hardboiled

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THE ASIAN AMERICAN NEWSMAGAZINE!

10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

10.6

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hardboiled 10.6

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! DISCLAIMER

editors' notes

Pick fights. Those are my two words of advice to future generations of hardboiled. (1) Pick (2) Fights.

Gather hate mail. Frame it and show it off to your friends. Save it: If in the future you wonder why you are doing what you are doing, a painfully ignorant letter addressed to you is a great reminder. If someone doesn't disagree, what's the point of writing it? If it doesn't create some sort of result, what's the point of publishing it? I don't mean to suggest that the role of hardboiled is to publish malicious, offensive, and/or irresponsible things in the name of "promoting dialogue" - this year has shown that college op-ed writers across the nation have got a handle on that. And I definitely don't think that it means rehashing tired old stereotypes and stunted, binary discourse in order to polarize people into an argument - TV "news" has got a handle on that.

What I am saying is that it is not enough to simply take a stance on an issue like affirmative action or immigration policy and leave it at that. Even being angry isn't enough. The purpose of journalism, and especially an alternative publication like hb, is to make the people who are responsible for offenses to the community genuinely accountable to their actions, whether that person is the UC Regents, a local politician, a multinational corporation, a Hollywood executive, or the president of an Asian American group on campus. How to pick fights? Do it gracefully (you may be working with your opponents in the future), and do it precisely. Find a problem, propose an explanation, and in perfectly refined word choice, grammar, and syntax... attack.

Save the gay baby whales!

adrienna wong
story editor

I remember watching *Toy Story 2* when I heard the phrase, "You can't rush art." It was spoken by an old man in response to the greedy toy dealer who asked how long it would take to fix Woody's broken cotton arm. Having worked on layout for the past three years, I can definitely relate to that quote. I can still recall the hours, nights, and days that I have spent dedicating myself to finishing layout for this publication. In fact, here's a short list that I have compiled:

Working on layout…
- On a weekend night? Check.
- At the mall food court? Check.
- At past editor, Jason Coe's party? Check.
- During spring break? Check.
- While getting stung by a bee? Check.

Those long hours have been spent on such tasks as deciding whether or not the line stroke on page five's title should be one or two point widths. While it may sound really pointless, layout is art and the difference in width really does affect how a page turns out. That is why layout cannot be rushed, just like art. Flip through any **hardboiled** issue and you can spot pages that have more visual heart put into it versus other pages. Even I can confess that I am not proud of some of my past layouts, which were due to time constraints. However, every time I touch the fresh ink of the words **hardboiled** on the cover of a hardcopy issue, I am truly amazed by the staff and editors' accomplishments. So the next time you flip through an issue of **hardboiled** and are about to read an article, take a second to look at the fine 30% gray shadings that surround a picture and appreciate the visual as well as the text content of a page. May the force be with you, future **hardboiled** staffers!

owen leong
layout editor

Zzzzzzz...
Beeep! Beeep! Beeep!
(Chirpy receptionist voice):

Good morning! This is your subconscious speaking. It is now 6:45:03, 6:45:04... Welcome to your future as an Asian American freelance writer! Your time at **hb** must have proven just useful enough to give you a basic compendium of writing and editing skills, instilling you with a naive sense of hope that you can "make it." You will undoubtedly find yourself overwhelmed by the sheer size of your new romping grounds, the Bay Area. Say goodbye to that little bubble you call Berkeley, and welcome yourself to the new world, the working world, the shifting, complex, urban landscape that will unflinchingly swallow you whole and spit you back out.

The thing is, you're so capable and talented, and you don't even know it. Sure there are folks who are more attractive, getting laid more often, going to get $50,000 straight out of school, attending Ivy League schools, law schools, medical schools, we're-better-than-you schools. But you're just as...ok, haha, who are we kidding here?

Just stop having all those dirty thoughts about Zhang Ziyi and focus a little bit! What has this strange culmination of national and personal tragedies taught you in the last weeks? Life is way too short! Remember your List of Things to do? Write with a passion! Volunteer! Take improv classes! Meet more people! Stop being so damn insecure about yourself! Take risks! Remember how fulfilled you were when you started doing that list?...and then you got sucked into Facebook and YouTube and the passive mediocrity of an unchallenged person.

Challenge yourself! There's a story out there waiting to be told! Find it and expose it! Woody Allen: "80% of success is showing up!" Remember that? Now turn off that annoying clock-alarm and GET UP you lazy bum! It's 6:45:07...GET...
(Groggily seeks clock-alarm with broad, sweeping motions of hand) Smack!!! Smack!!! Smack!!!
Zzzzzzz....

kevin lee
copy editor

in this issue

Editorial

by **kevin lee**

I feel like I know Seung-Hui Cho.

In that mugshot slapped on publications nationwide is a young Asian American student, bespectacled, morose, downtrodden. His somber eyes and tightly-pursed lips convey constant, everlasting tension. He has trouble relating to others. He's angry at the world. He views

writing as cathartic.

I keep looking and looking at the photo, and one truly sobering thought pushes its way into the forefront of my mind: Seung-Hui Cho is some twisted reflection of myself.

I'm not Cho. My hands remain untainted by the blood of thirty-three people. The collective sorrow and fury of mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers do not burden my conscience. Depression will not threaten my overall well-being. But just like anyone else, I have my ups-and-downs, I have my moments of anger, my flashes of rage. I sense that somewhere, deep in the recesses of our souls, Cho and I hold some of the same ideas about the world, about social disconnection, about estrangement and ignorance even in places that aim to foster growth and thought. Any individual would have trouble making sense of such complex dynamics.

Understand that the killer does not deserve our immediate and unconditional sympathy. Such a forgiving reaction would completely eclipse the grotesque and cold-hearted nature of his acts. It is impossible to comprehend what feelings currently grip the victims' family and friends. But for those who would respond with ignorant, angered rants against the killer, consider the fact that something was going on with Cho, some truly tumultuous combination of his own deeply-brewed animosity and his own misunderstandings of a rigorous, social environment.

It angers me that people would callously strike out at Cho. I looked on Facebook to garner background information on the accused killer of at least thirty-three people at Virginia Tech. Sympathies were mutually shared amongst all college students: "Today we are all Hokies" Beyond this, all I see are student groups devoted to Cho, with student responses using such vitriolic rhetoric as "douchebag," and "pussy" to describe the troubled student. Wall posts filled with such hardheaded, electronic chicken-scratch.

Do people, especially hormone-happy males, really think calling Cho a "pussy" really aids the situation? Such shortsighted notions may provide temporary personal release, but does nothing to add to the discourse on why this particular tragedy occurred or how to prevent future tragedies from occurring. Using such chauvinistic, weakness-laden rhetoric reveals supremely ignorant attitudes towards an act riddled with social and psychological complexities. I do not feign that I understand Cho's actions; I simply find it horribly ironic that these electronic lamenters use such disempowering terms to describe what the killer believed to be an empowering act. Classifying

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

Why a Chinese student feels close to the Virginia Tech tragedy

Cho as a "pussy" essentially equates him to a coward, and funnels the discourse into a binaristic "good guy-bad guy" explanation. It's not that simple.

It is in the aftermath of such a tragedy that we need to find mutual understanding with others. Yet, an article published in *The Nation* highlights people who seem more focused on differences. Andrew Lam began his article "Let it be some other 'Asian'" with this: "All across America, no doubt, non-Korean Asian-Americans are now heaving a sigh of relief." Lam goes on to illustrate how people from various Asian American ethnicities, Korean Americans, Chinese Americans, and Pakistani Americans, all were hoping the killer did not share their ethnic background.

When I first heard about the Virginia Tech shootings, the news devastated me. But then I heard on the KTVU 10 PM news that the alleged killer was supposedly a Chinese citizen visiting with a visa, and I doubled over, a strong hook to the soft spot of my gut. Chinese? Chinese? Like, me Chinese? That couldn't be the case. Horrific incidents occur in America, murders, bombings, suicides, terrorist acts... but none of them involve Chinese people. Instigators are white, black, Latino, Middle Eastern... but not Chinese. Never Chinese. I wasn't sure how to take this.

When I heard that the press had jumped to conclusions, and that the person responsible was actually a Korean green-card holder, I expected myself to feel relieved, but found myself still feeling a deep, internal sense of dread. Part of me wanted to believe I felt this way because of the horrific nature of what Cho had done, but there was something else. I then realized what I was truly thinking: this was, in recent memory, the first American mass tragedy center around an EAST ASIAN individual. It didn't matter that Cho wasn't Chinese. If we are to indulge in the visual observations the mainstream press seemed so fond of, Cho was still Korean - not the dark-skinned, bearded turban-wearing "other" Asians that terrorize the world, but a pale-skinned, bespectacled, 40-plus-percent-of-Berkeley East Asian. I still felt a deep sense of fear, for I had never seen this before, and I did not know what to expect.

Which leads to my frustration with the interviewees in Lam's article. During the immediate hours after the story hit, I never said to anyone, "Please don't let him be Chinese." Even when I had doubled over in shock, I had come to the sad realization that somebody Chinese (Asian) had been responsible for this tragedy. What's done is done. Whether or not he's Chinese, there sure as hell is not a damn thing I or anyone else can do about it. The fact that the media identified the instigator as ASIAN (and not, say, Arab American or Muslim American or Hispanic or African American...but "Asian" as in "East Asian") should be all the information needed. Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Pacific Islander, regardless of the ethnic background Seung-Hui Cho may have had, we, the API community, are all affected. Is the South Korean community the only community tainted, branded from this act? Should Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans really breathe sighs of relief because Cho turned out to be Korean?

