photo Credited to: http://farm2.static.flickr.com/1393/847233492_bc7c6ed9bc.jpg)*

Pocket eights. Not the strongest hand in the poker world but it changed the life of a Hmong man during the 2007 World Series of Poker (WSOP). Jerry Yang, a 39-year old refugee from Laos, won 8.25 million dollars on July 17th, 2007 at the Rio in Las Vegas. Although this could have easily been the happiest day for anyone, for Yang, it was only his second.

Yang, from Temecula, California, attended Loma Linda University and currently holds a Master's degree in Health Psychology. Yang, like many Hmong refugees, came to the United States in the late 1970s and focused on education to provide for his wife and six children. He only started playing poker during the last two years and won the opportunity to play at the WSOP 2007 event through the Pechanga Resort & Casino in Temecula, after winning their $225 satellite tournament.

Although Yang seemed like a quiet player during the first few days of WSOP, he made a name for himself when he found himself against well-known professional poker players such as Philip Hilm and Jon Kalmar at the final table. Through good hands and extreme bluffing, poker players fell victim to Yang one by one. Finally, after days of intense playing, Yang found himself against Tuan Lam, a Vietnamese refugee from Canada.

Lam started with a 5-1 chip lead over Yang. But after a half hour, it became a 12-1 advantage for Yang. Then, Lam decided to go all in with an Ace and Queen hand. Yang quickly called and went all in with pocket eights. The flop was Queen, 9 and 5 and a 7 came out on the turn. For many viewers, it seemed like Lam would win with a pair of Queens and they would have to see the two battle it out some more. Yang remained optimistic and prayed. The dealer quietly took her time showing the river card, while Lam danced around with the Canadian flag and Yang's fans, family, and the crowd screamed, "USA! USA! USA!" To win, Yang needed either an 8 for three of a kind, or a 6 for a 9 high straight. The odds were slim. The moment was intense. Still, Yang prayed. And the river came, 6.

In less than a second, Jerry Yang jumped and screamed as the crowd went wild. A straight! Yang thanked God and cried. He ran to his wife and parents. They were also crying. The crowd still screamed "USA! USA! USA!"

Mixed among the cheers of "USA!" were Yang's own distinct cries in Hmong. That night, as Yang became an winner for America at the 2007 WSOP. For the thousands of Hmong Americans watching on TV, he became a symbol of their own struggles and hopes.

Yang contemplates a poker hand. *(Photo Credited to http://farm2.static.flickr.com/1437/846101721_33a28142fc.jpg)*

The Hmong have had an unfortunate history. Living in the highlands of Laos, the Hmong never really had a country of their own. During the Vietnam War, the US CIA recruited the Hmong as guerilla war soldiers to fight against the communist movements. When the Pathet Lao, the Laotian equivalent of the Viet Cong, took over Laos, the U.S. armies left the Hmong to fend for themselves. For five years, the Hmong crossed the Mekong River to Thailand for refuge. It was not until the late 1970s and early 1980s that the United States allowed the Hmong to immigrate to the United States. Hmong Americans do not seem to be living the "American Dream" or the model minority myth. They hold the highest percentage population living in poverty and not having a high school education. Money for many Hmong in the U.S. remains a pressing concern.

> "I know what it is like to be poor. I can use the money to do a lot of good for people out there. --- Jerry Yang"

Perhaps for all of those reaons above, Mong Vang, a UC Berkeley graduate, believes that Yang is an icon of hope, "When I first saw Jerry Yang win, I was very happy. How many times do you see a Hmong on television? It was like cheering for my brother. For Jerry, you can tell he was a good guy and that he deserved to win, not that Tuan Lam did not too." Vang believes that Yang's win at the WSOP has made the Hmong feel more proud of their ethnicity. "Heck man, I'm prouder to be Hmong now," he says.

But Vang, like many others in his community, also realistically acknowledges that there is a gambling problem among the Southeast Asia community and wonders if Yang's win will have negative affects. "I am afraid that people, the Hmong in general, will see Jerry Yang's win as a luck that is floating around and go out to gamble on that. Most Hmong I know live at the poverty level and a gambling problem will just make it worse."

Cindy Moua, an 18-year old Hmong teen in Fresno who enjoys playing poker quips, "It's not like I'm devoting just my time to poker now. Seeing Jerry win gave me hope that good things happen to good people. I always felt like the Hmong were an unlucky race and I don't see a lot of rich Hmong. It is just nice to know a Hmong succeeded at what he loved to do."

