

THE ASIAN AMERICAN NEWSMAGAZINE

8.4

hardboiled

MARCH 2005

MIND THE MIND

BEYOND KUNG FU: *HERO* & *HOUSE OF FLYING DAGGERS*

THE GOVERNATOR BLOWS SHIT UP

TSUNAMI RELIEF WEEK

IMPORTATION OF ASIAN FILMS



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hb meetings
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ed note

It's always comforting to receive letters. Not only does it confirm interactive readership, it's further proof to our hardboiled staff that we spark enough controversy or interest in our articles to rouse an even more interesting dialectic. Of course, whether or not the feedback we collect is positive or disapproving is ultimately up to you, the discerning reader, but to reiterate once more, we appreciate it all. So thank you. And in this gratitude, and to secure socio-political and intellectual profit, to promote a healthy credo of free speech, I believe it best to examine a recent letter our publication got from a student named Colleen

Fewer, a young, sprightly woman who's co-in charge of the events our campus's freshly misnomered and "revamped" club, the Multi-Cultural Student Union, puts forth for us, especially here at hardboiled, to cruelly and self-servingly criticize. First, here's her letter:

Dear Gloria Kim,

I am writing in response to Julie Fisher's article in the December 2004 edition of hardboiled. As the Co-Events Chair for the Mixed Student Union, and as a person who identifies as Hapa, I find Fisher's article self-serving, poorly written and completely unprofessional. In addition to grammar and spelling mistakes, it is obvious that Fisher did no research other than reading the website of the Mixed Student Union. The quote she provides is from the president of a different club with a different mission statement than our own. She never spoke with anyone in our club while writing this article nor did she express any desire in interviewing us. This is not the first time Fisher has misrepresented our club. The fact that Fisher herself is Hapa does not allow her to speak for all other Hapa people or organizations. Her article is especially troublesome for me because it appears in an Asian American magazine. As a mixed race Chinese American I have

personally faced the most discrimination from the Asian community. I know that many other Hapas share this same experience. For this reason, although may not be intentional, it seems as if Hardboiled is expressing its Anti-hapa sentiments through the writings of its token Hapa journalist. Please assure the Mixed Student Union and myself that this in fact not true by publishing articles with factual, researched information. We feel this is an issue of journalist integrity.

Sincerely,

*Colleen Fewer
Co-Events Chair
Mixed Student Union*

Now here's mine:

Dear Multi-Cultural Student Union,

I am replying to Colleen Fewer's response to my article in the December 2004 edition of hardboiled. As a beloved and cherished story editor, and as a person who identifies as both Korean/Japanese and Jewish (and not a historically problematic term that obscures any politically motivated ethnic solidarity), I find Fewer's letter sophomorically reactionary and offensive, as that carelessly omitted "c" from my last name is a key signifier and homage to my Jewish heritage - she could have committed herself to some desultory research at the very least.

Fewer then criticizes my choice in incorporating the views of "a president of a different club with a different mission statement than [their] own" in my article. She believes I "misrepresented" your organization by quoting another (spotlight jealousy, perhaps?), and by not even interviewing any of your club's members. It is too unfortunate Fewer feels this way because Janice Fitch, that co-president of UC San Diego's Hapa MISC (Multiethnic Identity Students Community) I interviewed, carefully pieced their club's mission statement under a similar scope to your own - what's with all of this "Othering"? I thought one of the heralded platforms of the Multi-Cultural Student Union was unity and bonding? And if your Fewer read my article carefully, I did quote your own mission statement - my goal in conflating two declarations from two "different" groups? To cite this trend of renaming organizations in order to expand and serve a larger community, duh.

But Fewer's letter is definitely a helpful lesson in thorough and vigilant reading - she writes: "The fact that Fisher herself is Hapa does not allow her to speak for all other Hapa people or organizations". Strange. I thought I inserted a disclaimer in my first article assessing your club? Oh that's right, I did: "I am not, by all means, a representative of or spokesperson for hapas here at UC Berkeley, nor do I purpose to."

Nevertheless, I recognize that much eschewed practice of stereotyping - I know Fewer does not represent the entirety of the Multi-Cultural Student Union's membership. But reading through her reductive sob story of discrimination from Asians does not help your club and my subsequent...stereotyping: "I know that many other Hapas share this same experience." Oh, she knows this? Then she must not know me because I have personally faced the most discrimination from white folks - and I know that many others share my experience.

Please assure hardboiled and myself that Fewer will do her homework in the future, complete with factual, researched information. She's mistaken about my "token" status here at hardboiled - there are like, three others beside me. And we feel that she has issues - period.

Julie Fischer
hb story editor

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events

Multicultural Center Grand Opening
Monday, February 28, 5pm
Heller Lounge
(sponsored by twLF)

15th Annual API Issues Conference
Saturday, March 5, 2005 @ 9:30am-4:30pm, Dwinelle Hall
<http://multicultural.berkeley.edu/apasd/conference2005/>
**hardboiled will be running a workshop!*

Diversity In Action: Campuswide Symposium
Thursday, March 3, 10am-5pm, Pauley Ballroom
iwan@berkeley.edu

Empowering Women of Color Conference
Thursday-Saturday, March 3-5
<http://ewocc.berkeley.edu/>

Women of Color Film Festival
Thrusday-Sunday, March 3-6, PFA
www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/

Theatre Rice's Midsemester Show
Friday, March 4, 7pm and Saturday, March 5, 5:30pm
155 Dwinelle

23rd Annual SF International Asian American Film Festival
March 10-20th
for movie listings and showtimes check www.naatnet.org/festival

REPAIRING THE RIFT:

HOW THE IMPORTATION OF ASIAN FILM MAKES FOR A BETTER AMERICA

By
Vineeth Narayanan

There's a new trend in Hollywood, but unlike others in the past, the implications of this trend seem to reach far beyond Rodeo Drive. In recent years, movies like *The Ring* and *The Grudge* have found unprecedented success in an industry that usually struggles in the horror category. American horror films that traditionally center on attractive women being chopped up and spouting blood haven't been able to compete with the slowly developed and tense plot lines from Japanese horror films. What is it about these remakes that make American audiences shelve their notorious impatience and embrace these movies that are so very slow to build up? It could be that these films are made better. It could even be that Asian Horror movies are simply scarier. But I suspect it's the sheer

than when Bruce Lee tears through dozens of goons and leaves his surroundings laden with bodies in movies like *Fists of Fury* or the *Chinese Connection*. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, a critically-acclaimed Oscar-nominated picture was widely distributed and advertised as a "Kung-Fu flick." These movies have a huge fan base, which is precisely why studios bring them over. There is virtually no risk, since there will always be an audience here for the martial arts action movie.

The major film studios call it "cross-over potential." Only movies that have the highest of this potential are brought for wide release in American theaters. Films that are deemed unworthy are either remade or simply ignored. What, you may ask, are the criteria for a high cross-over potential? Looking at

friends in the Bush Administration, we are as encapsulated as ever, living in our safe American-made bubbles.

But there is another side to this issue: The Asian perception of Americans. Film undoubtedly plays a major role in distributing, around the world, the American citizen in all its glory. But is it a true representation? It seems Asia gets the same skewed view of us. In Asia the most popular U.S. films are action movies and thrillers. Warner Brothers have recently announced that they have plans to open multiplexes in China. In addition, studios have already begun to experiment with films exclusively for Asia with no "cross-over potential." In a sense Americans have their hands in Asian film. It seems the line between the east and the west is beginning to blur.

VINEETH:

But what does it even mean that we need a concept like cross-over potential? Are we that distant from Asia?

novelty of it. Horror movies in America seem to come from the same mold these days, but with a decidedly different style and a brand new approach, these movies are growing on Americans.

Remakes of Asian films aren't new. In the 1960s, legendary director Sergio Leone created the "man with no name" trilogy, including *A Fist Full of Dollars*, a remake of Kurosawa's *Yojimbo*. Currently, Hollywood is planning to remake the popular crime drama from Hong Kong, *Infernal Affairs*. In general, these movies are part of the theater of sensationalism, appealing to our most basic desires in film. They are thrilling, keeping you on the edge of your seat, and most importantly to the studios that remake the film, translatable for American viewing. In a *New York Times* article, Roy Lee, a partner in Vertigo Entertainment, detailed his role as Hollywood's negotiator for the remake rights of Asian films. He decides which films would work best in American theaters. Lee explained that he stays away from "dramas rooted into the culture with family and relationships. They're just harder to translate." Comedies, thrillers and horror movies are all more accepted candidates for the film studios. So essentially, US audiences are exposed to films that hint at a deeper cultural relevance, but are shielded from any kind of real contact with it.

Yet the American studios, in their incredible magnanimity, have chosen to bring some films directly over from Asia, deciding, ultimately, there were some things that couldn't be reproduced on American movie sets: Kung-Fu. As one of the first introductions to Asia, audiences marveled at these spectacular feats of physical ability. Few things thrill me more

a sampling of these imports, it seems that a great deal of fight scenes and action are the only qualities that matter. However exciting these films are, they seem to create a perception of Asia that is somehow exotic or unrelatable to American culture. American studios, deliberately or otherwise, are constructing, in a nearly pedagogical manner, the "Asian" in American culture. In that regard, these studios have done nothing but continue to perpetuate the stereotypes that have always been associated with Asians. Cleverly, however, they do it with a smile and a false commendation for the films they import.

