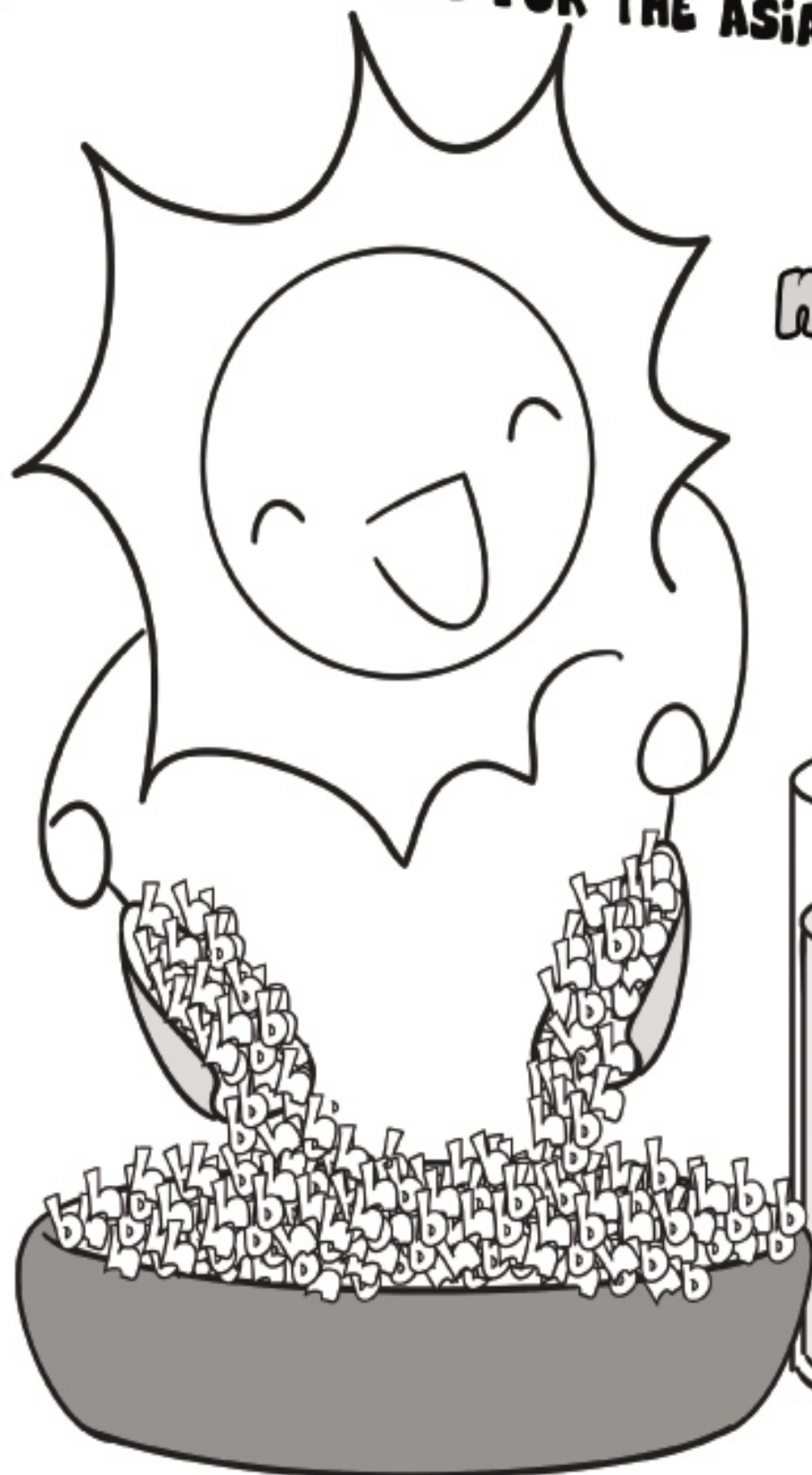


# hardboiled

ASIAN AMERICAN CEREAL FOR THE ASIAN AMERICAN ACTIVIST!

Best Sold By  
NOV 2007



NOW WITH TWO  
SCOOPS OF  
**HARD**



**HARDBOILED COMES FORTIFIED WITH:**

- + Southeast Asian Youth and hiphop
- + "Peace Not Prejudice" Week
- + ... and much more!

## issue 11.2

# hardboiled 11.2



## CONTRIBUTING STAFF

### STORY EDITORS

brian lau  
naomi oren  
lina peng  
pauline sze

### MANAGING EDITOR

matt hui

### LAYOUT EDITORS

wendy gu  
kory wilson hui

### INTERNS

katherine nguyen

### CONTRIBUTING STAFF

davin chang  
jimmy huang  
monica hui  
maria kim  
eunice kwon  
susan moua  
michelle nguyen  
annie kim noguchi  
jennifer phung  
cecilia tran  
john viet  
stephanie wu  
yer yang

### COVER ART

maria kim

## editor's note

Dear Reader,

As you now hold the finished 11.2, I must say it is a pleasure to see how much our publication has grown in the past year. The topics that our writers cover have been increasingly provocative and challenging. I can say that one of the things I love most about hardboiled is its fluidity. Each year our staff brings new strengths to our publication as well as new obstacles. Although our core values are the same, our identities are different. The Asian American identity is similar in many ways. With the upcoming "Count Me In" campaign, we are now looking to make sure the UC system understands that there are more people in the Asian American category than just East Asians. The disaggregation of the Asian American category will give a more accurate demographic of Asian American groups in the UC system and better provide services for truly underrepresented groups. This movement is shaking up the Asian American identity and making history. When you graduate from Cal, what will be your mark? What will you leave behind? Will you have made a difference?