As for Yang, the day he won the day he won the $8.25 million dollars was only the second happiest day of his life. Yang says in Card Player Magazine, "The day I came to America, I found freedom. That was the happiest day of my life...I truly believe that God brought my family to Thailand and to America and now we have a better life." Yang now plans to leave his job and focus on investing his money towards something important. Yang promises ten percent of his winnings to the Ronald McDonald House Charities and Make-A-Wish Foundation, whom he has worked with in the past. Yang explains, "I know what it is like to be poor. I can use the money to do a lot of good for people out there."

one way or another

Re-envisioning Asian American Identity

by alice tse

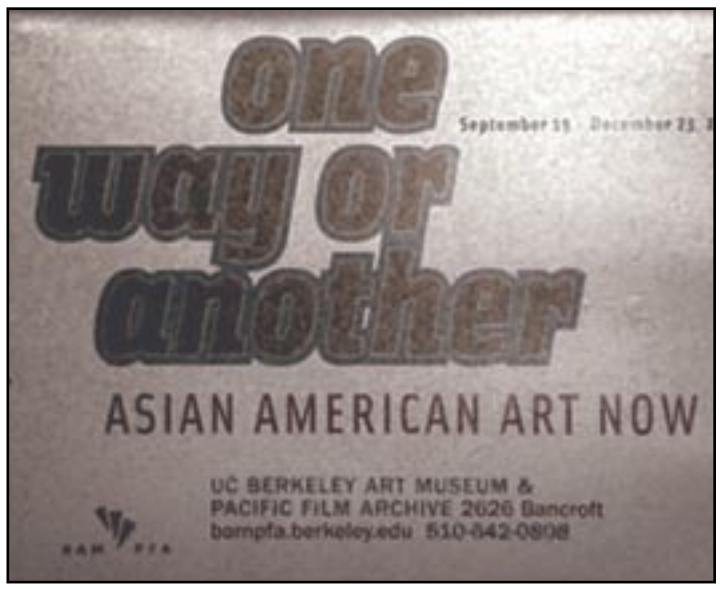
There is nothing distinctively "Asian American" as you enter the the modern art exhibit at the Berkeley Art Museum (BAM) titled One Way or Another: Asian American Art Now. One Way or Another is the first major Asian American art exhibit organized by the Asia Society Museum since the 1994 exhibit, Asia/America: Identities in Contemporary Asian American Art. Melissa Chiu, director of the Asia Society Museum in New York and conceptual designer of the current theme, explains that One Way or Another, in contrast to the 1994 exhibit, was "born from a desire to evaluate an Asian American sense of self . . . and to focus attention on, and increase our understanding of, the individualism that comprises an Asian American cultural imagination." The exhibit thus fittingly emphasizes the Asian American individual and not Asian American society.

Geraldine Lau's, "Information Retrieval [3],", an abstract mural depicting "cultural transition and transformation" through what appears to be fragments of maps, graces the slope leading into the exhibit. To the left of Lau's work a lively collage and network of sweaters, "Unraveling" created by Jean Shin, is displayed. Together these two art pieces exude a sense of unity and complexity, setting the tone for the rest of the exhibit.

Aesthetically and intellectually diverse, the pieces in One Way or Another range from political to raunchy and quirky to serious. Museum goers may chuckle over Xavier Cha's "Human Advertisement" video featuring the notorious dancing shrimp and his provocative tail-thrusting, but then are forced to contemplate the portraits of fallen American soldiers in the Vietnam War in Binh Danh's "Life: Death" series.

A particularly memorable piece was Laurel Nakadate's video documentary, "I Want to be the One to Walk in the Sun." It consisted of a string of video vignettes featuring her encounters with strangers and footage of her dancing sensually (including a scene with her and her extremely friendly dog). One cannot help but question Nakadate's motives and perhaps even a lack of common sense in making these videos with random men that she encounters. Some clarification is offered in the museum brochure as Nakadate explains, "I think about the way so many relationships grow out of chance encounters and how we are then asked to trust a stranger and simply go with it…" What at first appeared to be aimless film footage revealed itself to be a philosophical exploration of human interactions and relationships.

The diversity and complexity of ideas emanating from the exhibit leave museum goers with varying senses of elation, pensiveness or mere confusion. The apparent heterogeneity of ideas, goals, and identities of the artists break the bounds of what one might typically expect to see at an "Asian American" art exhibit. Each piece is able to to stand on its own, like the artist who created it. Together, this amazingly varied collection does not call overt attention to its "Asian American" identity, but touches all who wish to see with the unceasing questions of life, emotion, and individuality.



***one way or another* poster.** *Photo credit to Alice Tse*

"I am obsessed with men who live alone with no one to care for them. I am always watching them, because they are invisible people in our culture." - Laurel Nakadate

"I Want to Be the One To Walk in the Sun" by Laurel Nakadate features the artist, herself, creating video stories with random men she meets through "chance encounters." According to Nakadate, the themes she is concerned with are "voyeurism, exhibitionism, discomfort, loneliness, disconnection, longing, wishing, watching, hostility, gullibility, fear, cunning, slapstick, and folly."


SAVE THE DATE
MAR 1
18th ANNUAL API ISSUES CONFERENCE
UC Berkeley - Pauley Ballroom


SO WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO COME TO CAL?
I WANTED TO GET AWAY FROM MY PARENTS AND DO EVERY THING THAT THEY WOULDN'T LET ME DO, LIKE SMOKE OR DRINK.
WELL, DID YOU GET TO DO IT?
NO, BUT I'M MAJORING IN ENGLISH.
WOW. WHAT A BADASS.
ART BY MARIA KIM // WRITTEN BY MATT HUI