But what does it even mean that we need a concept like cross-over potential? Are we really that distant from Asia? Are we really that different? Yes, well at least politically. In China, one of the countries most ideologically different from the United States, the years following the communist revolution have left American presidents weary of sharing. Conceding to a certain futility in a more prolific relationship with China, the US has decided to limit their diplomatic exchange to trade and downplay the spreading of human rights or democracy. The US government has become increasingly threatened by the relative success of communism in China and I suppose they are clinging to the belief that ignorance is bliss. Opening our arms to China would be a sort of acceptance of views, which may never be allowed to happen. In America, there exists a nurtured, systemic fear of losing American values. With the inclusion of different cultures and belief systems, some people believe American will lose its own. As a result, we generally don't have many mechanisms for the awareness of Asian cultures. And with the help of the exclusionary foreign policy from our

Forgive my generalizing and incessant use of a term like "Asian," which conglomerates thousands of regionalized cultures, languages and societies into a tidy little package. However, there has always been a deep division between the east and the west. Even in a time of unprecedented communication abilities and exchange of information, there is still a definite disconnect between the two worlds. Film has the ability to find common ground and is medium for exchanging ideas. Yet the movie studios have chosen to leave this incredible tool untapped. Films like *Spirited Away*, which won the Academy Award for best animated film, receive poor distribution and are rarely seen by American audiences. If this trend continues, the rift between the east and west will only grow and foster a relationship of misunderstanding and mistrust.

Yet as it is right now, the films that are being exchanged are not completely without value. Within them are tidbits of culture and tradition that are available to share. There are stories about love, passion, and heartache imbedded into these movies, but these aspects of movies are washed over by the things that make film appealing to general audiences. If these films can establish some kind of basic context for understanding Eastern culture, then perhaps, in the future, films "deeply rooted in the culture" will be more easily exchanged. In time, terms like "translatability" and "cross-over potential" could be completely unnecessary. And a Hollywood trend could spark the beginnings of real, honest cultural discourse.



HERE IS WHAT I CAN TELL YOU DEPRESSION IN THE ASIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

by amy sakaue

I wish I could tell you how to make it all go away. Hell, don't you wish *anyone* could tell you exactly how to make everything go away? But, of course, life isn't always that easy.

"Major depression is completely treatable. The triggers of it can range from a relationship breakup, a loss of a family member, to even just random causes that may include a change of environment or extra stress in life." I remember hearing something like that my first year in college when I was going through what I thought was just a normal slump. But now that I think about it, missing weeks of lecture, isolating myself with the only company of a half gallon of Dreyer's Cookies 'n Cream, and waking up crying in anxiety doesn't seem too normal. Three years later, and I'm still on the frontlines of this emotional and mental war. To be completely honest -- I'm tired of fighting. Where's my complete recovery?

During my first two years in college, I found my closest home-friends injured from their own fights: eating disorders, alcoholism, and depression. And not only those friends, but the most important person in my life at the time was hurt as well: my then boyfriend of three years. He had embodied all that you'd never wish to encounter in life: depression, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, anorexia, bulimia, binge eating, panic attacks, wrist cutting; not to mention projecting dependency, verbal abuse, infidelity, and instilling fear for my life when it got to the worst of times. Isn't college supposed to be that cheesy and overused phrase of "the best years of our lives"?

What's going on, why can't I fix anyone, this is going to go away . . . right? I suppose having your whole friendship-support system fail shouldn't have been as severe as I received it since my family will always be there. True, family will always be there but the ability to let them in will not.

Being second generation Japanese American, I never had a close relationship with my family. As the years passed, I slowly gave up trying to mimic the relationship my white friends had with their families and selfishly only relied on my parents for monetary purposes. Surprisingly, when I later did tell them about the depression and I found my parents to be as supportive to me as I would let them when I took a semester off of school. It was a sad sense of realization since a parent's love should never be a surprise.

Throughout the years I was just frustrated at not being able to fully express myself in a language that I didn't know all of

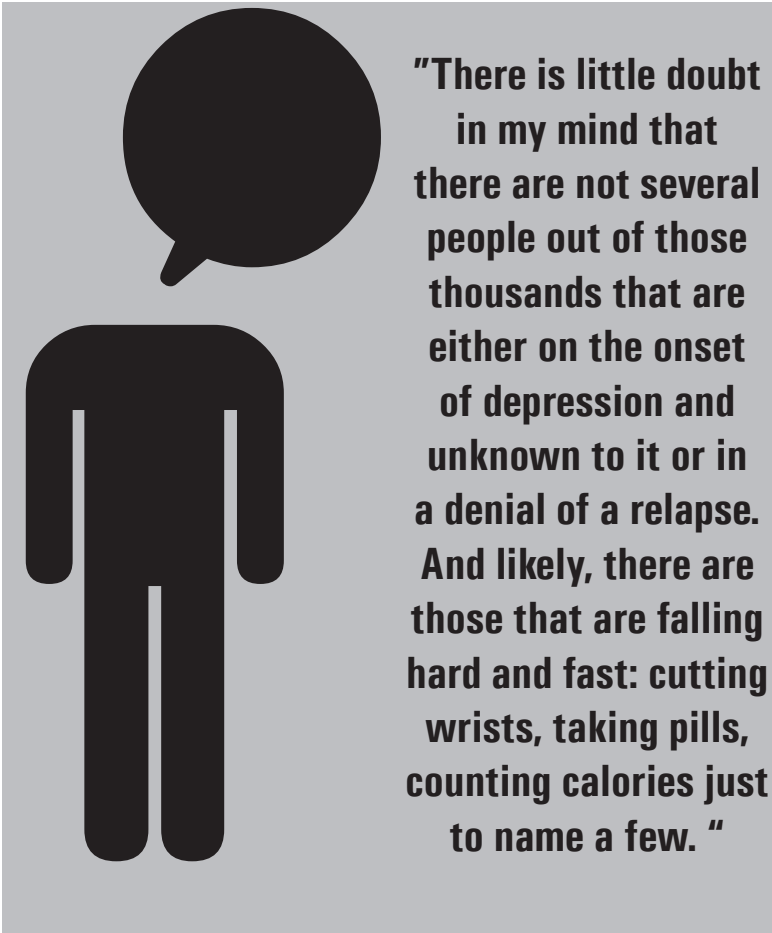
the words to and in another that my parents tried so hard to understand. I was left stuck in a mold of Japanese traditions, even though I believed I was part of the white society. I grew up in a community where even my few Japanese friends were

running track instead of in those comforting conversations my family had while they all sat around the dinner table laughing with each other. My brother, sister, and I are technically under the same economic, social, cultural, and language obstacles yet they seemed to come out perfectly fine: close to my parents yet far away from any prescription pills.

Though, prescription pills aren't always the answer for everyone of course. College is almost over now and my home friends all seem cured for the most part without befriending those semi-transparent orange bottles. One friend that was suffering from major depression completely recovered in less than a year. My other friend suffering from alcoholism learned to put the other type of bottle down after getting in touch with religion again. But why am I taking so much longer? I thought I was cured this summer but just last month I started to relapse into depression -- this time with more dangerous ways of handling it. I ignored the usual symptoms of irritability, isolation, pounding headaches, wanting to cry but being completely numb, not attending class, a lack of motivation, and having a non-existent concentration level.

But this could not mean that I was falling back into depression. If it did, I will not let anything affect me - - denial of a relapse seems the only way to handle it. Stubborn and egotistical, I say treatment is unnecessary because I'm fine. I'll just ignore everything because the depressed theme is just pathetic and annoying now. Pretty soon, the appeal of alcohol, drugs, and sex fill my mind--any kind of escape to make it go away. But the buzz will only last till the hangover takes its place, a cig only calms untill you need to light another one, and we all know that orgasms can last only for so long. Is there nothing that can take the pain away? Sources of false and temporary happiness are realized but needed; a temporary escape is better than none. Tired and refusing to waste any more time being depressed, an uncontrollable switch is turned on and a smile is up. Another amazing yet exhausting performance but the curtain is down now, you can close the door and take

the three shots of Southern Comfort for breakfast, then stare at the bottle of 20MG white pills secretly hidden in your room so no one would think you're "problemated." Such a low dosage . . . what would happen if all of them were swallowed at the same time? The irrationality of it all doesn't seem to process, the reality of consequences doesn't seem to be a factor in actions



all fourth generation in Americanized families--replete with affection, communication, and understanding. Maybe it wasn't just the language and cultural barriers that wouldn't let me take the full emotional support of my family; maybe it was the fact that I was the isolationist youngest child, the emo-hearted kid that found refuge in friendships, boyfriends, loud music, and

anymore. If one pill per day is supposed to help in the long run, maybe taking 60 at one time will be the quick fix?

The quick fix: believing someone can fix me, though deep inside I already know that no one has the ability to truly “fix” anyone else. A desperate search to find someone to understand begins but who can you really connect with? It’s hard to bond with someone that hasn’t been through what you’ve been through or at least anything close to it. Even still how is that supposed to go? “Hi! I’ve seen shrinks, popped happy pills, and been battling depression ever since I’ve gotten to Berkeley”- -not exactly how I’d like to introduce myself. “I used to sleep 16 hour days, won’t trust anyone, and hate people” -- oh yes, great beginnings for any life long friendship. And though we try to test our waters with people that might understand, the defensive wall stands impenetrable. If no one can enter, there can be no harm done. The only source of affliction is you; but at least the control remains in your hands.

Completely alone again, but maybe it’s better this way. This past summer, I had come to a conclusion that depression is a choice, and that no one has to be mentally unstable if they don’t want to be. But with this relapse I’ve learned that that is not true. A person cannot fight the onset of depression but can only deal with it when it comes. “1 out of 5 adults over the age of 18 suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder.” Stop feeling alone now and follow me as I try to do some math here. The fall 2004 enrollment of the University of California, Berkeley yields 22,880 undergraduate students and 9,934 graduate students with a total of 32,814. So I’ll assume perfect distribution that the 1 out of 5 statistic holds true for our school, meaning there are approximately 4,576 undergrads and 1,987 graduate students that are battling some sort of mental disorder. Berkeley is a campus, I would approximate, with undergraduate lectures to be on average of about 200 students, so 40 of your classmates might be waging the war. And sections usually consist of about 30 students meaning that 6 students are fighting the good fight. I’ll stop now before the stat majors point out that there is no way that my calculations are correct, call it gambler’s fallacy if you will. I’m not exactly sure what that is so don’t harass me if I used that term wrong, I was just trying to have some fun. Anyways, although I came up with simple and most likely very inaccurate results, it does not falsify the fact that Berkeley had a total enrollment of 32,814 at the beginning of this fall. There is little doubt in my mind that there are not several people out of those thousands that are either on the onset of depression and unknown to it or in a denial of a relapse. And likely, there are those that are falling hard and fast: cutting wrists, taking pills, counting calories just to name a few.