The entire API community must prepare for any sort of racial/prejudicial backlash. It does nothing to help the Asian American community if, in this time of tragedy, we focus on differences. At this juncture, we must recognize pan-ethnic solidarity. If the numerous media outlets cannot bother to ensure the difference between a Chinese alien and a Korean resident in America for over a decade, then how can we expect anyone else to? Lam's article notes a Chinese Virginia Tech student who was originally suspected of the shootings because of his Asian background, his affinity for guns, and the pictures of these guns he posted on his blog. Think anyone outside the API community truly distinguishes between Japanese, Koreans, and Chinese? In the chaotic hours after the shooting, the media did not.

While progress has been made with respect to recognizing race and ethnicity, it would still be naive to think that people completely overlook ethnic differences. To expect the majority of America to distinguish between Iraqis, Afghanis, and Iranians, or Sunnis and Shiites is a stretch at best. Negative, unwarranted stereotypes are founded upon ignorance. Our nation's history is built on an inability to distance itself from its affinity for racial prejudice. The Immigration Act of 1924 included an act called the Asian Exclusion Act which barred immigrants from all of Asia, inherently stating that Europeans are highly preferred entrants to Asians. As **hb** writer Brian Lau explains in this issue, the Vincent Chin tragedy still resonates in all of the API community, twenty-five years later. In the aftermath of 9/11, we somberly observe continued examples of racial profiling in places like Lodi, California, and in airports across the nation. If the Korean American community should receive unjustified backlash as a result of Blacksburg, the entire Asian Pacific Islander community must be prepared to stand together to weather the blows.

Cho will in time become synonymous with McVeigh, Osama, Columbine. If we have learned anything from the past few weeks, we have learned that misconceptions rise in every medium, be it print, electronic, visual. The API community must unite and be prepared to deflect shortsighted, disempowering rhetoric and potentially dangerous prejudices. Scholars, journalists, students, Facebookers, Youtubers, and everyone inbetween will delve into Cho's plays, view Cho's videos, seek Cho's past. In unearthing Cho's history, they may discover what many within the API community already know: that Asian young people endure unique acclimation struggles here in America. New social customs, new behaviors, new values and expectations all weigh heavily on new arrivals and early-generation citizens alike. The API community, now more than ever, must take steps to ensure that people have the tools to adjust to a new land, be it social networks, job opportunities, or emotional support. With respect to the college environment, student groups act as a guiding light in a young person's life, not only in fostering group solidarity and social skills, but also individual identity. As a community, we must strive to welcome all.

I'm not Seung-Hui Cho. But if I didn't have the family and friends that I am fortunate to have, the social activities that I partake in, the motivation that spurs me onward, I might have been.

"I keep looking and looking at the photo, and one truly sobering thought pushes its way into the fore-front of my mind: Seung-Hui Cho is some twisted reflection of my-self."

are the co-ops finally cooperating?

by **adrienna wong**

berkeley co-ops propose changes to increase diversity and create safe spaces.

Four years ago, hardboiled published an article covering the under-representation of Asian Americans in the co-op system (“Co-op living at Cal” by Alfred Twu, 7.6). Asian Americans made up only 10 percent of USCA (University Students’ Cooperative Association) residents, despite the fact that they constituted 40 percent of the student body at UC Berkeley. A year later, I wrote an article on the racially hostile atmosphere that Asian Americans like myself, as well as other people of color, had experienced in large houses like Casa Zimbabwe and Cloyne (“Race and the Co-ops” 8.6).

Alfred’s article had much in common with mine. We both opened our articles with a description of the USCA’s history in racial justice, recognizing that the co-ops had preserved Japanese American student facilities during World War II internment. Both of us also noted that the big houses were the least diverse and the most culturally homogenous, and that smaller houses and co-op apartments had higher concentrations of minority residents. There was one big difference in our articles though – Alfred concluded his article with an endorsement of the system, saying, “If you’re looking for a place to live that’s more than just a roof and four walls, give the co-ops a second look.”

Perhaps Alfred left his article on such a positive note because it seemed like some progress was being made. Asian American representation in the co-ops was discussed in a 2004 General Member’s meeting, where plans for recruitment and retention were made. When I entered the co-op system the following semester, however, not much had changed. I found that I had unintentionally entered into an environment where it was acceptable for white residents to make racially-charged jokes about Asian Americans, Latinos, and African Americans in public meetings, while racial profiling was openly advocated as a security measure. Interviews with minority residents of several other co-ops revealed that this was a recurring problem that extended beyond my own personal experiences. In the two years following the publication of my article, I was also disturbed to receive e-mails from several consecutive USCA administrators expressing ignorance to the specifics of the problem.

In April of this year, however, the USCA finally announced a comprehensive plan to address the problems that Alfred and I had raised in our articles, as part of “The Cloyne 2010 Project,” a proposal to redesign Cloyne Court as an international-themed living situation dedicated to creating safe spaces for members of diverse peer identity groups. Much to their credit, the USCA has chosen to go a different path than merely telling their Asian American residents to deal with the situation by “addressing the awkwardness yourself” as one co-op resident suggested (“Letter to the Editor” 9.1). And despite admonishments from the same resident that hardboiled should have “stuck to what we know” before publishing criticisms about the environment at the co-ops (“Letter to the Editor” 9.1), the proposal for the Cloyne project includes an acknowledgement that “the two largest, best known houses adhere to a similar, white-majority, arguably un-inclusive, community standard” and that “the USCA’s lack of ethnic diversity... is a problem within the entire USCA.” An information sheet on the project specifically mentions the under-representation of Asian Americans in the co-ops.

Cloyne Court on Ridge Rd. *http://www.usca.org/coops/clo.php*

> “Despite admonishments that hardboiled should have ‘stuck to what we know’ before publishing criticisms about the co-ops, the proposal for The Cloyne 2010 Project includes acknowledgement that ‘the two largest, best known houses adhere to a similar, white-majority, arguably un-inclusive, community standard’ and that ‘the USCA’s lack of ethnic diversity... is a problem within the entire USCA.’”

In order to reach out to a broad range of new members and retain current membership, and in response to University pressures on the USCA to meaningfully change Cloyne Court, the co-op association has designed the “Cloyne 2010 Project” to achieve two main goals: to “welcome a culturally diverse college student population” and to “provide safe, quality, equitable housing” for its diverse membership.

Practically speaking, the Cloyne project reserves 50% of its beds for international students. Beyond that, it is a little unclear what solid measures the USCA will take to ensure what it hopes will be a “safe, clean, study-friendly, culturally diverse choice for prospective co-opers who might otherwise feel alienated by a setting which seemingly caters to the needs of white folks.” The proposal that the Cloyne theme coordinator should facilitate community-building discussion groups does not guarantee a safe space for racial dialogue, nor does the proposal ensure that house managers will not instruct residents to be on the lookout for “sketchy black men” (“Race and the Co-ops” 8.6). However, the USCA seems mindful of the work yet to be done; the Cloyne project description includes a warning that although an international theme at Cloyne “jump-starts” the process of diversifying the co-ops, further steps must be taken each year in order to sustain the long-term goal of “cross-cultural credibility” for the co-op system. The USCA’s public acknowledgement of the problem and its assertion of the values of equitable housing and diversity definitely constitute a positive start for creating inclusiveness. This alone is an improvement that should be applauded.

There is much to love about co-op living: rent is cheaper, the food is often delicious and ethically purchased, and democratic decision-making sure beats the authoritarian reign of University dormitory administrators. These strengths of the co-op system will not diminish by including individuals of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. If co-op members responsibly support the trajectory of the “Cloyne 2010” proposals, there may be some time, perhaps eight or nine years after Alfred Twu first published his article on the co-ops, when a hardboiled writer can attest to the increased diversity and inclusiveness of cooperative housing at Berkeley.

Editorial

25 years later...

REMEMBERING VINCENT CHIN

by **brian lau**

It was twenty-five years ago. Twenty-five years remove us from that one Detroit night, from that strip club bar, where it all started, and that fast food restaurant parking lot, where it would all end. Twenty-five years is a lifetime of defeat, struggle, and progress.

Twenty-five years ago, Vincent Chin was murdered. What had started out as a joyous evening with friends, a bachelor party for the soon-to-be-married Chin, would tragically turn into a night of despair. Twenty-five years ago, Ronald Ebens and Michael Nitz, two white automobile workers in Detroit's stagnating automobile industry, beat an unarmed man to death with a baseball bat.

Chin, a 27-year old Chinese American, was killed because his murderers thought he was Japanese.

Undoubtedly, that's an oversimplification, and we may never know the exact details of what happened that night. But from what eyewitnesses of the event have claimed, from what the economic and social context of the period tells us, the racial motivation for Chin's death is almost undeniable. This was a hate crime.

In the words of Ebens, "It's because of you motherfuckers that we're out of work."

The killing of Vincent Chin was not an isolated incident, it did not occur within a vacuum. Before his death, the automobile industry in America was facing stiff competition from various Japanese auto companies. The entire nation was hit hard by the automobile industry's impending collapse, and Detroit was no exception. The city, where an immense number of residents were employed in car manufacturing, was in recession.

The natural scapegoat, of course, was Japan and their booming automobile industry. Promoted by local politicians and union leaders, supported by both employed and unemployed, anti-Japanese sentiment skyrocketed. Never mind that American car manufacturers had gone years without responding to calls to develop more fuel-efficient automobiles. Never mind that the U.S. as a whole had stood by and witnessed the death of the working class since McCarthyism. The blame must be put on those crafty Japanese.

Hence the hateful statements vocalized by Chin's murderers as they barraged him with their Louisville Slugger. The motions of a sledgehammer to the hood of a Honda are not unlike those of a bat to the face of a man mistaken as Japanese but undoubtedly understood as enemy.

Those same motions are echoed in the banging of the judge's gavel, as the killers' sentence is proclaimed: guilty of manslaughter, three years probation, and a $3,780 fine. In the words of the judge, "These weren't the kind of men you send to jail."

It did not take twenty-five years for Asian Americans to recognize what had happened here: two white men who had admitted to killing a defenseless man had just gotten away with murder. The judge had in effect legalized murdering Asians. Asian Americans across the country saw Chin's death as an indication that ethnic distinctions of the past would not be the avenue to challenge the strand of racism that groups together and essentializes all Asians.

And so a pan-Asian American identity was forged. The creation of American Citizens for Justice, founded by Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and Pilipinos living in the Detroit area, was the first step, and the group began organizing

rallies and pursuing other legal avenues to gain justice. The movement spread across the nation and demonstrations in many major cities composed of an array of different Asian ethnic groups showcased the widespread support for bringing the killers to trial. Under immense pressure, the US Department of Justice filed charges in 1983 against Ebens and Nitz for violating Chin's civil rights and conspiracy.

Still, the two men walked away without having set foot in a prison. An initial conviction was overturned in a federal appeals court due to evidence that the prosecution had been improperly coaching witnesses. The case was retried, but both men were found not guilty on all charges. A civil suit against Ronald Ebens resulted in $1.5 million in damages, but the money was never paid; Ebens fled the state.

But the movement for justice did not end there. The organizations that had grown out of the Chin case continued their work, expanding their vision to include advocacy for other Asian American groups. The mode of coalition building we see today is a direct product of that which came out of Chin's death.

At times, I've wondered why it is that twenty-five years from Chin's death, we still rally around him, lightning to the rod. The best answer I can come up with is this:

That the sound of a bat against bone is not muted by flesh.

That no noise can penetrate the sobs of Lily Chin, as the men who killed her only child, the kind of men you don't send to jail, get away with three years probation and a $3,780 slap on the wrist.

That in times of injustice, injustice of any and every degree, silence is a privilege we are not afforded, nor should it ever be.

You see, no matter how much we have come in these twenty-five years, we haven't come far enough. Not even close to it. We still see Vincent Chin. Everyday, everywhere. The picture of Vincent stays in our memory, that sense of self-assuredness, the gold chain, everything about his hair and clothing that screams 1980s fashion miscues, the smile. The image is so easily recalled.

We see Vincent Chin in the "Dotbuster" attacks against Asian Indians in the late 1980s in Jersey City. We see Vincent in the Southeast Asian refugee children mowed down by a crazed man with a semiautomatic rifle. We see him in the female workers toiling in the sweatshops of Nike and Jessica McClintock, both here and abroad; in the meth addicts shunned by the Bay Area Chinese and Pilipino community, as well as in American society in general; in the unseen women brought to this country through trickery or coercion to serve as sex slaves in invisible parlors, unsure of when (or if) they will ever escape; in the soon-to-be-deported Southeast Asian adults, who as teenagers committed crimes in the indiscretions of youth and now face the draconian laws of a xenophobic backlash against the immigrant communities. Violence is not relegated only to the physical, but extends to all acts of animosity and oppression, individual and structural.

And that is why it is crucial for us to remember Vincent Chin. For when we recall that image of Vincent in his youth, we are also reminded of the protests and rallies by the Asian American community in the wake of his death. We are reminded of a united cry for justice, a voice that, while not easily nor automatically created, said to the rest of America that we would not tolerate such violence to go unchallenged.

But it is not enough that we rally around those sites of marginalization and violence as they pertain to the Asian American community. We must also be always aware that Vincent Chin, though racialized as Asian, can be found in the struggles of all oppressed peoples. Vincent Chin is the murder of a black man shot 41 times by New York's Finest, who mistook his move towards reaching for his wallet as a move for the gun that all black men must invariably carry. Vincent Chin is the murder of the Mexican teenager living in Texas, fatally shot in the back by a white rancher who mistook the American-born youth as an illegal immigrant, as any rational person could be prone to do.

And so as we had fought for Vincent Chin, as we continue to fight against anti-Asian racism, we must also fight against any and all instances of marginalization. The next step is not a movement beyond Asian American issues, but an expansion of our vision to include issues that affect all people of color, all persecuted groups, and all humans.

Twenty-five years ago, Vincent Chin died. Twenty-five years later, we are here where he is not. But while time separates us, while Detroit is miles away from Berkeley, we are not abdicated from our responsibility, our duty to fight against the injustice that existed then and there, the injustice that exists now and here. We must fight so Vincent Chin can rest in peace, so that we can rest in peace.

hardboiled time machine

by **pauline sze**

ten years of deep shit and stickin' it to 'em

As **hardboiled** finishes off its last issue in its tenth year of publication, we remember that ten years ago three passionate students formed this newsmagazine in response to the political tensions stemming from Proposition 209 and the lack of representation of Asian American issues in a fresh and critical manner. In an effort to commemorate our ten years of service to the community, we felt it would be refreshing to hear the voices of some of the past editors of **hardboiled**. In the words of one of the original founders, Cuong Lam, "Wow, has it been ten years? ... Amazing."

How did you get involved with hardboiled newsmagazine (or if you were a founder, why did you decide to start hardboiled)?

EW: **hardboiled** started as an offshoot of Asian Student Union, a progressive APA political student-organizing group. Three of us (me, Cuong Lam, and Jean Hsu) got the idea during finals in our junior year (1997). At that time, most of our work was around education and organizing, specifically against the Regent's decision to end affirmative action and Prop 209. We were so sick of the negative coverage of affirmative action at the *Daily Cal* that we decided to create an alternative API voice. We also hated how boring or tacky the existing API magazines were at that time on and off campus (*A Mag*, *Yolk*, *Slant*) so we figured, we certainly couldn't do any worse.

DKS: I started Cal with dreams of Computer Science. Two years and 1,000 lab hours later, I didn't make the cut and suddenly had a lot of free time on my hands. That and my then-youthful idealism to fight the Man and encourage fellow Asian Americans to do the same.

JH: I found a dirty, crumpled copy of an issue on the floor of my ex-boyfriend's apartment. It was the one with Mao saying, "Give us your labor" and Chiang Kai-Shek saying, "Give us your money." I don't remember any of the articles but I liked the layout. Then I went to a meeting and they made me join their cult.

DM: I was actually on my way to join *The Heuristic Squelch* that second year of college. And one Tarak Shah sent me a kind email, having heard of me from a friend. Curious to have been so elicited, I stopped by one day at the meeting. I was impressed by how good looking everyone was. I mean passionate. It was a well-run organization with a lot of fire and openness. I was immediately drawn to the knee-in-the groin muckraking spirit. It was a heady (and stylish) mix of irreverence, indignation, and wit. Many years later, I found out the staff of *The Heuristic Squelch* was not nearly as good looking, so I'm glad it all worked out.

KC: As a pissed off freshman, all it took was a fateful stroll along Sproul. Equally pissed off looking people sitting at the table proved far too enticing to pass up. Went to a meeting. End of story.

Describe one of the most rewarding experiences you had with hardboiled.

CL: The most rewarding thing about **hardboiled** was the response during its first year from faculty, students and leaders at Cal. I remember being in Professor Michael Omi's class when he cited **hardboiled**, getting emails from students, and having people thanking us on the steps of Sproul for creating **hardboiled**.

david yang and edmund wong as old men (2006)

DCY: It was all about staying up all night, talking smack, and drinking like dumb crazy people. Another thing is that when the first website went up (in year two), we started getting crazy hits from all over the place, especially after Yahoo featured us. Some of the correspondence we got was pretty cool.

AC: Very often, I would meet Asian American students at other colleges around the country who knew about **hardboiled**, read it on-line, and always said that they wished they had something like it at their campuses. Also, in the last issue of series five, we did a feature on well-known Asian American 'sell outs' (e.g. Dinesh D'Souza, Elaine Chao -- Bush's Secretary of Labor). A Political Science professor used that piece for the final exam in his class that year.
Editor's Note: Prof Zook used **hardboiled** in his final exam.

JH: We used to go over to the Layout Editor's (Harish) apartment on Channing and stay there all night [for production night(s)]. Those were the most fun. A lot of people use to hate on **hardboiled**, too -- is it still like that? We used to get all kinds of hate mail. I enjoyed replying to those as well. There was an article we published about interracial dating on the Berkeley campus and a guy wrote in about how we're a bunch of racists. Good times. Oh, and we had a couple "**hardboiled**-sponsored" events in 2002 that were cool. We had the Sweatshop Fashion Show on Lower Sproul, and we held a spoken word night with Ishle Park, Dennis Kim, and Beau Sia.