Depression affects all ethnicities and age groups whatever socio-economic background a person comes from. As an Asian American female, which makes up a considerable population at Cal, it is important that we seek treatment. While in general, women double the depression rate than that of men in the United States, Asian Americans are “a quarter likely as whites to seek mental health services and half as likely as Latinos and African Americans.” For whatever reasons those may be, the longer anyone with depression waits to get treated, the longer it’ll take to recover.

I was originally going to fill this article with only statistics and causes of depression and relate it to Asian American mental health - basically making it just an informational article. Though, for anyone that is reading this and is actually suffering from this life sucking disorder, I’d imagine that’s not what you want to read. You already know the symptoms and what it’s like. I know it seems like I can’t tell you much but here is what I *can* tell you: you are not alone and yes, it is a tough battle but I believe in us. We will rise victoriously. Imagine the day that you will be able to look back at everything you’ve been through and see how much your character has strengthened. (I apologize for the sentimental tone but sometimes it’s exactly what I need to hear, hopefully you do too.)

Recoveries vary from person to person so if you’re not “healed” immediately just hang in there. Don’t let your ego get the best of you, getting help does not make you weak, it is a sign of strength. Seeing a therapist doesn’t constitute you as a psycho, but rather as someone who’s been thrown life’s curveballs and is smart enough to do whatever it takes to deal with it. Yes, I am completely tired of this battle; I know you are too. When will it stop? Why won’t it stop? I honestly wish I could tell you. In a recent conversation, a new friend told me that some people are just prone to depression but we will be able to get through it. Relapses will come but they know it will pass: you’ve been through it before and you will get through it again. Everyone handles situations differently, and sometimes seeing other people seem so perfect make it harder for us to accept why we can’t be like them. Remember that we never get to read the whole autobiography of people we meet--they may have much to surprise you with. I at least know that most people assume that I can’t relate to some extent, if at all, to many mental health or substance abuse issues when they first meet me.

I hold my close friend that fully recovered from depression as hope and proof that we will one day be free from this chained mental instability. Until then, I will deal with the relapses and battle the idea of calling a therapist again. I’ll make the call if you will. Too many choices always stressed me out. Here’s just one to get you started: University Health Services: Counseling and Psychological Services (510) 642-9494

Meet the Tsunami Relief Week!

by diego jacome

I know what you’re probably thinking. What’s goin’ on? It’s a Hispanic name. It’s a Hispanic guy writing for **hardboiled**, Asian publication about serious Asian issues. More importantly, it’s a Hispanic guy writing about the tsunami, a very sensitive topic on “everyone’s” minds. What could possibly give him the right to write about something so dear to the Asian American community? He might offend me. He doesn’t belong to my community. He may not understand what we’re trying to do here. My response – who cares. The truth of the matter is that the tsunami is not just another news story that **hardboiled** has chosen to cover because of its relevance to the Asian community of Berkeley. The tsunami and its ensuing relief efforts are more than just Asian issues. They’re about humanitarianism, coalition and awareness.

On December 26, 2004, there was a minor change in the rotation of the earth. The length of the day was shortened by 2.68 microseconds and various islands rose in elevation. Since then, 230,000 people have perished, survivors are being raped by the very people who rescue them, and children are becoming victims of trafficking or, if they’re lucky, murdered. It is way more powerful than what you see in the movies. It’s real.

Naturally there have been various relief efforts taking place in these afflicted areas, but they have been limited. Only so much can be done when the whole world doesn’t even comprehend the magnitude of the disaster. Half of the aid that these victims receive become commodities on the black market. Do people have any idea how many thousands of children are dying from malaria and other vector-borne diseases? These are *thousands* of kids dying, *thousands* of elderly people dying, thousands.

It is with these thoughts in mind, and an open heart that UC Berkeley launched “the biggest coalition of students since the Free Speech Movement.” Over 40 student groups came together to raise awareness and money for the victims in Asia. The Tsunami Relief Week kicked off with a panel of speakers on the steps of Sproul, which featured former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich, local Berkeley Professor Junichi Semitsu and a couple ASUC political figures. The Tsunami Relief Coalition also led an evening candlelight vigil and gave the students an opportunity to voice their thoughts and prayers in various reflection boards distributed throughout campus. Pauley Ballroom was also host to a Charity Dinner, which featured performances by the Movement, Cal Wushu and Satrang among others. To conclude the week of events was a 5K Run/Walk on Saturday morning that started and ended on Sather Gate and featured over 50 participants. An estimated \$5000 was raised in the course of the week and will be donated to UNICEF for tsunami relief.

“It was amazing to see so many people of different creeds and backgrounds, come together and actively participate in the week’s events,” said James Chong, co-chair of the Asian Pacific Council, a participating organization. “After seeing so much division on campus because of the heated Multicultural Center, it was great to see so much unity with regards to this issue.”

However, one can’t be blind to the negativity that surrounded this thoughtfully-planned event. People not only questioned the motives behind this organization, but often criticized it for lacking publicity. This comes despite the fact that the Daily Cal dedicated a page long advertisement on that Tuesday, highlighting each of the events, and despite the fact that organizers spent countless hours on Sproul, flyering and monitoring a clearly visible table and donation box.

Much of the effort was also criticized because of the political nature behind it, something that I can sadly admit to understanding. The tsunami quickly became the new “hot topic” in student government affairs and in the minds of politically aspiring candidates for next year. It had the potential

Sources
-*The Numbers Count*- National Institute of Mental Health. <<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/numbers.cfm>>
-Office of Student Research Division of Student Affairs, University of California Berkeley <<http://osr4.berkeley.edu/Public/STUDENT.DATA/f04.eth.html>>
-*Did You Know? NMHA Statistics*- National Mental Health Association. <<http://www.nmha.org/infoctr/didyou.cfm>>
-*Asian American and Pacific Islander Communities (AA/PISx) Mental Health Facts*- National Alliance for the Mentally Ill. <<http://www.nami.org/Content/ContentGroups/MIO/AAPIfacts>>

to turn into *yet another* CalSERVE versus Student Action affair. If party A had a member attending the meetings, party B had to have one too. It was just pathetic, good old fashioned bandwagon politics. It didn’t help that the Daily Cal also labeled the coalition as the ASUC Tsunami Coalition, a mistake that seemed to spur mounts of rage in the 40 groups organizing and in the people who were critical of it to begin with. Others were wondering how much the effort had to do with helping people across the globe as much as it had to do with helping Asia in a time of crisis. “You hope that the same efforts would have been made if the tsunami wouldn’t have struck Asia,” said Christopher Lee, a junior who participated in some of the relief events. “It’s easy to see how much this tsunami has been glamorized and campaigned to benefit some and forget about others.”

“This should not come as a surprise, as people respond when things happen to your own community,” explained Chong. “But I do believe that Cal felt it was a humanitarian issue. There were members from the Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Caucasian community that also responded to this effort.” Among the groups that were almost invisible in the fundraising were the African-American and Hispanic-American students of this campus, as occasional tabling and sporadic attendance in organizational meetings was evident by only one of these groups. Being part of this community, I feel like I have the right to criticize this lack of presence in the week-long events. It’s funny to see how much we all often rant about racial integration and strength in unity, when in cooperative efforts like these we are nowhere to be seen. What would’ve been said if the earthquake was in Latin America?

It’s not just me saying it either. The Daily Cal just printed an article that resonated with my beliefs, *Relief is the New Black*. Charity has once again been coined trendy. Few are shocked. The biggest natural disaster in modern history became inspiration for proposed charity parties, dances and fashionable picture taking in front of relief signs. This is how the crème of the crop responded,

minus a few dedicated souls.

It hurts to see how little some people cared when it came to helping out. Folks, this was not another flyer advertising some rush event or party in San Francisco. Those ribbons were not another “cute” fashion statement that you needed to have just because you saw it on that girl’s backpack. Nor were those bracelets the latest product in the line of cool accessories by Lance Armstrong. These were hours and hours of arduous planning, sacrificed sleep, and oh yeah, thousands of people dying in the entire world because of this tsunami. I’m tired of people not caring. And you people who think you’ve done your part just because you contributed money to your periodic Asian charity cause – it’s not over. Tsunami relief doesn’t end with the 5k run or in Berkeley or in Asia. There are so many other disasters and humanitarian issues that have to be paid attention to throughout the whole world. Here are some to consider – Sudan, Rwanda, Iraq, Pakistan, Palestine, Colombia, etc. I guess it would be different if these disasters occurred here, where you’re directly affected.

Professor Semitsu couldn’t have said it better. He was one of the people you didn’t hear because you had to do homework: “I can’t visualize standing on the top lookout level of Berkeley’s Campanile and, within minutes, watching a mammoth wave wipe out the majestic Bay Bridge, drown hordes of students walking through Sproul, and level every building on campus. I can’t digest the thought of surviving that, only to watch my fellow Berkeley survivors die of malaria. Or know that children who once smiled next to me have been sold into sexual slavery. Or, quite simply, search through piles of bodies looking for my loved ones. But there are a few things I can do. I can choose not to turn away. I can empathize...I can listen.” I hope we can listen too.

BLOWING UP THE COMMISSIONS

time for a total recall

by pauline sze

After only a year's worth of operation, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger called for the termination of the Commission on Asian Pacific Islander American Affairs. Last August, the Governor came out with his California Performance Review (CPR) plan, which included plans to abolish the Commission on Asian Pacific Islander American Affairs. Upon further review in January the Governor came out with a revised CPR plan still calling for the end of the Commission. The Commission consists of 13 appointed members, either by the Governor or the Legislature. It was created by legislation in 2002, written by Assemblymember George Nakano and co-authored by members of the Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus.

According to the CPR website, its goal is to "restructure, reorganize and reform state government to make it more responsive to the needs of its citizens and business community." Essentially, its purpose is to save the state money, making governmental services more efficient, and essentially making the government more accountable for the outcomes it produces. The CPR's job is to ensure that the state government is responsive to the needs of its residents.

Paralleling the work of the CPR, the focal point of the Commission is to address the very issues that pertain to one of the fastest growing populations in California—the Asian American community. For example, in December 2004, the Commission came out with its Annual Report: "Building our Community: Recommendations for Supporting Asian Pacific Islander Americans in California." Some of the matters that the report addressed included overcoming hate violence and crimes, Hmong refugee resettlement in California, and assisting newcomers with English proficiency—issues that aren't addressed or acted upon as often as they should be. The Commission also serves as an advisory board to the Governor and State Legislature, acting as a statewide platform.

Fortunately, on February 17, the Governor withdrew his plan to abolish the Commission. Currently, the specifics are unknown as to why the Governor changed his mind. But, it is certain that the constant objection to the abolishment of the Commission made a clear mark to the Governor and other political figures in Sacramento. Letters were mailed to the Governor and calls were made to legislators as the Asian American community came together to urge those in political power to rethink the abolishment of the Commission. After much attempt, the Commission can continue their crucial work.

According to Pam Chueh, Senior Consultant of the Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus, it was unclear as to why the Governor wanted to cut the Commission in the first place, as it served no fiscal benefit to the state government. It's only speculation, but it's possible that the Governor was attempting to keep his promise to "blow up boxes," by cutting as many commissions as possible. In this subtle form of manipulation, he could boast that he killed X amount of "unnecessary" commissions—but in fact are necessary.

Therefore, instead of attempting to close down the Commission, hopefully the Governor saw that the CPR was very much dependent on the Commission in terms of the needs of the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities.

If the Commission had been eliminated, it would have wiped out the voice of over 4 million residents in California. The Asian Pacific American community is a diverse and rapidly changing group that has a wide-range of needs stemming from issues that pertain to the new immigrants that have recently settled in California, to the citizens that have been in California for multiple generations. The Commission is only a step in the right direction that begins to address these issues that have been sitting idly for too long.

Eliminating the Commission would not have solved California's economic crisis and growing deficit, as its benefactors and members privately support the Commission and fundraise their own money, at no cost to taxpayers. If the Commission had been abolished, it could very well have caused the deficit to increase. Dr Norman Hui, chair of the Commission, stated in *AsianWeek* that, "by eliminating and incorporating us," it could increase government spending, citing the costs of increased staffing that may be involved when the need arises to conduct investigations on growing issues affecting the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities that the legislation cannot ignore.

At a time where the gap between the more established Asian American groups to the immigrant or new generations of Asian Americans is steadily increasing, it is vital and

necessary that something like the Asian Pacific Islander American Affairs be established that will vouch for a community that is not as vocal or united in the political spectrum as compared to other minority groups.

United, we beat the Governor and his unjustifiable proposal. His plan made no common sense in the first place—he wanted to break apart the Commission after only a year of observing its work, which is hardly enough time to really grasp the work that the Commission does, as its members only met four times in the past year.

This is an historic moment for the Asian American community. Together, as a coalition, we were able to stop the Governor's plan to eliminate a Commission that is vital to the well being of the Asian American Community in California. Finally, after being residents of this state since the mid 19th century, we are beginning to be adequately represented.

image credit: wired.com

“Eliminating the Commission would not have solved California's economic crisis and growing deficit, as its benefactors and members privately support the Commission and fundraise their own money, at no cost to taxpayers. If the Commission had been abolished, it could very well have caused the deficit to increase.”

the death of a paladin:



the life and legacy of zhao ziyang

by veronica louie

China lost one of the greatest assets on January 17, 2005 Zhao Ziyang Secretary General of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), died in a coma. To be more accurate, however, China had severed its relations and thus promising prospects, with Zhao Ziyang long before he died at the age of eighty-five. He had been ousted from his leadership position with a blink of an eye, and he sank into anonymity at the demand of the government. So you are probably wondering, "Who was Zhao Ziyang, and why should he be included in the long list of martyrs in Chinese history?"

Zhao Ziyang was born in Henan in 1919, and joined the Chinese Communist Party at the youthful age of thirteen. Five years later he was rising through the ranks and acted as a party official for twelve years even though his father was killed by party officials during this time. After gaining prominence for his dedication and aptitude, he was appointed a top provincial post as the party secretary of Guangdong province by 1965. Instead of being influenced by coercion and bribery by the upper echelons of government, Zhao was in tune with the needs of the common people and proposed agricultural reforms consisting of ending the commune system, because it was not favorable to the people, and redistributing private property. Zhao had implemented what most would consider taboo in China; he had introduced an idea that went against communism.

Unfortunately, Zhao was not able to watch much of the beneficial plans he had for his region flourish. His increasing status was met with the rise of Mao Zedong's popularity in the 1960s. Mao quickly denounced Zhao as a supporter of the evils of capitalism and he was "removed" with all of the other dangerous "capitalist supporters" in the Cultural Revolution. His reputation was tarnished; as his picture with a dunce cap and the words "a stinking remnant of the landlord class" was displayed around his province.

Fortunately for Ziyang, Mao's efforts were not enough to erase him from the political scene. He was reinstated in 1973 by Zhou Enlai, who was the Premier and Foreign Minister of the CCP. Zhao was given the governorship of China's largest province, Sichuan, which was experiencing severe poverty from Mao's economic plan.

Ziyang eagerly sought to remedy the ailments of the province by allowing people to grow their own produce and sell it in the markets. He showed genuine support for the people without concern for himself or the precedents and expectations of the government. According to the British Broadcasting Company (BBC), industrial production went up 81% and agricultural output increased by 25% in just three years. These figures had never been reached under Mao's economic plan, nor has the province prospered since Zhao.

Unlike the past, Ziyang's accomplishments were not

denounced and seen as damaging to the government. Rather, he was recognized for his work by Mao's successor, Deng Xiaoping. In 1977, Zhao was admitted into the Political Bureau (Politburo) as an alternate member, and in two years he was given full membership. Zhao's ascendance in the ranks did not cease there, and in 1980 he was titled Premier, or the Communist Party general secretary.

With his new leadership position, Zhao seemed to begin the daunting task of rescuing China from the despair caused by Mao's tyrannical reign. Using Sichuan as a model, Zhao implemented market reform where industries were given more leeway to manage themselves and individuals were granted more control over what they produced. But this did not mean that Zhao turned his back on communism, rather he noticed what was working for China and what was not. He should not be mistaken as an advocate of capitalism. Instead, he was tailoring the system to meet China's needs.

In conjunction with this policy, he also tried to streamline the large bureaucracy that had grown to a disproportionate size, and in essence reduce corruption. Zhao proposed that China should expand its trade and open up to countries that it did not normally trade with in the West, like the US, to enrich the economy and bring in investors. In addition to this, in 1987 Ziyang gave a speech to the Central Committee where he boldly said that the CCP should be limited in its direct control over the government.

As his momentum climaxed, the Chinese economy went through an inflation period in 1988 and this dealt a significant blow to Zhao's building support. The inflation problem gave those opposed to Zhao and his vision a reason to speak out, and they did not waste any time exploiting the situation. The incident that led to Zhao's demise was the infamous Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing May 19, 1989. The CCP decided to send him out as an authority figure to tell the people protesting to disperse. But instead of being an authoritarian government official who spoke at the people, Zhao showed sympathy to the protestors and plead with them to go home. He said to them with sorrow, "I have come too late," and many have interpreted these few words to encapsulate all of the feelings Zhao had felt towards the people. He was a man of the people, working to improve their lives.

Zhao was a popular man who was unusually honest, using the government to truly serve the people. In a mere three weeks all of his responsibilities to the government were taken away and he was placed under house arrest for the duration of his life, which lasted for fifteen more years. This demonstrates the extent to which the government had control over the people, their actions, and the information that was disseminated throughout the country. Zhao Ziyang's purpose in life was over as soon as the government determined it so,

and after that he faded away from the political spotlight.

Zhao Ziyang's absence as an advocate of the people may not have significantly threatened the Communist Party, but CCP leaders greatly feared that his death would act as a reminder of the injustice done to him, triggering protests. On the day of his death, Tiananmen Square and Zhao's private home were surrounded with increased security for fear that people would be compelled to demonstrate in remembrance of him. To further perpetuate this air of indifference to Zhao's contributions, his death was hardly mentioned by China's state media and in most cases was brushed aside, not even worthy of mention. The government's response to his passing way was one of silence. There was even controversy as to whether or not he was going to be allowed a formal burial and how large the ceremony was going to be held at all. The extent to which the CCP goes to silence someone is incredulous and at the same time astonishing. Could this one man threaten the CCP so badly as to cover up his entire existence? The answer seems to be an invariable yes.

On January 29th, the government conceded and held a funeral ceremony for Zhao Ziyang at the Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery. Strict rules were set and expected to be abided by without question. Only two thousand people were permitted to attend and pay respects to a man who deserved more than what life offered him and of these two thousand guests all had to be pre-approved by the government. Specific people were placed under house arrest; his secretary Bao Tong and the Tiananmen Mothers leader Ding Zilin were among those not permitted to leave their residences. Mourners were allowed to view the body and pay respects five at a time. Flowers were not permitted nor were personal messages allowed on the flowers provided by the government. It seems odd that a funeral where the deceased is supposed to be given respect and honor had such restrictions, orderliness, and limitations of expression. No eulogy was offered because his family and the government could not agree as to what it should say.

As the last insult to a man laid to rest, a short obituary was given on the day of his funeral to acknowledge that Zhao had passed, but it stated he had made definite mistakes during the 1989 protests. To bring a final end to the sorrowful death of Zhao, he was denied a burial at Babaoshan and had to be cremated and taken back to his home in Beijing. Although Zhao Ziyang may not have accomplished what he set out to achieve early in life, he has made his mark in Chinese history and in the minds of those who hope for something better. This legacy simply cannot be suppressed.