LWM: We got all the APA campus groups to hate us and got busted by the *Daily Cal* for plagiarism - in just one issue! Also, we once talked about doing this "Women of **hardboiled**" spread to rival the "Men of The Patriot," where D, Vilar, Marites, G-lo and I would stand on some steps near the Campanile in our suits and shit. But we never did it. We also talked about doing an undercover investigation of pledging an APA frat. We also never did that. Both of those would probably have been very rewarding experiences.

AH: The coolest part of being in **hardboiled** is getting out into the community and talking to people. I got to meet people who have played a huge part in shaping Asian American history and contemporary politics, such as activist Yuri Kochiyama, protestors from the '99 Ethnic Studies strikes, senior citizens who still remember the I-Hotel evictions, SF School Board member Jane Kim, and more. Meeting these people put human faces on the issues that affect our community.

Describe one of the most challenging experiences you had with hardboiled.

CL: Leaving the publication we created and passing it to the next staff. It belonged to the students of Cal...

MA: The challenges of last-minute scrambling to get content and layout together, especially for the first issue, when **hardboiled** was just five or so people.

LWM: A girl from the Asian Political Association almost attacked me in front of Wheeler. To diffuse the situation, I walked away. She screamed at me, "Don't walk away! Come back here!" Thank god Peter Gee hid behind the bushes around the corner, in case something went down. She goes to Boalt now, I hope she reads this.

DL: Working until late into the night and driving it to the printers. The reward sometimes was Krispy Kreme though.

ME: Issue 6.2 stands out as particularly trying. We dealt with a plagiarized story and flak about a piece on APA campus organizations. There was some damage that needed controlling.

DM: I struggled with the "us-versus-them" tone that pervades the paper. Perhaps there's something deeper to that, something that is a larger struggle for identity politics. But I also think *X* was an amazing project to push cross talk and coalition. So rather than a specific event, it was this ongoing struggle for all of us to ride our passions for the issues, but to also not let anger or the easy route obscure the issues, or quality work. Injustice and foolishness can often speak for themselves, when you give it the forum.

What do you value the most about hardboiled?

EW: I don't know…builder's pride? When we started it, we knew that all of the founders would be gone after the first year. So my goal from the start was to groom leadership to keep it from dying after we left. So besides editing articles, I was most interested in building the teams and camaraderie to keep it going. To see it at ten years--wow! On a personal level, the friendships I made or solidified have continued to this day. Three of my four grooms people at my wedding were either editors or writers for the first issue.

DKS: The camaraderie and commitment. The attitude. The danger. The drugs and the fast cars.

AC: That folks have kept it going for ten years! When **hardboiled** first came out, the current first-year students were in third grade!

DM: It was an opportunity as a student to really empower myself to learn from my peers and the stories about issues of social justice. I mean at 19, did I really understand what was going on? It was very rough. **hardboiled** allows a bunch of passionate kids, who know sometimes shit is fucked up, to grapple with some of those things and develop a sophistication regarding that. It allowed us to talk to each

hardboiled All-Stars

NAME	ROLE	SERIES
edmund wong (EW)	co-founder & managing editor	1.0
cuong lam (CL)	co-founder & editor-in-chief	1.0
david c yang (DCY)	design editor & co-editor-in-chief	1,0-2.0
momo chang (MC)	features editor (story editor)	1.0-3.0
michelle man (MA)	managing editor	1.0-5.0
mary lai (ML)	co-editor in chief	2.0
david k song (DKS)	co-editor in chief	2.0-3.0
hua hsu (HH)	story editor	2.0
anmol chaddha (AC)	story editor	2.0-5.0
jean ho (JH)	managing editor & story editor	3.0-5.0
lisa wong macabasco (LWM)	story editor	3.0-6.0
daniel lai (DL)	story editor	4.0
marites mendoza (ME)	story editor	5.0-6.0
dharushana muthulingam (DM)	story editor	5.0-6.0
kristopher capello (KC)	managing editor	7.0-8.0
allen hong (AH)	story editor	7.0-7.0
jeremy chen (JC)	story editor	8.0-9.0

photos by david yang

hb editors and hb staff after Issue 1.1

other and the larger community of Asian American activism. Rather than just being told by a teacher, we sought the teachers out themselves, and then in turn tried to share that in print. It has been very influential in figuring out the fight I want to fight.

JC: Nothing is more valuable than **hardboiled**'s staying power. The fact that it has been around for ten years now is a testament to the passion of the Asian American community. **hardboiled**'s existence makes liars out of people who say that Asian Americans are apathetic and socially unconscious.

How has hardboiled changed since the days you were an editor?

EW: After I graduated it became more tart and dogmatic. Yeah, we had a political bent, but our goal was to put really solid articles that were interesting. No bullshit clichés, no predictable screeds--we wanted to inform without being didactic. More *Daily Show* than *Harpers*.

DCY: What I've seen of **hb** since I graduated is that it has remained more like series two than series one. I can tell you how it changed between the first and second years. I love the editors from the first year, but I thought they were overly conservative—not in the political sense but they tried so hard to adopt a serious tone and imagery, akin to *NPR* or the *N.Y. Times*. I used to argue with them—"We're called **HARDBOILED**, damn it, I think it's okay to have some attitude." Anyway, after they graduated we riff-raff went to town on the thing and gave it some spunk and I started liking **hb** a lot more as a publication. I hate it when Asian American publications a staid and overly understated aesthetic, like skinny serif fonts, pictures of bamboos, tasteful small graphics in boxes, crap like that.

LWM: I've actually talked about this recently - **hardboiled** is actually a social group now! It's very disconcerting. It used to be so uncool it was cool to be with **hardboiled**, and now there's a facebook group and shit. I always thought our unofficial motto was: "**hardboiled** – we don't need you." But I guess we do. And we're better for it.

So…what's up with that obligatory diss against the *Daily Cal* on our website?

DCY: I wrote that. Actually, I wrote that blurb when I made the first **hb** website back in like 1998. It brought a tear to my eye when I realized it was still up.

I don't know how the *Daily Cal* is now but it was a big piece of crap back in my day. I think we perceived it as an organ of the right wing, as its editorials were generally conservative. Prop. 209 was passed back when I was still in college and the *Daily Cal* barely took a stand (and might have even celebrated it, though I don't recall exactly). The Asian Americans who wrote for it often espoused assimilationist points of view; for example, columns about how "I can't stand how people stereotype Asians, in fact, I suck at math, so I'm not one of those nerdy Asians! I'm cool!" It was like, fuck you guys, stand up for yourselves and the community, you don't need to make any excuses.

They were also running a lot of ads for "Asian Dreamgirls" calendars and other fetishist shit like that. We once ran a stupid spoof ad for "Caucasian Dreamgirls" and actually got some interest!

MC: Well, I also wrote for the *Daily Cal* but quit soon after I joined **hb**!

AC: It sucks.

JH: I didn't know anyone who read the *Daily Cal*, except to do the crossword puzzle.

LWM: Wow - if you have to ask... In brief: it fucking sucks.

ME: Umm, it's the *Daily Cal*.

JC: They do what they do, and **hardboiled** does what it does. Compare the two, and that is a diss in itself.

What are you up to these days?

CL: I am currently in New York City working for MTV Networks in Times Square.

DCY: I'm now an attorney at a firm in LA, doing commercial and intellectual property litigation. After college I worked for the tech sector for a couple of years in the Bay Area and Germany but found it unfulfilling, and I missed being in school. So I applied to Boalt Hall to basically relive my youth. Law is much more fun than engineering.

MC: I am a staff writer at the *Oakland Tribune* and also editor for *Hyphen* magazine - but nowadays I'm mostly just hanging out at home with my baby boy.

ML: Currently, I'm in a PhD program in Human Development & Family Studies at Pennsylvania State University. My research interests are generally in API delinquency and substance use, and the role of culture and immigration in youth development. I'll always be interested in youth activism and community development.

DKS: My main project is an epic 1,500+ page sequel to *_Journey to the West_*; I'm working on it from a fortified compound in the Mojave, near Lancaster. I'm a motivational speaker for high school students on the side. I also play bass for Monolidic, a struggling Asian American band that will no doubt become a sonically destructive force of nature in indie rock as soon as we find a non-flaky drummer. And practice. Regularly.

HH: After graduating from Berkeley I started writing for magazines and newspapers, and went to graduate school in the History of American Civilization at Harvard. I'll be starting as a professor in the English Department at Vassar College in the Fall.

LWM: I'm a freelance writer and an editor at *AsianWeek* newspaper and *Hyphen* magazine. I know, I know.

DL: Got an M.A. in Chinese history at Columbia. Going to law school at Tulane and doing some work with the Vietnamese community here in New Orleans.

ME: Getting my ass kicked as a PhD student in the English Department at UWashington.