BEYOND KUNG FU:

Air-Borne Projectiles and Governmental Systems in Hero and House of Flying Daggers

Once a political muckraker, Zhang Yimou has redeemed himself in the eyes of the Chinese Communist Party with the release of *Hero*. His earlier film *Raise the Red Lantern* was banned in China because of its commentary on government corruption and nepotism, but with *Hero* Zhang has hitched his career on the Chinese nationalistic bandwagon. With its ominous mantra of “tian xia”, or “all under heaven,” Jet Li would have us all surrender our lives in the cause of uniting the “middle kingdom.” As the film ends with a shot of the Great Wall, one of China’s many great achievements under totalitarian rule, Zhang enthusiasts are left wondering just what the hell happened.

However, this view may be slightly simplistic, especially in consideration of his most recent addition to the American cinemascape, *House of Flying Daggers*, “*Ambushed from Ten Sides*” in Chinese. The two plots are strikingly similar: rebel faction wants to end tyrannical reign of corrupt government, assassin sacrifices his/her life, and a love triangle to boot. According to Zhang, *HoFD* was actually written in the 90’s as a companion to *Hero*. But in their differences lies the key to a possible ideology that may leave many of his devotees less flustered.

One of the overarching themes of *House of Flying Daggers* is individuality. This comes up quite often, even in the names of these characters. Upon learning Zhang Ziyi’s character’s name, Mei (literally “little sister”), Takeshi Kaneshiro’s character, Jin, remarks, “Every girl [in the brothel] is named for a flower. Why is yours so plain?” To which she replies, “I don’t want to compete with those other girls. The flowers here aren’t real flowers. Real flowers bloom in the wilderness.” In the same way, Jin sets himself apart when he gives his name to Mei later on, “Just call me Wind,” or in Mandarin, “sui feng” which literally translates to “goes with the wind.” He explains, “I wander all around alone, come and go without a trace... a playful wind.” These two characters value their individuality.

However, these individualistic tendencies are turned on their heads when Jin finds out that Mei is actually an undercover agent for the Flying Daggers, whom are all named Mei. What originally seems to be her individualistic strength is actually an example of her actual role as a facsimile of every other female member of the daggers, down to the green outfit and conical hat. Furthermore, Jin who claims to be like the capricious wind is eventually reduced to a pawn manipulated in opposite directions by the Flying Daggers and the Tang government.

Both of these characters lose their agency, which is symbolically represented in various scenes when they are trapped by enemy forces and must be rescued by a third party. A prime example being the scene in which Tang soldiers launch sharpened bamboo spears at the

Still from the film *House of Flying Daggers*

pair, surrounding them to the point that they are unable to move an inch. This lack of agency characterizes these two like star-crossed lovers of the Feudal Chinese variety. On one hand, we have a character forced to kill his own men, and on the other a character whom is nearly raped twice. Despite their namesakes, the destiny of these two is largely out of their control.

This harsh determinism contrasts with the characters in *Hero*. Jet Li’s character Nameless is a martial arts master capable of swatting hundreds of arrows from the sky. This ancient society seems dominated by those with enormous skill and power. The Qin Emperor rules with an iron fist and his massive armies destroy entire kingdoms with missile like arrows. Broken Sword and Flying Snow are able to storm the Emperor’s palace, defeating thousands of soldiers. For these four, individual destiny is largely determined by oneself. And in quite the opposite fashion these characters are not the pawns of different political groups, but are instead the leaders of these groups bent on determining the destiny of “all under heaven.”

A commonality between the Flying Daggers of *HoFD* and the Qin army of *Hero* is the invincibility of their airborne weapons. In *HoFD*, the daggers zigzag through the air, seemingly

Still from the film *Hero*

at their own will, and attack the opponents’ vulnerabilities. If the daggers are the heat-seeking missiles of Tang China, then the arrows of the Qin army are akin to heavy carpet bombing. The arrows are able to breach solid wood killing the inhabitants within, and destroying whole cities with just one volley. The invincibility of these weapons represents the power of their respective political bodies. Only those with amazing talents are able to impede these weapons.

While Nameless is able to evade these weapons, Mei is not. However, ultimately, both Nameless and Mei are killed by these weapons. What unites the two is choice. In *Hero* the Qin emperor offers his sword to Nameless and asks him to “let ‘all under heaven’ guide [his] decision” of whether to assassinate the Emperor or not. In deciding to allow the Emperor to live, he forfeits his own life to support the Emperor’s authority and is put to death by arrows he can very well defend against. Nameless chooses to die despite having the ability to change the course of history.

Under very different circumstances, Mei also chooses death. Near the end of the film, Jin and Mei are forced to separate because they are members of warring parties. These two characters have no choice or agency. However, Mei abandons the Flying Daggers in order to be with Jin. In the pursuit of her lover, Mei is unable to evade a dagger thrown by her other spurned lover from the Flying Daggers Leo, (Andy Lau). Leo explains to Mei that he is killing her because he won’t allow her be Jin’s lover, and she replies, “I knew that you would do this.” Leo then asks, “You knew, then why did you follow him?” Mei responds, “To be free, like the wind.” Knowing full well that she is riding to her death, Mei chooses to follow Jin anyway, validating her own free will.

Mei lives in a world without freedom, but she carves her own. Contrastingly, Nameless is abound in freedom, but forfeits this freedom for the betterment of all. This may seem contradictory, but what it comes down to is the ability to choose one’s own destiny. What Zhang is elucidating with his film twosome is not a governing system that will ultimately work for China, but the power of individual liberty and choice.

Perhaps the more important question is why has Zhang chosen to take a more apolitical stance, especially as the most famous member of the “fifth generation” film makers who opened

“WHAT ZHANG IS ELUCIDATING WITH HIS FILM TWOSOME IS NOT A GOVERNING SYSTEM THAT WILL ULTIMATELY WORK FOR CHINA, BUT THE POWER OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY AND CHOICE.”

the world to Chinese film but were often censored for the political content of their films. In recent articles he has feigned innocence when pressed about the political nature of these two films. There are several possible theories as to why this shift has occurred. *Hero* has been the highest grossing Chinese film of all time, and the most expensive. With his new role as China’s cinematic foreman, Zhang now has more license to make expensive epic films (CGI is expensive stuff). It may have been a personal decision to put aesthetics over politics, and without a larger budget he would have been unable to achieve his directorial vision.

With China’s recent emergence as the world’s economic powerhouse, perhaps Zhang is focusing more on China’s promising future. He has been chosen to direct the film celebrating Beijing’s successful bid for the 2008 Olympics. In a recent interview in *The Guardian* Zhang said, “There is one saying you hear a lot, which is, ‘When the Olympics take place, the sky of Beijing will have to be blue.’” This signifies the belief that the Chinese government may have to “clean up its act” perhaps by allowing more political freedoms. Lastly, it is possible that Zhang wanted to make a few light-hearted kung-fu movies that everyone would enjoy. Either way, don’t count on Zhang being in the government’s good graces forever. His great ambition is still to make a series of films that take place during the Cultural Revolution, a very traumatic time for Zhang, and for China. I’m sure he’ll manage to piss somebody off.

by matthew hoang

To be honest, I had no idea what to expect with *Sideways*. I have not yet seen any of director Alexander Payne's critically acclaimed films and frankly, the trailers I've watched made the film seem pretty bland and rather cheesy for my tastes. However, upon watching the film, I found that my first impression could nor have been more wrong.

Sideways, a dramatic comedy starring Paul Giamatti (*American Splendor*) and Thomas Haden Church (*Wings*), is a story about two former San Diego State College roommates who embark on a week long tour of pleasures in celebration of Jack's (Church) upcoming wedding to a wealthy Armenian woman. Miles' plan for the week is to visit a number of different wine establishments in the Santa Ynez Valley, play a few leisurely rounds of golf, and stay out of trouble. Jack's vision for his final week of bachelorhood is not so simple. . . not only will *he* try to get laid, but he will not rest until his friend gets some action as well. Although Jack's intentions seem innocent enough, the decisions he makes and the events that follow will test Miles' resolve, to say the least.

What ensues is an insanely hilarious yet melancholy story about relationships, moving on, and growing up. While Jack provides a riotous aspect of the film with his ruthless pursuit of sexual gratification, Giamatti's performance as Miles, an eighth grade English teacher, struggling author, and wine enthusiast, is powerful and heartfelt. Still tortured by his divorce, the nature of Miles involvement in Jack's nocturnal activities can be painful to watch. Despite the hilarity of given situations, his pain is understood. Though oftentimes clumsy, Miles' devotion to his misguided friend and his internal struggle is what drives the movie.

Miles and Jack's journey largely involves the presence of two women: Maya (played by Virginia Madsen), a waitress at one of Miles' most frequented restaurants, and Stephanie (Sandra Oh), a wine-pourer and the object of Jack's week-long affection. Cases of wine and a couple "climaxes" later, the audience becomes aware of each character's individual traits; their doubts, their imperfections, the extent of their loyalties, and even their take on life, as is presented by Maya and Miles' personal philosophies on wine. Madsen provides a touching performance in her supporting role, adding a positive perspective to the downtrodden Miles which is essential to his psychological healing process.

The strength of Sandra Oh's portrayal of Stephanie, on the other hand, contours to the role. Playing Jack's casual love interest, the nature of her



Sideways

Approx. Run Time: 127 min.

Rated: R

Cast: Paul Giamatti, Thomas Haden Church, Virginia Madsen, Sandra Oh

part as Stephanie consists only of small amounts of superficial screen time. You couldn't really call her appearance "gripping," "spellbinding," or "groundbreaking" (she was the only one of the four that was not nominated for a Golden Globe), but she plays it well, and her presence in the film is definitely warranted. While it can be argued that she plays a minor role and that it would not have mattered whether the role was taken by any random Caucasian actress, Oh was fun to watch and she definitely adds a welcome flavor to the film. "[This has] a flutter, of like, a nutty Edam cheese."

All in all, there is never a dull moment in any of the 127 minutes of *Sideways*. Uncharacteristic of most films of the day, the movie made me laugh out loud on a number of different occasions, and they were high quality, intellectual laughs. With a moving performance by Paul Giamatti complimented by a handful of engaging characters, and a ridiculously fitting musical score, *Sideways* definitely pours a full glass. So if you haven't seen it yet, get to the theaters and watch it *The Day After Yesterday*. . . by which I mean, "Today."

by hau tran

When one thinks about the most popular reject of all time, one name comes to mind: William Hung. Remember sitting in front of your television, watching American Idol with much anticipation, and then seeing William Hung's audition? It's been a year since that fateful episode, when William debuted himself, a civil engineer from Berkeley, presenting to the world a whole new meaning of rejection. Almost at once, his performance was streamed online and passed around between friends and friends of friends as one of those embarrassingly funny videos.

Yet, even with his terrible performance, he was still able to surprise the world. Who knew that his decision to go ahead and try out for American Idol would get him where he is today? Who knew that his audition, consisting of a modestly shoddy rendition of Ricky Martin's "She Bangs," would lure the nation into absolute adoration? All because he was able to say, "I have no professional training. I already gave my best. I have no regrets at all."

I have a hard time

believing it myself, but hey, that's how the story goes.



After his seemingly disastrous audition, a petition formed online to get him back on American Idol, in addition to the circulation of his audition footage. News reports of him appeared online and in print. A fanbase appeared online, devoting its energy to bringing William back (<http://www.williamhung.net>). Wherever he was mentioned, one thing was clear: He actually wooed the nation by his genuine modesty ... and everyone wanted him back.

Instead of getting William Hung to continue on to the Top 117, though, they gave him a record deal—which is, by far, a much sweeter deal. This turned out to be a surprising gesture

The William Hung Retrospective

to the rest of the world, but a squeal of delight for the fans. He signed a record deal with KOCH Records and Fuse Music Network and released his debut album, titled "The True Idol," on April 6th, 2004.

Ever since, he's been getting all kinds of attention, and definitely been living his dreams. He has performed for the Los Angeles Dodgers and the Golden State Warriors; he's performed live at many shows and concerts; he has been nominated for many awards and even won one (AOL Television Award).

Now he's breaking out internationally, making waves in Asia and even landing himself a role in a Hong Kong movie entitled *Where Is Mama's Boy*. According to *Variety*, the movie co-stars Nancy Sit, and is produced by My Way Film Company. It is classified as an action comedy production. Although the exact release date is unknown, the film was released in movie theatres in late October of 2004, and the DVD was released on February 1, 2005. Not surprisingly, however, reviews on this movie have been nothing short of terrible.

This also doesn't seem to stop the My Way Film Co. from getting William to sign a contract for a next film, something rumored to be similar to *Spy Kids*.

Although he's been hustling and bustling over in Asia, William's presence here is anything but new. It's been exactly a year, and although William's glory has simmered down, he is definitely not forgotten. I mean, what exactly do we love about him, exactly? Is it his ability to not sing on key? Is it the way his hips move when he shakes his bon-bons? Is it the way he plays the Pokemon trading card game (I mean, he did participate in the Pokemon TCG World Championships)? Or is it just the way he loves to tuck his shirt in his pants? Perhaps the allure of an honest dork that makes him such a magnetic figure?

Maybe some of these qualities are what we love about him, but maybe the most universal reason is that William Hung is just a genuinely nice guy. He is everything to admire. He won't conform to the Hollywood pop culture, to whatever is defined as "cool," or anything else that he feels doesn't fit him. He flosses after every meal. He still tucks his shirt inside his pants. He will sing for you on demand and fixes his hair in that outlandishly dorky style, but you know what? He doesn't care what you think. In an interview with *Rolling Stone*, he said, "OK, so I'm not famous for the right reasons. I'm infamous, a joke. It doesn't make me feel good, because I'm a genuine person, but I don't let it get to me, because I am who I am."

And I think that's pretty cool.

In fact, instead of remembering him as the American Idol reject, we should remember him as someone we strive to be, everyday. We should remember that he has defining characteristics that he stays true to himself and can laugh at the face of musical elitists because he got there with his character. We should remember him as someone who said, "I'm always going to be just me," and actually sticks to it.



by kevin lee



AN ASIAN DUDE IN A WHITE FRAT?!

A CRITICAL LOOK AT CAL'S FRAT SYSTEM

I will admit it. While a naive high school student in Southern California, I fell victim to the stereotypes befalling fraternal life. If you do not know these stereotypes I would suggest watching National Lampoon's Animal House or Old School. About 100 minutes of viewing will get you up to speed on oversimplified images of how "frat brothers" supposedly eat, drink, and live. The first time I saw Animal House, I was privately disgusted. I could not believe such rampant chaos occurred in a college setting (that's the Asian American parental propaganda speaking). The consistent drunkenness, lecherous obscenities, and complete disregard for authority all struck me as, quite frankly, despicable. Fraternities were for fun, but not for the serious, motivated, and ambitious students.

Coming to Cal changed my overall outlook on fraternities, but not for the better; if anything, my anti-fraternity mentality only strengthened. You could tell which guys were in a fraternity; they came to class with a certain swagger, they strolled through campus with a cocky grin and an arm wrapped around a girl's shoulder. They were confident to the point of arrogance.

To this day, I'm bothered by how certain fraternities will stereotype guys as they pass along Upper Sproul or through Sather Gate. You'll see a fraternity brother with rush fliers, proudly sporting his letters on his specially-made t-shirt/hoodie/jacket, meet eyes with a borderline prospective. For an instant, the air between the two crackles with energy: from the fraternity brother who is intently scrutinizing the prospective; from the prospective, whose is trying his best to stifle his anxiety. They maintain eye contact for just moments, before the brother looks cruelly away, crossing the prospective's name off of an invisible checklist while re-establishing his position of fraternal superiority. I would know; I used to be the doe-eyed freshman with the unwieldy backpack who, upon meeting eyes with a brother, could only look away in a frustrated attempt to salvage my dignity. In some ways, I'm still that freshman. I'll still get a "Rush Alpha Alpha Alpha" flyer one day from a fraternity brother only to get ignored the next day by that same brother, simply because I wore a different style of clothing or I decided to wear my "nerd" glasses. To come to college only to feel the inadequacies and pettiness of high school still...still lingers like the stench of month-old milk.

Peer pressure is a powerful tool and fraternities exploit it in every way possible. Rush events are designed so that prospectives see fraternal brotherhood in its purest form. During rush week, fraternities quiet the usual bureaucratic bickering typical of any large organization into a muted murmur in an attempt to maintain the image of full brotherhood. As soon as the last remnants of the final, extravagant rush event are cleared away, the murmur increases into the usual dull roar. The divisive cliques within the fraternity become apparent. I fell victim to this image of unwavering brotherhood; I have to believe that a large majority of freshman who rush fall victim as well.

It's only after becoming a brother and experiencing rush from the other side do I realize how much prospectives, especially freshmen, are exploited. That's what made the incidents with Alpha Alpha Alpha at Sather Gate so frustrating; brothers know they have an entire fraternity backing them up and justifying their actions. It's the pledge's fault if he does not join; he let the rest of the house down. But while pledges internally toss and turn over their decisions, fraternities trivialize rush, transforming it into a game; who can get the most prospectives this week? Brothers gossip like little children over rumored numbers that are as reliable as presidential votes. "I heard Alpha Alpha got ten this semester, and more may be on the way." "I heard Gamma Gamma only have two pledges this fall. They're definitely on their way out." As my freshman year passed by, I grew to have an increasingly complex and dichotomous relationship with my perceptions of fraternity life. I continued to loathe the carefree, ego-driven

attitudes of brothers. They smoothly flirted with girls, they constantly hung out with their network of brothers, they knew where the parties were at, they knew what classes to take, they knew contacts to internships, jobs, and career opportunities. I hated them. I grew jealous of them.

Towards the end of my fall semester of freshman year, I began to have extremely agonizing internal debates. I imagined on one shoulder my Angel-self arguing that I would be losing my integrity if I joined a fraternity; in essence I would become a sellout, a hypocrite. I heard my Devil-self on my other shoulder claiming the numerous benefits that a fraternity could bestow upon me; I would meet an entirely new group of people, with unique access to a myriad of opportunities (including parties, girls, job opportunities, and the like). Each debate, I convinced myself that for all the advantages a fraternity had, it simply was not worth it. Why in the world would I want to devote so much time to a group while at the same time I sacrificed my integrity? But the voice of my Devil-self became more and more persistent. I found myself questioning whether or not joining a fraternity would be that reprehensible.

At the beginning of spring semester, I began attending different parties and rush events, at the very least to test the waters. I found Rush Week to be too forced. Brothers would come up and talk to me, and I would go up and talk to brothers, but these conversations reeked of inauthenticity. I knew it was a paradox; if I did talk to these brothers, I would probably have to endure several superficial conversations with many of the same questions: "Where are you from?" "What year are you?"

"But while pledges internally toss and turn over their decisions, fraternities trivialize rush, transforming it into a game... Brothers gossip like little children over rumored numbers that are as reliable as presidential votes."

"What's your major?" If I did not talk to these brothers, I would never get into a fraternity. This paradox of superficiality made me again question the validity of my desire to join a fraternity.

I think my Asian American identity sheds yet another unique perspective on my quandary. While determining whether or not I truly wanted to join a fraternity, I always considered the potential consequences towards my family, especially that of my parents. First off, there is a certain generalization among Asian Americans of the ultra-strict, over-demanding parent(s). Ashamedly, I find truth in this stereotype. Even while pledging, I learned of guys in fraternities who waited semesters, even years before they confessed to their parents of their fraternal participation. One of my Asian American friends, "Kyle," plans on not telling his parents about his fraternity for the rest of his college years. He is scared that if he were to tell his parents, they would no longer pay his college tuition. It took me several months to even approach my parents with the proposition of joining a fraternity...even after I had already joined. Their initial reaction once I told them can be best described as muted ambivalence (a euphemism that has improved slightly since).

In contrast, many of the "white" guys I know have had far less difficulty integrating into the Greek Community. Some of them had parents and grandparent who were in fraternities; do not forget that some of these institutions are over centuries old, dating as far back as the birth of American society.