DM: I'm a first year med student in the Joint Medical Program between Berkeley's School of Public Health and UCSF School of Medicine. As part of that, I'm also in a program called PRIME-US that focuses on health issues related to the urban underserved. Some of the issues there include understanding the role of community clinics; barriers in access for immigrants, whether economic, language, legal, or cultural; prison health care; racial disparities; and homelessness. It's been a really incredible opportunity to pursue my passions for social justice, hands on work, and scholarly/scientific thinking. I am focusing my master's research on trying to understand whether disparities in health status along racial lines constitutes a deprivation of civil rights, and what the role of the government would then be. I'm excited about becoming a doctor, and using that in this kind of work, but I'm not sure about all the details yet. And I hope to keep writing in many ways.

Are you still active in the Asian American community?

MC: I write and edit for *Hyphen* magazine - also an all-volunteer pub. Prior to going on maternity leave, I covered API issues for the *Oakland Tribune* as a part of my beat. I also support and am a member of various API orgs, like the Center for Asian American Media.

MA: I write for a Vietnamese-English bilingual magazine, *BN*.

ML: I'm trying to be involved with the API community here at Penn State but let's just say things are kinda different here. I went to their APA Caucus meeting the other day with the undergrads and I really had to hold myself back from taking over the meeting. They have an Asian American Studies class that they're campaigning to make permanent so I'm sure I'll be involved in that. I'd like to help teach a course or facilitate something. Next year, I might consider reaching out to the API community orgs in Philly and DC.

DKS: After school, I put a couple of years in the trenches as a grant writer for a Korean American non-profit. I also got involved for a time with a local Asian American writers group and then went to UCLA for an MA in Asian American Studies, which I finally finished this year. Right now most of my support is just the moral kind for the Asian American community/arts scene.

Do you still read hardboiled?

CL: I don't. I had to let it grow…

DCY: I couldn't bear to read **hb** the year after I graduated. Even though I loved the people who became editors after me, I considered **hb** my baby—I loved **hb** and it pretty much defined college for me—so it was too painful for me to see it in other people's hands, so I tried to pretend it didn't exist. After that, I was getting email updates and getting sent issues for a while, but it stopped. I read the website from time to time.

LWM: No – but I want to! Why don't you guys have an RSS feed? And non-PDF articles?

DL: Once a year, on the website. Heheh.

AH: Yeah, but I have only been able to read the online editions. I yearn for the newsprint pages.

hb editors - dave song, momo chang, misun, duy nguyen (1999)

JC: Sometimes I read it online, and when I do, it makes me feel young and nostalgic, albeit I have only been a graduate for less than a year.

And, just for kicks…if you could be any type of cereal, what would it be and why?

EW: The cereal at the dining commons, because you're always going to be better than the food they cooked.

DCY: Fuck cereal, I would be some sort of Taiwanese breakfast meat bun.

MA: Granola…because I'm nutty.

DKS: Rice, the finest cereal crop of them all.

DL: Cheerios, because I would float. I cannot swim, not even in milk.

ME: Grapenuts. No one would eat me, and if they tried I'd break their teeth.

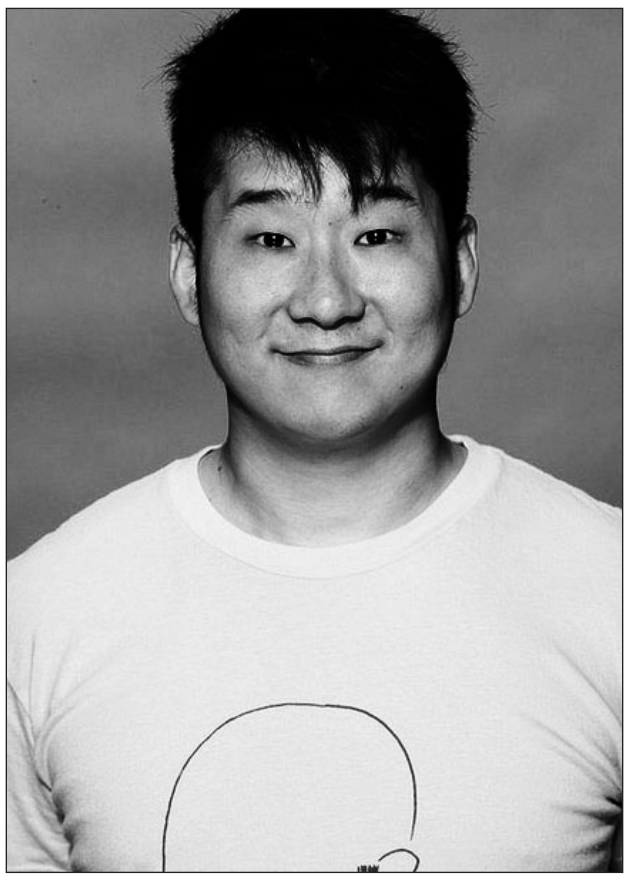
kickin' it

by **matt hui**

OLD SCHOOL

hardboiled interviews Bobby Lee about his life as an Asian American entertainer.

with bobby lee



Asian American comedian Bobby Lee needs no introduction. With a permanent spot on the hit series *MADtv* and a prominent role in the upcoming movie "*Kickin' it Old School*," Bobby Lee sat down with hardboiled about his opinions on his new movie, his relationship with his parents, and being an Asian American entertainer.

So tell me about your role in the new movie *Kickin' It Old School*.
I play a guy named Aki, and he is part of a breakdancing group in the 80s. There's a white guy, a black guy, a Mexican guy, and an Asian guy. We were all dancing in the 80s, but then the white guy, [named] Justin (played by Jamie Kennedy) gets in a coma. When he comes [out of a coma], he tries to get his break dancing group back together. I play Aki when he's older and I work in an office. He convinced me to rejoin his group and then we dance.

Is Aki a stereotypical Asian American male character?
I think it was written with an accent, but I didn't do one. On top of that, I feel that stereotypical stuff is fine as long as you find an angle that is funny. I play him with such weirdness that I am weirdness and manic and excitable. I put my own Bobby Lee-ism to the guy so it makes it okay in that sense. They were looking for a "longadong," but they didn't get that, they got me. In fact, the first scene was all improvised.

If the role were written in such a way that portrayed Asian American males negatively, would you refuse to do it?
You don't want to say that you refuse to do it. I wanted to do the movie. There aren't that many parts written out there for guys like me. It's either do a movie or not. So it's like, I did it. I want to do movies.

This brings me to the next set of questions. Hiro, in the television series *Heroes*, is seen as a very passive character. In one particular scene, he gets hit in the face in Las Vegas. He has no power. As someone who is an Asian American male in the entertainment business, how do you feel about that?
So, my background is in sketch comedy. The kind of characters I play on *Mad* have been a variety of things. I play a guy Tank who thinks he can get chicks, so he's very aggressive with the women. I play this guy Johnny Gong, who is really perverted, and I played Bae Song, who is kinda weird and says crazy stuff in accents. I haven't done a character for a long time on *Mad* that "people" expect us to do. Most of the time I play myself and myself is perverted and kinda crazy and druggy.

What about Miss Swan [a *MadTV* character], is she a stereotypical Asian?
First of all, there are two different things. We're talking about something that's stereotypical, but there are things that are stereotypical but funny. *Borat* is stereotypical but funny. People from that area are against Jews; they are portrayed as ghetto and poor but people see it as funny. If people like it then it's okay, right? Like the example you gave in *Heroes*, when Hiro was attacked; it wasn't funny, so that didn't work. Take another example, my character in *Harold and Kumar*, when I played an uber-nerd. I haven't seen one negative comment about it. Everyone's saying that's fuckin' hilarious. I mean I'm playing an uber-nerd and making it funny. I mean how else are you going to play that guy? You play him ultra giggly and weird. When I wasn't even on *Mad* and I saw Ms. Swan, I'm like that white chick's funny. Look I'm a guy that never bought into stereotypes. My girlfriend is 5'11, blonde, from the south, and she could be a model and people look and go "How could that happen?" I just don't fall into those traps.

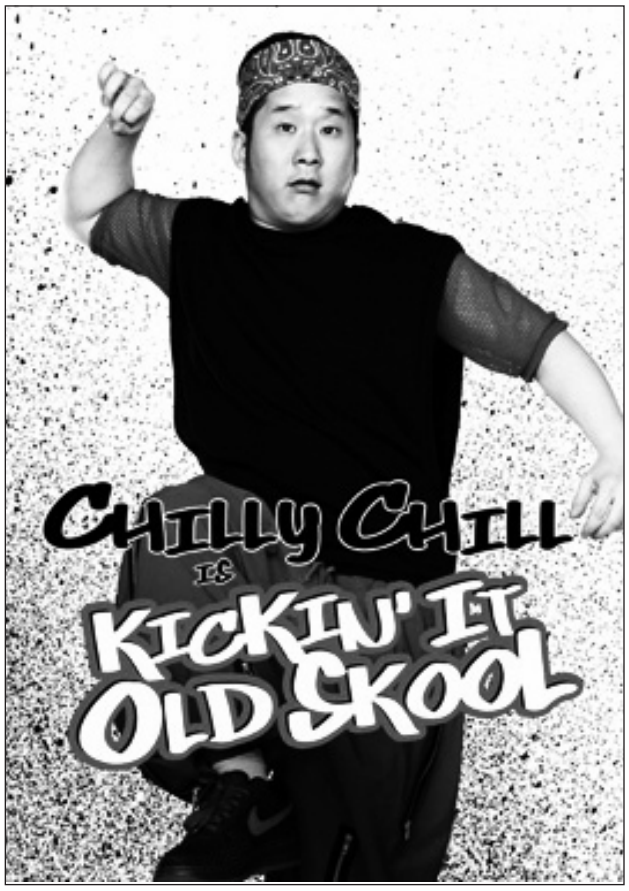
But people are asking, "How could that happen?" They have those views from what they see in the mainstream media.
Right, and it's up to guys like me to break that. I do it in my own way. I mean people that see my stand up go, **"**Wow,**"** because I show my asshole, and I'm edgy, loud and aggressive since the stereotype is to be passive and submissive. I feel like it isn't my characters, but me that's breaking the stereotypes. Getting girls was never a problem for me. I've always been able to get girls.