Fraternities are a tradition in America, sometimes running through generations of families. Hence, many fraternities are put in an interesting quandary when faced with changes to American demographics: shift to fit the changing face of America, or hold strong to the roots of tradition. Ideally, in this modern era, fraternities de-emphasize ethnicity and focus on individual character. But it is difficult to change centuries of history overnight. As a recent editorial in the *California Patriot* disconcertingly proclaims, there seems to be a growing secularism (under the supposed guise of multiculturalism) within the student body of Berkeley. While I would question some of the conservative accusations

made, the editorial does bring an interesting inquiry to light: are student organizations (specifically in this case, fraternities) hurting race relations? My friend "John" joined an Asian American fraternity because he simply enjoyed his experiences with the Asian American community more so than he did with the rest of the student body. There are fraternities and sororities on campus that cater to certain ethnicities that may cater to a dangerous policy of isolationism. The fraternal community (ALL the fraternal community) must be more aware of Berkeley's multiculturalism. Let's not have the superficial judgements of Sather Gate and Upper Sproul dominate the fraternal community (Incidentally, I had affairs with both a "white" fraternity and an "Asian" fraternity). There is nothing wrong with hanging out with people of similar ethnic and/or cultural backgrounds. But we must be careful not to so voluntarily segregate ourselves without first considering the amount of exposure we get to different ethnicities and cultures. Such a consciously divisive mindset limits our perspective and weakens the collective voice of Berkeley. We must ensure that we maintain a balanced focus on different viewpoints.

Perhaps that's why "Omega Omega" stood out for me. My fraternity is a collection of some of the most well-rounded students you'll find at Berkeley. The ethnic diversity of "Omega" remains one of our greatest assets (and one of our biggest selling points during Rush Week). Our body is not directly representative of the entire student population here at Berkeley, but (when compared to the majority of the Greek community) we reflect a myriad of groups, from Asian Americans to African Americans, Jewish Americans to Hispanic Americans. I would proudly contend that we are one of the more diverse student bodies on campus, which means different people with different ideas, and an overall healthy open-mindedness.

I digress. I do not mean for this article to be a personal ad for my fraternity; far from it. Nor do I mean for this article to be a personal attack on any specific fraternities. I confess that I have not completely reconciled with joining the fraternal community, nor specifically "Omega Omega." The words of Poet Laureate Robert Frost comes to mind: "The road not taken..." I continually question what would have happened whether or not I had joined a fraternity, and whether or not I had joined "Omega." Moreover, the internal hypocrisies (the images of full brotherhood during rush week, the "selling" of the fraternity to exploitable freshmen, and the constant tension of race relations in a supposedly open and diverse student body) of the fraternal community all remain personally prevalent and frustrating notions.

But the main point of this article is to illustrate that while not everything is as simple and deplorable as the images presented in Animal House, everything is not hunky-dory in a fraternity either. If there is anything you gain from this article, I hope it is the following: Fraternities are complex entities, especially to the modern-day Asian-American, who seeks a community he can relate to as well as a means of establishing personal identity. Misjudge or misuse these powerful institutions and they will tear you apart. Join them and you may never have peace of mind. If you are considering a fraternity, your reasons should not be merely for personal gain (my mistake) or for the simple ideal of brotherhood (from my experience, the more common mistake), but rather a self-aware combination of both. The only way to come to terms with the fraternity quandary is to either 1) have the state of mind to declare yourself as truly independent, free of any fraternal bonds and resistant to insecurities; or 2) to join a house and utilize a powerful and practical bond of brotherhood, devoting valuable time and energy to a lifelong commitment. If you can ponder and anticipate the consequences of both sides, then your decision should be made that much easier. The choice is yours.

How do you say “assimilation” in Vietnamese?

by matt hoang

As we may or may not be aware, there is something of a contradiction in the pairing of the words “Asian American.” Looking a bit closer, such a classification calls into question the idea of racial or cultural purity. If you were to define cultural purity as retaining *all* elements of a particular tradition and restricting the inclusion of foreign influences, is there such a thing and can it be maintained?

Using my own cultural background and experiences, I would say “No.” Well, not at the rate that all immigrants or minorities are being assimilated into the surrounding culture. Like many of my Asian counterparts, my parents hail from the same country and they have done their best to pass on the native language, customs, and maybe even the spirit of their homeland. Unfortunately, many of us speak a very robust Vietnamenglish, have a fancy for hamburgers and pizza, walk outside with Levi’s and without our raiden hats, and also happen to be strangely attracted to people who are not tagged with the label “Made in Vietnam.”

Yeah, I’ve seen it. . . and so have you; that bubbly pair consisting of an Asian female and a Caucasian male. I remember spending a day walking on the streets of Berkeley and San Francisco counting these couples. “There’s one, there’s another. . . holy garbage!! When does it end?” I commented to my friend (who *happens* to be one of these Caucasian males) that every couple that scores one for “our” side (i.e. an Asian *male* and a Caucasian *female*) would be in for some trouble; I would shake their hands and buy them dinner. That night, I spent a little over 3 dollars on pork buns in Chinatown.

My sister said to me once, “It’s easy for a white girl to get an Asian dude to like her, but it’s hard as hell to get an Asian dude to get a white girl to like him.” Never really thought that was true, but I guess it holds some ground. I had a Caucasian girlfriend at one point, but I don’t think I’ve ever had a Vietnamese one. Why is that? I remember making a

vow when I was younger, that if I got married it would be to a nice Vietnamese girl to ensure that my children would be just like their old man, 100%. What happened to that?

10 years
vow, here
proficient
Japanese
as my own,
Japanese
to boot. I’d
if I said I
anime or
tempura.
likes to
with that
by the Vapors, “Turning Japanese”. Of course, to add a

MIND THE GAP

S o m e
after I said
I am, as
at the
language
and with a
girlfriend
be lying
didn’t like
that I hate
My brother
taunt me
s o n g

“As time progresses and experiences in a ‘foreign’ environment accumulate, there is nothing to stop an individual from incorporating different cultural forms into one’s identity.”

more personal touch, he switches the “I’m” part with “Truc’s” (my Vietnamese name, something I never use in regular social discourse).” He’s not really one to talk either, with his aspirations of bedding a member of the fairer sex with fairer skin. I have to admit though. . . his Vietnamese is a hell of a lot better than mine.

So what does all this say about cultural purity? From my perspective, such purity and the attempt to maintain it the way our parents would like us to is extremely difficult, if not futile. As time progresses and experiences in a “foreign” environment accumulate, there is nothing to stop an individual from incorporating different cultural forms into one’s identity. Some people are sure to disagree, but if you’re first generation *Something* American and beyond, you’re bound to melt into the pot one way or another. If it isn’t you, then your children or your grandchildren will join the ranks of the cosmopolitan. For example, I listen to my fair share of white rock and I can’t stand Vietnamese music. Every time I see the elders enjoying the vocals of Linda Chan Dai and the like, I personally wish that they could get to *Paris by Now* rather than pacing themselves to get to *Paris by Night*. Is it because I don’t understand most of the lyrics, I can’t appreciate the *ahum* beats, or is it just that I don’t want to? No matter what it is, when those sad verses hit the eardrums, all I want to do is slap ten salonpas patches on my head and swig a gallon of that green heat sauce (meant for external application) to prevent migraines and unnecessary bowel movement.

So, what do I say to my Grandma when she tells me she won’t attend my wedding if the bride isn’t of the “correct” descent? Do I tell her that I believe it’s a matter of “where you are” rather than a “where you’re from” or “where your *parents* are from?” When people ask me, “What are you?” The only response is, “I’m Vietnamese,” but I’m definitely not as Vietnamese as my parents and they’re probably not as Vietnamese as their parents were at this point in life. I know one thing though: I was born in California and California is in the United States of America. So, that would make me an American no matter how much fish sauce I have on the side. But. . . how do I translate all that so that my Grandma can understand?

HIS STEPS, MY MIRROR

HIS 21EB2' MY W1BB0B

by paul kang

I see a man walking the path of reminiscence.

It is a life of reflections upon recollections, a well-deserved privilege of a man who has traveled far and long. Yet with much of his past now too distant and opaque, he sees but a single figure of his own reflection clearly and focuses on it solely; only this reflection is not of him – it is of my countenance that he, my father looks on proudly as his own. As I look into his gaze upon me, I receive a glimpse of my own reflection that belongs to him: a symbol of his youth; a testimony of his past; and his vision of future. It is true that more often than not, I have felt the weight of his years upon my shoulders.

As I look at my father in turn, however, all I observe before me is a man who stands almost to my shoulders and is well aged but poorly dressed. His hair is now mostly gray, and his limbs seem almost frail compared to mine. Interestingly enough, I can now recognize him better than ever before, only this recognition is not of him – it is of my qualities and my behaviors that were initially his: his habits, preferences, and along with it, *adulthood*. It is true that at this junction of my life, the weight that I feel isn’t of his years. It is of mine that I must now bear on my own.

As I look at my father closer, I must admit that I grow wary and fearful of becoming more like my father and of his age. He smiles, seeing how much I’ve grown; I cannot do so, because I see how much he’s aged. As I look at him I feel the dread of his age when one has traveled far more than he has to travel, and dreams of the days past rather than the days to come. And I frown – because I cannot ignore the whispers of this society and of my ambition that’s beckoning me to leave him to a retirement home and in the past where he belongs.



photo by paul kang

Yet as unsettling as it might be, this is one of the rare moments that I ever got to see this man; thousands of miles away from the place of his birth and familiarity, confined to his work and his small community in this great, vast nation. All for what? He must have asked himself. I see that he continues to smile at me, and for me. I want to ask him – moreover just to say something to him. Yet for all my learning, I do not even know what to feel.

My father approaches, and pats me on my shoulder as if he sees my distress and is trying to comfort me. At this I smirk, because I know that this is about as intimate as he will ever be with his child regardless of what he feels. Amiable yet invariably private, he will remain behind the boundaries of his cultural formality. It seems so natural that we were so incompatible with each other back then; his value system was out of place while mine only screamed for more Rock N’ Roll. Nonetheless, just beyond our boundaries, even as distant as it may have been, he remained there for me. Regardless of whether he understood me or not, he remained by my side. Silent. Steadfast. Always.