You know how they always say it's the Asian girl that's dating the white guy...
Yeah, but is it the media's fault or is it our fault? I'll tell you this. I think it's 50/50. When I'm at a mall and I see a group of Asians, it's always a GROUP of Asians together. Rarely will I see a Black guy and an Asian guy and the Asian guy is holding the hand of a White girl. I mean whose fault is that? If you see me walking in a mall, you'll see a guy that's 6'8 black with gold teeth, my girlfriend who's white, and an albino midget. These are the people who I choose to be around. They're my friends. I mean, I'm an American and I'm well aware that I'm Asian also. I want to experience what America has to offer, and that's the world. When Asian parents are like, you have to be a doctor or lawyer, and go to the best schools…that's not the media's fault, that's our fault. Because then the world sees us just doing that. Asian parents should be like, You should be a rock star." They should be like do what you want to do, so it's partly our fault too.

That's a good segue into the next question, which is: how did your parents react when you wanted to go into comedy?
My parents were like you got to be a lawyer and go to Harvard. So I was like okay, I'll try and I get F's on my report card, so I couldn't do those things. My parents wouldn't talk about me in front of family. Then when I was in my 20s, I started doing stand up, and they were like, "Was that an option?" In the beginning, they thought I was fucking ridiculous and they wouldn't talk to me in front of family until I did *The Tonight Show*. They were okay with it when they saw that I was successful and that I could make more money than any of my cousins, and I never went to college.

Is that how they measure success? Through how much money you can make?
Yeah, and it's their fault for using those standards. Those are their standards, they aren't mine. When I have kids, I'm not like, you have to go to college. I won't give a shit. Just don't steal, don't kill. If they want to do something with their life, I say just go and do it.

Do you feel that it is a generational issue, where the standard of happiness or success is measured differently?
Americans do the same thing, but it's the American dream where anything can happen. But the Asian culture is like, money is success. I don't know why it's like that, but this is the guy I am. In my early 20s, I was so depressed, I had nothing. I was working in coffee shops and I had long hair and I was hanging out at bookstores. I started doing stand up and I realized all I wanted to do was perform. If I did movies, it was because I wanted to do them and TV, but I'm no role model. I'm no pioneer. I'm just a guy who just wants to have fun and to live my life.



continued…

How did you get into the entertainment industry?

I started doing open mic night at The Comedy Store in San Diego. I worked there as a bar back, washing dishes and six months after doing Amateur Night, Pauley Shore saw me and he was like "Dude, you gotta keep doing this because you're hilarious." A couple months later, Carlos Mencia saw me and was like "You gotta open for me man." So then Pauley and Carlos helped me out and I opened for them all over the country. You basically fall into it and you realize that it's fun. I'm pretty lazy so I wanted to do something that was fun and it just worked out. I took a risk and it ended up working.

How is your relationship with your parents now that they see you as successful?
They actually have been in sketches with me. If you go to YouTube and type in "Bobby's Parents," I invite one of the cast members over for dinner and it's funny. I'm actually developing a show for *Comedy Central* and I'm thinking about bringing them on as regulars. I never realized this but my parents have always been funny. But when they were so strict I couldn't see it and I hated them for it. Now as an adult, you look at them and you go, "Wow, they say things that are hilarious," and they mean to say them, they aren't accidental. My dad will fart and do the gun thing where he's like "bang bang" like he's shooting farts off. I didn't see it until they got old and stopped doing the parenting thing. We're friends now mostly. I talk to them about girls and things like that. Even though before I couldn't conform to what they wanted and I felt like I was a horrible son.

What would you say to people who don't want to conform to what their parents want?

But the thing is that it's partly [the parents'] job. All they really want is the best for you, and they think that they know what's the best for you. But they're not you. It's your responsibility to do what you love. You really only got one chance at this, so you should just do what you love. It isn't about money, it isn't about getting chicks, it's not about status. I used to wake up and dread going to work every day, now it's like I'm just excited.

What advice would you give to people who are trying to pursue careers outside of what is expected of them?
If Asian people are so sensitive to the stereotypes, it's partly because of the fact that Asian Americans usually follow a specific line. My philosophy is to do something that you love and do something that's out of the box. Because the more of us that are rock stars like James Iha from the Smashing Pumpkins, [the better]. When the Smashing Pumpkins came out I loved them just because James Iha was in the band and you don't understand what that meant to me. He probably doesn't even know. It made me more proud of anything that I have ever seen. When I saw Margaret Cho the first time on television, it made me proud. They were doing exciting. They were the role models to me. They made me proud because they showed that they could do something like that.

Call for Camaraderie:

Peering into the 17th API Issues Conference

by **kevin lee**

Torrential rain pour, squealing fire alarms, missing performers...it seemed like the 17th annual API Issues Conference might have been doomed from the start. But thanks to the determined efforts of the entire Conference staff, the graciousness of guest speakers from all over the Bay Area, and the interest from students and professionals alike, the Conference marched onward.

Many students acknowledged the importance of gaining knowledge during such gatherings. Betty Zhou, a UC Berkeley freshman, helped facilitate the Session II workshop, "Asian Business in the Community." Despite this being her first API Issues Conference, Zhou was determined to do more than attend. "I want to make an impact," Zhou resoundingly stated. "I want people to know more about the business side of things." Others came to learn more about the API community. Krissia Manansala, a student at the University of Santa Cruz who attended last year's conference, came to Berkeley this year to "hear people talk about [API] issues" and to be more aware about them.

Rain in the early part of the conference acted as a strong deterrent to potential attendees, but could not discourage everyone. Amidst a sparse morning crowd at 155 Dwinelle Hall, activist and keynote speaker Lillian Galedo talked about her fight for Pilipino and Pilipino American rights. Galedo lamented over the inability of the current US government to adequately reimburse Pilpino veterans for their efforts in World War II. According to Galedo, the US government pays Pilipino veterans fifty cents for every dollar paid to American veterans; such an unjust government policy perpetuates the idea that "former colonial subjects cannot be [Americans'] equal[s]." Galedo also emphasized that Pilipinos make up the largest group of foreign-born soldiers in the US Army's occupation of Iraq. Perhaps most telling in her lecture was one slip-up, when she nearly referred to the war in Iraq as another infamous war: "I was going to say '[the war] in Vietnam'...it feels like the same."

Despite her sobering observation of the current political landscape, Galedo remained upbeat about potential change through young people. "You build commitment through organizations, step-by-step," she explained after her speech. Brian Tom, a former collaborator with Galedo during their collegiate years at UC Davis, stressed the need for change at an institutional level. He called for new viewpoints in teaching Asian American studies. "The API role is complex," Tom said. "There needs to be some creative thinking in what should be addressed in classes. For example, globalization must be a class within Asian American Studies because current classes don't address its impact on solely the API community."

Session I saw late-risers stumble into Dwinelle Hall, in time for morning workshops. The makeshift breakfast buffet featured muffins, cereal, orange juice, and milk to help participants perk up. It seemed the Conference was gaining momentum, as the morning showers began to calm. But just when people were settling into Session II, a loud, pulsating alarm reverberated through the hallways and disturbed ongoing lectures. Students and visitors were rushed out as a fire truck charged onto campus to investigate. It was later learned that there was no actual danger, and sources claim that the pulled fire alarm was only an unwitting accident.

With fire alarms screeching, conference volunteers quickly rushed participants to Heller Lounge for an early lunch, where a delicious buffet of Cambodian food and a bevy of talented musicians awaited. Opening act Connie Lim, alongside her band complete with bass guitarist, African drummer, drummer, and keyboard player, charmed the audience with her soulful, passionate musings about life. Braindrops, a brother duo, dropped sharp rhymes infused with protest. Lijie played a lovely solo acoustic set, melodically singing to a self-sampled beat: her own hand rhythmically banging on her guitar. Rey Resureccion and band Trademark closed out the live sessions with a stirring, emphatic set of tracks that had listeners clapping and breakdancing. After completing their preset playlist, Resureccion and Trademark launched into some musical and lyrical improvisation, much to the delight of the audience.

Refreshed from delicious food and quality performances, participants returned to Dwinelle Hall for Session III and the eventual closing of the conference. Yours truly ended up attending the workshop "Yellow Journalism: Asian Americans and the News Media," headed by former hard-boiled writer and current Hyphen and AsianWeek collaborator Lisa Wong Macabasco. Topics discussed included the controversy surrounding writer Kenneth Eng and the impact Hyphen has on the larger API community, as well as career tips for future unemployed local freelance writers (a.k.a. yours truly). Eunice Lee, a UC Berkeley 4th year, found the workshop as well as the overall conference helpful. "I really liked how a lot of the workshops were though-provoking," she said.

Bambu, part of the hip-hop group Native Guns, was slated to talk at Session I and perform at the conclusion of the conference, but unfortunately could not make it. Yet, the show went on, and the 17th API Issues Conference closed with coordinators Denise Sugita and Susan Fang receiving bouquets of flowers and thanks for their efforts. Despite the fairly moderate attendance and the chaos throughout the day, conference staff and workshop leaders managed to collect students and scholars, youths and professionals, artists and activists, together into one gathering. What this year's conference may have been lacking in continuity, it made up for in producing provocative discourse and practical knowledge.

To learn more about Lillian Galedo's activism, visit:
http://www.filipinos4action.org/index.htm.
Ms. Galedo also wrote a stirring editorial in response to a proposed immigration bill, the STRIVE act:
http://www.truthout.org/docs_2006/041707P.shtml

BROKEN LANGUAGE by **brian lau**

SHORTCOMINGS AND HOSTILITIES

of the english-only movement

photo courtesy of migramatters.blogspot.com

Near the end of last March, Newt Gingrich, in an address to the National Federation of Republican Women, advocated for the abolishment of bilingual education. In arguing for English as the official language of the United States, Gingrich labeled bilingual education "the language of living in a ghetto."

Word, Newt? And the last time you were in the ghetto was…?

Putting the thinly-veiled racism aside (don't worry, we'll come back to it later), Gingrich's conflation of "bilingual education" with "speaking Spanish" is especially problematic in that it ignores the vast impact an official English policy would have on the Asian and Asian American community here today. According to the 2000 Census, just under 70 percent of the Asian population in the states are foreign-born, with 40 percent of the total Asian population speaking English less than "very well." Those numbers reach over 50 percent for the Vietnamese, Hmong, Cambodian, Laotian, and Korean communities. Needless to say, the practice of English-only policies would greatly affect those groups which lack the English proficiency needed to participate in everyday interactions.

Fortunately, the US federal government has yet to adopt official English legislation. But this hasn't stopped the English-only movement from making grounds in the individual states: 24 states have adopted English as the official language, including our own Golden State.

California, despite common perceptions about its left-leaning politics, has been one of the most aggressive states in promoting English-only policies. In 1986, voters passed Proposition 63, declaring English the official language of the state. While the text of the proposition does not explicitly detail what the consequences of such a declaration are, those who feared a withdrawal of services for non-English speakers saw those fears come to light in 1998 with the passage of Proposition 227. Prop. 227 forbade schools from teaching in any language other than English, giving students with limited English proficiency a maximum of one year in sheltered English immersion programs before being sent to English-language classrooms. The proposition passed with a 61-percent majority, though a majority of African Americans and Latinos opposed the measure. Interestingly enough, 57 percent of Asian American voters supported the proposition.

Definitive results as to the effects of Prop. 227 have yet to be determined. A report released last year by the American Institutes for Research and the nonprofit research group WestEd evaluated the effects of Prop. 227 over a five-year span and found that regardless of language fluency, students experienced improvements in standardized testing scores. This result, however, is complicated by the fact that other reform measures were enacted around the same time. Also, the performance gap between English learners and native English speakers had remained constant. The inconclusive nature of the report has led those on both sides of the debate to claim victory.

The question to ask is which program, English-only or bilingual education, achieves, in an equitable and efficacious manner, the goal of English proficiency. And while initial studies have provided little in the way of a definitive answer, it is important to recognize that a law like Prop. 227 provides little to no flexibility in providing solutions outside of the mainstream mandatory English system. More than anything, what bilingual education provides is an avenue towards proficiency for those students for whom English immersion fails. The problems that we have seen with bilingual education in the past are problems of accountability and execution; many bilingual education programs were poorly staffed, received little commitment from schools, and, pont blank, weren't bilingual – they were either almost all-English or all-native tongue. But when bilingual education is done earnestly, beyond superficiality, then students of all backgrounds are given the opportunity to learn.

Issues of educational efficacy aside, the implications of an official English policy extend far beyond our schools. Taken as part of a larger campaign, the English-only movement is but a piece of a growing backlash against immigrants and communities of color. It is no coincidence that the push for English-only has coincided with a decidedly anti-foreigner, anti-minority sentiment that has sought to criminalize and marginalize the presence of those who don't represent the traditional middle-class, white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant values of English-only proponents. We can draw a chain of events linking Prop. 227 in 1998 with Prop. 187 in 1994 (denying services to undocumented immigrants), Prop. 209 in 1996 (repealing affirmative action), Pete Wilson's "3 Strikes and You're Out" initiative in 1994, and numerous other legislation aimed at marginalized communities.

> "It's no coincidence that the **push** for English-only has coincided with a decidedly **anti-foreigner**, **anti-minority** sentiment that has sought to criminalize and **marginalize** the presence of those who don't represent the traditional middle-class **white Anglo-Saxon Protestant values** proponents of English-only hold so dear."

Which makes the support of Asian American voters for something like Prop. 227 confusing and worrisome. Given the decidedly anti-foreigner undertones to the proposition, why would a majority foreign-born population perpetuate a system that discriminates against them? The question delves into the heart of the problem with the "Asian American" label itself. Considering the growing intra- and inter-ethnic class disparity within the Asian American community, Asian American voters will tend to represent the wealthier and more established groups, who, because of their relative level of achievements, can disassociate themselves from the less "successful" Asian "Others." What is needed in situations like these, however, is not an elimination of the "Asian American" term; rather, the times call for a reformulation of the label. "Asian American" can still be a politically and personally empowering identity, but without recognition of the differences within those communities identified as Asian American (and how the use of the label can deny those differences), then we run the pitfall of essentializing a vast array of peoples. We oppress ourselves.

No one denies the importance of learning English. While the federal government has not adopted English as its official language, the majority of government activities are conducted in English, the majority of business interactions are conducted in English, and the majority of people speak English. English is undoubtedly necessary navigating day-to-day life. But such a conclusion does not necessitate English-only policies. We must be open to moving outside of static and limiting conceptions of English learning. We must be respectful of the difficulties different groups may encounter in operating in an English-dominated world. And we must always be cautious of actions, especially when we are the ones committing them, aimed at marginalizing those communities who have been, and continue to be, denied their voice.

AFTER THE WAR: the real world of 1948

a play by Philip Gotanda sparks discussion on post WWII race relations

by **naomi oren**

What do a Russian immigrant who is more proficient in Japanese than English, a nerdy middle-aged accountant who can't get a date, a man who is an outcast in his own community, another man late on the rent because they won't hire a "black man," and a dancer trying to support her naïve younger brother all have in common? A two-story wooden boarding house and a swinging affinity for some good ol' jazz.

Set in 1948, Philip Gotanda's play "After the War" chronicles the lives of Japanese Americans adjusting to the move back into "Japanese Town" in San Francisco. Instead of focusing on the desolate life of Japanese Americans in internment like in productions such as "Camp Dance" and "Manzanaar," Gotanda revives an often-overlooked chapter in Japanese American history.

Chester Monkawa (Hiro Kanagawa), a rebellious "No-No Boy" during his camp days and a talented jazz trumpet player, has borrowed money from the sleazy Mr. Goto (Sab Shimono) in order to get back the boarding house that his parent's once owned before the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The boarding house,constructed as a three-dimensional eerily squeaky three-dimensional mobile set, is a mid-way home for many of its residents who have been bounded by political and social dilemmas effected by the policies generated during World War II. Representing refugees seeking security and understanding in their new home, the characters in After the War poignantly showcase the tensions and misunderstandings between the Japanese American community who came back to the Fillmore District to reclaim their "Japanese Town" and the African American community that moved in during their absence. Much of the tensions between these two groups were instigated by the government Redevelopment Agency. With Eminent Domain as their prime choice of weapon, the Redevelopment Agency in 1948 displaced more than 1,500 residents and over 60 small Japanese businesses to make way for "one of the first large-scale urban renewal projects in the nation (jtowntaskforce.com)."

Before the world-premier of After the War at the American Conservatory Theater (A.C.T) in San Francisco, Nikkei Student Union (NSU) at UC Berkeley had a special reading at their annual Day of Remembrance (DOR) last February to commemorate the injustice done to the Japanese American community during WWII. Hardboiled talks to some of the members (Erin Ochi, Katie Post, Miwa Natsuki, Vanessa Hatakeyama) of NSU about what they thought about the play:

How did you come about having NSU do the readings for After the War?
eo: Jere Takahashi is the faculty advisor for NSU. He is the one who first started talking about it because he worked with East Wind Books just over here (in Berkeley), and the owners there knew Philip [Gotanda], and Jere also knew Philip so when it came time for DOR they had been talking about this and maybe trying to do a new thing with DOR... more of a fine arts oriented thing. When I heard about it I was really interested in it because I really like to incorporate the fine arts into things. From Philip we were able to get a hold of Anthony Brown, which is when we brought everything together for the show.

Is Anthony Brown the musician that played at DOR?
eo: Yep.