Forevermore.

As we now see each other, I can faintly return his smile. He simply nods as if to acknowledge something, and offers me a hand. I take his hand with both of mine and shake it firmly, and acknowledge that it was all that we needed to say. And slowly starting into our paths once again, I watch the steps of a man who has witnessed mine – as we walk down the path to our memories.

“Amiable yet invariably private, he will remain behind the boundaries of his cultural formality.”

Year of the Rooster:

Lunar New Year Across Cultures and Generations

by shu-sha angie guan

Originally, I wasn't going to write about Lunar New Year. Despite my fond memories of celebrations in childhood, I always felt a little embarrassed when discussing it with others. I think I was afraid that it would make me look too 'new-immigrant-like' (I refuse to use the three-letter acronym for which I will now deem the new 'F'-word). I am disheartened by the fact that my need to be so faithfully American has led me to turn my back on my cultural roots because the Lunar New Year is a very important day for me and many other Asians.

The holiday marks the first day of a new year in the lunar calendar. While many countries have adopted a solar calendar (read: Western, 'modern' calendar) for business purposes, several Asian cultures still plan their festivities based on a traditional lunar calendar.

The solar calendar that most of us are accustomed to is based on the sun and its descent to earth. In contrast, the lunar calendar is determined by the cycles of the moon. The Lunar New Year is actually based on a lunisolar calendar that combines the two time-keeping systems (the Islamic calendar is the only model that is purely lunar). The first day of each lunar month is marked by a new, "black" moon and regular years contain 353, 354, or 355 days (on leap years, an extra month is added). This is why the Lunar New Year is not synchronized with the Western New Year's Day.

This year, the Lunar New Year fell on the 9th of February. It was situated, much to my consternation, right in the middle of the school week, on a Wednesday. Many of you may have returned home to spend the holiday with your family. Some of you, unable to fly home (e.g. me), may have tried to recreate the festivities with friends here in Berkeley. But however you chose to celebrate this holiday of fresh starts and new (hopefully, better) beginnings, I hope you had a jolly, good time! Although the holiday is experienced differently across a variety of cultures and generations, togetherness, joy, and happiness are common themes throughout.

Tet: Vietnamese Lunar New Year **Chuc Mung Nam Moi!**

Tet, the Vietnamese Lunar New Year, lasts three to seven days. Preparations, however, start much earlier. To get rid of stale, bad luck from passed years, many Vietnamese families thoroughly clean their homes in the weeks before. Some even manage to re-paint them. Debts are paid off and grudges resolved. New clothes are a must have! Families also exchange gifts and children get red envelopes with money inside upon wishing adults a happy new year!

Tet not only marks the first day in the lunar calendar, but it is also seen as the beginning of spring. Houses are sometimes adorned with *Hoa Mai*, a yellow flower that represents the spring season.

On the first day of *Tet*, families visit temples and churches to honor ancestors. At midnight, people begin a celebration called *Le Tru Tich*, which involves loud noises from gongs and firecrackers. The noises from the instruments and small explosives are believed to scare off evil spirits. The red ribbons wrapped around a *Cay Neu*, New Year's tree, are also believed to ward off misfortune.

"It's a time when your family gets together and celebrates a joyous occasion...of good food, fun activities, and just showing how much you care for one another," recalls Ted Nguyen, a third-year student. "It's also the only time you can gamble as a kid... of course, not in big sums," he adds. Now, I guess, we know how some kids choose to spend their New Year money.

Ted is a second-generation Vietnamese American. Though unable to go home for the Lunar New Year, he still managed to have a good time. "This year, unfortunately, I was not able to go home to celebrate with family and get all that good food," says Ted. "Instead, a couple of friends and I went down to San Jose to attend the *Tet* festival at the Santa Clara County Fair Grounds. We got to see some performances and eat some good kabobs."

"My parents have very vivid memories of how it was in Vietnam. It's one big, national celebration and they would often relay stories of it to me," says Ted, who feels that some of the traditions have been lost in its transition into the US. "But now it's different – not as big," he relates. "But I want to relearn these traditions... I think it's a big part of my culture because its one of the few things my parents really brought to us (my siblings and me). If I don't embrace it and try to learn more about it, then it's sort of like losing a little part of who I am."

Chinese New Year: Chinese Lunar New Year **Gong Hay Fat Choy!**

Chinese New Year lasts several days, ending with the Lantern Festival on the fifteenth day. Sometimes the Lunar New Year is referred to as "Chinese New Year." The familiarity of the holiday as "Chinese New Year" may have arisen from the fact that the Chinese were the earliest immigrants to arrive in relatively large numbers and introduce it to the States. Whatever the reason, it is far more than a Chinese holiday.

The Chinese and Vietnamese celebrations of the Lunar New Year share a lot of traditions. Much like with *Tet*, many Chinese families prepare for the holiday by cleaning the house. Homes are also festively decorated, debts cleared, new clothes worn, and *lai se* (red envelopes with money inside) given to children, unmarried friends, and relatives. The *lai se* envelopes on the market today reflect the re-adaptation of traditions. This year, I was able to get my hands on a couple of adorable Hello Kitty envelopes. I was also given a *lai se* with Snoopy and another with Mickey Mouse on it. I assure you that none of these cute, cartoon characters are a part of Chinese religion or mythology (though wouldn't that be great?!).

On New Year's Eve, families gather to dine on foods like fish, chicken (usually whole to represent completeness), *nian gao* (a gelatinous, rice pudding), *zong zi* (sticky rice with other fillings wrapped in leaves), and, for those from Northern China, *man tao* (a wheat bun). Candied pieces of melon, roots, and fruits are also served to ensure a sweet year.

Many Chinese people believe that the day sets the tone for the rest of the year, so nothing is lent (lest you want to be lending endlessly for the year) and children are not spanked (lest they cry and bring tears to the rest of the year). One holiday, I spilled my bowl of rice and began crying. A few months later, my maternal grandmother passed away. Now, this may seem like an irrelevant-paired coincidence, but through the eyes of my traditional, superstitious mum, it had been an omen that came to fruition. To her, my having cried on Chinese New Year meant that there would be many tears in the coming year. And there were.

Solnal: Korean Lunar New Year **Saehae Bok Mani Paduseyo!**

On *Solnal*, families travel back to towns of origin. They also gather to eat *dduk gook* (rice cake soup) and *manduk gook* (dumpling soup). A ritual called *Jishin Balpgi* is performed on New Year's Day. Including loud drums and gongs, it is meant to fight off unfriendly spirits.

Later in the day, once family and relatives have congregated, the women prepare special food for a ceremony for their ancestors called the *Cha Le*. Afterwards, children, upon bowing to elders, receive New Year's money, which they are to keep in silk pouches.

"After that, it's all fun and games. We just enjoy the food and play," says Su Yon Rim, a fourth-year Berkeley student from Los Angeles.

Su is a Korean American of the 1.5 generation. Since moving from Korea to the US, the holiday has changed for her. "Since the Lunar New Year is not celebrated as much as in Korea, my family celebrates January 1st rather than on the Lunar New Year," she says. This is a shift that is taking place in other cultures as well. The Japanese Lunar New Year celebration, *Oshogatsu*, for example, is observed only by those in rural areas. The rest of Japan has taken to celebrating New Year's on the January 1st.

Like *Tet* in Vietnam and Chinese New Year in China, *Solnal* is a huge event in Korea where "the whole neighborhood becomes very festive. During this holiday, everyone comes together and celebrates. But here, you don't really feel that sense of collective celebration. We still follow the traditions, but it feels less like a holiday than it does in Korea," states Su.

As with the Lunar New Year celebrations of other cultures, the *Solnal* has been reshaped in America. But for Su, and many others, these traditions remain important. As she confides, "continuing the cultural traditions keeps me connected to Korea as well as my family."

Celebrating New Years

With each generation, pieces of the past are lost. I think that's somewhat natural. But there are those who no longer acknowledge the Lunar New Year, despite having grown up with the traditions. Though there may be several (possibly excusable) reasons for why this is, Paul Takagi, the faculty sponsor for Asian Studies 100X (the first, "experimental course" on Asian American history class at Berkeley) would consider this a form of self-hatred.

At a community seminar on Asian American Identity on April 26, 1969, in the midst of the Ethnic Studies movement, Dr. Paul Takagi spoke about how damaging it is to one's self-image and sense of identity when one believes that his or her group is inferior. He argued that Asians are one such group and that one of the feeling that arises from this perception is self-hatred. "For example, a person may dislike his own name, and some people change their names." He also uses the example of Asian girls who try to enlarge their eyes through epicanthic surgery. But there are more subtle forms of self-hatred.

As an example of this less overt form, Dr. Takagi spoke of an experience eating out with his sister and family. "When I was in Chicago last week my sister prepared Japanese food. Knowing that my wife is not a very good cook, she feels that her brother is deprived. So she served all the goodies and we ate with chopsticks. The second night she decided to take me out to dinner [at a Chinese restaurant] ... I believe that the only way you can eat Chinese food is with chopsticks. My brother-in-law ate with chopsticks; my sister, who should know better, who is about 50 years old now, has three daughters – ate with a fork. I would like to argue that this is a subtle form of self-hatred." In the same vein, I think choosing not to celebrate the Lunar New Year traditions that one grows up with reflects an internalized dislike for one self.

Cultural traditions are great gifts passed on to us. As expressed by both Su and Ted, they are important to our senses of self and family. For many of us, they are a large part of who we are because they remind us of where we came from. Occasionally, our Asian traditions get reshaped by our experiences in America. I don't see a problem in that because it is not change that I fear; it is the rejection of one's roots. While our traditions and cultures bring us together, they also make us unique. I hope you will be able to embrace them the way you embrace the benevolent relatives you only see once a year. Happy belated Year of the Rooster everyone.