He was really awesome.
eo: Yeah. Anthony Brown played the music and composed the score for "After the War." He [Brown] is half Japanese and half African-American, so the play is almost like his parents' story because they are from San Francisco. "After the War" is a similar story with African-Americans and Japanese Americans mixing…

Is "After the War" different from other portrayals of Japanese Americans during internment like "Camp Dance"?
eo: It does. The play didn't focus on internment solely and it was more about the effects of internment afterwards.
Do you think there should be more plays about how people dealt with internment post-WWII?
kp: If you're in the community then you know about it. But once you step outside the community then the general public doesn't know- even in California…

What did you think about the mobile set?
mn and **kp:** That was really cool.
eo: I loved it.

Did you notice the creaking noise from the mobile set?
eo: Yeah. But I think because there is so much happening...

At the television party, Goto (Sab Shimono, center) lectures Mr. Oji (Francis Jue), an unemployed accountant, on business lessons, as Earl (Steven Anthony Jones) and Olga (Delia MacDougall)--a Russian Jew and employee of the boarding house--observe. Photo by act-sf.org

that (the noise) is understandable.
mn: I think to avoid the creaking sound it (the mobile set) has to be so structurally sound. But for theater stuff, you really don't have that much time.
eo: It also made it sort of period appropriate because those older houses were creaky.
mn: The creaking noise was kind of fun because I was trying to figure out how these doors all connected and how things were working inside. When someone was going downstairs or upstairs I could totally hear them going up or down – oh there's a stair going down there and that's how they're connected! It helped me imagine everything going inside.
eo: The inner workings…
mn: Yeah, the inner workings of the creaks

There's a lot of layering of different stories. Which story did you find most appealing?
kp: Well there are so many triangles…
mn: I don't know. Olga (Delia MacDougall) was cute. Olga and Mr. Oji (Francis Jue)
eo: Yeah they were cute. But it was also cool to see Earl and Marie-Louise (Carrie Paff). Just because the play was – of course – centered on the Japanese Americans. But it's also showing what the times were like. African-Americans were still having such a hard time as well. Just to bring in those different racial tensions that were happening at the time, not just with Japanese-Americans, also helps diversify the audience.

What was your favorite moment?
vh: The set rotating. The ending of the first act when everyone was dancing and everyone was happy. After that it gets sad.
eo: That was the point when everyone was integrated. Then the reality starts to set in. No matter what they really can't avoid it, even if you don't want to be a part of it...
vh: and the women cause trouble.
eo: (laughs)

After the War portrays a lot of racial tensions, especially between the Japanese American community and the African-American community at that time. Do similar racial tensions exist, either within those two communities or within the APA community in general?
eo: I think that there are always racial tensions. I mean not everywhere and not as prevalent, but I mean there are always people who make things an issue.
vh: There is that one part in the play where Chet explains why he quit the band in Chicago. He was like: "Well they never got me a solo, but how do you tell a black person, someone who has been stepped on his entire life, he's stepping on you?" From everyone's own perspective, everyone's own life is really hard and they might not see another person's struggle as equally valid because " oh you don't come from this background".
eo: Especially here in Berkeley, well... like Nikkei Student Union (NSU), a lot of people do tend to go off in their own racial and ethnic groups, but at the same time I don't feel such tension. I think it's almost it's a way of preserving the culture and a sort of comfort. That's always an issue in America: What is the American Culture? We're supposed to be a melting pot of everything coming together but then again we lose so many traditions and cultures... When you get something like that, you have racial tensions. But it's also necessary to try and segregate off a little bit to keep the culture alive.
kp: Nowadays, there is a lot of outside social pressure. The social constraints are different. In theory political correctness and tolerance is what's preached today, even if it's not true that it comes out all the time. I think that because there is that standard, things are a little bit better now.

Do you think Chet would make it as a musician today?
eo: I don't see why he couldn't. Especially in a musical crowd, where people are musicians, people are more accepted as whatever they are.
vh: There are a lot of Asian American jazz musicians.

What did you think about the interracial relationships?
vh: I almost didn't think about that…
eo: I think it's weird because it was very controversial then and the play portrayed them sneaking around about it. But to us it's not odd because like Vanessa just said we don't really think about it.

Was there anything that you didn't like about the play?
kp: The fact that the entire thing took place at the boarding house made it seem chaotic because it was all confined to that set.
vh: Like the Real World.
eo: I think that that was also a part of the times because they didn't really have that many places to go to.
vh: It was Real World- Japantown. Only that it was middle-aged people instead of young people.

Anything else?
vh: For young adults to the older age groups, it's a really good play, but you might want to read the program because it has a lot of historical information that you need to understand the play.
mn: I didn't know about Redevelopment and all the other stuff.
eo: It's not a play to go into if you want to learn about Redevelopment is and what internment was. Probably they (the audience) would just get the love triangle thing and the racial tensions but they wouldn't really know why they were there and what's the issue behind the boarding house and having African-Americans in there.

As revealed in **hardboiled**'s discussion with NSU, "After the War" is a vivid interpretation of Japanese Americans in the post-war Fillmore district coping with problems of racial integration, recuperation of property, and simply trying to define their American identity. Philip Gotanda's play reflects these hardships – not as a cheesy melodrama – but through the reality of human struggle.

Thanks to NSU for the interview.

For more info on Japantown during the Redevelopment era visit: **http://www.jtowntaskforce.org/jtown_history04.htm**
For info on After the War **visit: www.act-sf.org**

what's in a name?

a film review of mira nair's *The Namesake*

by **susan moua**

http://www.imdb.com

The film *The Namesake*, directed by Mira Nair, takes us into the journey of Gogol Ganguli, played by well-known Indian American actor Kal Penn. *The Namesake* begins with Gogol's mother, Ashima (played by Bollywood actress Tabu), a young woman from India, who chooses to marry Ashoke Ganguli (Irfan Khan), an Indian who lives in New York, after she tries on his American shoes. After they marry and adapt to the lifestyle in New York, they bear their first son, who they have difficulty naming at the hospital. The movie follows their marriage for twenty-five years as they watch their children grow and assimilate into American culture. Throughout this two-hour film, Gogol, the oldest child, struggles back and forth with the names "Gogol," the name his parents gave him, and "Nick," the name he uses with others. Like many Asian Americans, he is caught between America and his homeland.

The Namesake, adapted from the novel of the same title by Jhumpa Lahiri, is set in both present day Kolkata, India and New York City. The actors that were chosen for the roles in The Namesake seem almost perfect; there was never too much or not enough from the actors. Kal Penn does a wonderful job at portraying Gogol Ganguli, considering his disappointing roles in comedies such as *Epic Movie* (2007) and *National Lampoon's Van Wilder* (2002). Although he plays a different role, Penn was still able to bring the character Gogol to life, displaying struggles that many of us endure when trying to define ourselves. Whether he is in high school or in college, Gogol somehow is unable to escape the constant laughter and questioning of his name. He rebels and dates white women even though his parents want him to marry a Bengali woman and refuses to keep in contact with his parents while in college.

Embracing his freedom and individualism, Gogol experiences a series of events that always seems to question his identity. Although it seems to frustrate his parents that he does not acknowledge his name, it does not bother him. He is more absorbed with trying to be accepted in America than to forge ties with his parents' homeland. It isn't until a terrible tragedy occurs that Gogol is stirred to reflect on who exactly he is and where his priorities stand. In an evocative scene after the tragedy, we see the change within the main character when his white girlfriend calls him "Nick," and he responds by saying, "My name is Gogol." After this scene, we start to see the ways that Gogol opens his eyes to being a Bengal.

> "He is more absorbed with trying to be accepted in America than to have ties to his homeland."

The other actors, not well-known in mainstream American media, had powerful portrayals. Tabu, who plays Gogol's mother, is perfect as the calm and beautiful Ashima. She shines on screen each time she smiles or speaks. When filmmakers try to make her look forty-five (though the film begins with Ashima at twenty-three years old), the age does not show. She still appears young and beautiful, while still portraying the maternal role well. The memorable scenes of Ashima singing magnificently at Kolkata are probably the most moving scenes in the entire movie. Kahn, who plays the father Ashoke, also portrays his character well. Ashoke's quiet and easy demeanor might make the audience wonder how he won Ashima's heart, yet Kahn shows his character's unique ways of communicating with people. He plays a mediating role in the movie – though his wife hates America and his son hates his name, he eventually impacts both of their perspectives. Kahn's bring both calmness and a sense of importance to the paternal role. These actors bring the novel to life, and their portrayals are both entertaining and credible, a rare combination.

The cinematography of *The Namesake* was absolutely lovely and scenic. By shooting scenes in the slums of Kolkata, director Mira Nair brought the novel to life. Instead of focusing on the physical beauty of Kolkata, Nair focuses on the everyday life of the Bengalis, who bring the real beauty onto the screen. And although New York is overplayed on the big screen, Nair shoots from a perspective that makes the city landscape appear lonely and cold, but compelling as well. In between scenes, Nair focuses on the Howrah Bridge in Kolkata and the Brooklyn Bridge in New York City, which both look very similar. This cinematic move illustrates the characters' symbolic struggle between two worlds. When Gogol decides to travel to Kolkata, we see the Howrah Bridge in the background. This powerful scene shows how Gogol has finally accepted being Bengali.

What is in a name? How important is it exactly when our parents decide what we should be called for the rest of our lives? *The Namesake* seems to stress just how important one word is in defining who one is. The film represents the experiences of the many Asian Americans seeking reassurance about their cultural identity and self-identity. What is your name?