Keep Fighting the Good Fight,  
Matthew Hui

Managing Editor

**in this issue**

- 3 protests in Burma by jimmy huang / layout by michelle nguyen
- 4 follow up to the Cha Vang case by susan moua / layout by jennifer phung
- 5 the hot shot by cecilia tran / layout by stephanie wu
- 6-7 a united front by naomi oren / layout by davin chang
- 8 catching the white girl's disease by monica hui / layout by john viet
- 9 i am? by annie kim noguchi / layout by maria kim
- 10 wong flew over the cuckoo's nest by eunice kwon / layout by wendy gu
- 11 hip hop by yer yang / layout by katherine nguyen
- 12 race to disgrace #5: kenneth eng by pauline sze / layout by kory hui

## DISCLAIMER

hardboiled is not an official publication of the Associated Students of the University of California. The views expressed herein are the views of the writers and not necessarily the views of the ASUC or the views of the University of California, Berkeley.

## hardboiled meetings

Wednesdays 6-7 PM  
247 Dwinelle

harboiled.berkeley.edu  
hardboiledmagazine@lists.berkeley.edu



# PROTESTS IN BURMA

by jimmy huang

This is a story about Burma. About a country that, lush with jungle and natural resources, used to thrive as a leader in British-ruled Southeast Asia. And about a country that saw such prominence disintegrate over the past 40 years, under the control of a corrupt and brutal military regime.

This is a story about Burma, and it's a story about how the country, for a brief few days, saw a flash of hope for peace and progress – but now faces resigning itself back to poverty and oppression.

Burma has long languished in obscurity. A paranoid and oppressive military regime has made sure that Burma has stayed isolated. Since a 1962 military coup, the country has been a virtual police state, with the government restricting the flow of information in and out of the country, suppressing protests from ethnic minorities, and running the Burmese economy to the ground. During military rule, corruption and military mismanagement of industries have toppled the country from one of the richest in Southeast Asia to one of the ten poorest in the world. The non-governmental organization, Transparency International, had named the Burmese government the most corrupt in the world. But, isolated from the rest of the world by the regime, Burma has persisted as an obscurity on the global scene.

On Sept. 23 however, the obscurity melted away and Burma splashed onto international news. A hundred thousand monks and civilians had poured out onto the streets, rallying against the military government and demanding democracy. Photos and videos smuggled out of the country told a moving story of a non-violent protest. Crimson-robed monks, flanked by their many civilian supporters, marched through the streets of Burma's major cities. Hundreds prayed and waved the Buddhist flag. The protestors' demands were blunt and lofty: democracy, modernization and, in effect, an end to the military regime.

The monks, revered and respected by a country that's 90 percent Buddhist, had opened the floodgates for a nationwide movement for change in Burma. Only a month before, the regime had doubled the price of oil, crippling people's ability to travel or even power their homes. Small civilian-led protests were quickly quelled by the military, but in doing so, troops had injured a number of monks. Demanding a government apology, the monks quickly organized and took to the streets. Like that, in just a few short weeks, economic discontent transformed into a mass uprising calling for the military to step down as Burma's rulers. All of Burma seemed to have risen up against its repressive government. For three days, peace, democracy and reform appeared just about to bud in Burma.

And then, as quickly as the protests had begun, the Burmese military cracked down on the demonstrations. On Sept. 26, the images of a people's movement – non-violent and democratic – were replaced by images that were far more chilling. Armored cars driving through the streets. Monks blockaded by armed troops. Armed troops firing into civilian crowds. Even a video of a Japanese journalist shot and killed at point-blank. Weeks later, the blood-soaked body of a monk floating in a river. The Burmese government meanwhile denounced the protesting monks as violators of the Buddhist faith.

Just like that, the hopes for change were dashed.

Eyewitness stories, images and videos had only trickled out of Burma. Through the late-September protests and its violent aftermath, civilian activists on the ground in the Burma had to sneak out snippets of information through Burma's only two internet service providers, both state-regulated. Foreign journalists struggled to enter Burma through the Burmese-Thai border. Meanwhile troops beat civilian crowds in the streets, demanding, as one eyewitness reported, "Was it you? Was it you who sent out those pictures?"

Then the regime further demonstrated its repressiveness as it systematically plugged up the stream of images and stories that flowed from Burma. Military-enforced curfews shut down entire cities by night. Bans on large gatherings of people shattered activity by day. The government shut down its two internet service providers. And shocking images and reports were replaced by an eerie silence, a haunting halt to the trickle of information.

Through the silence, the bits and pieces of information that did escape to the outside world seemed to confirm the worst. Rumors told of monasteries being blockaded, civilian protestors forced to flee to the countryside, and people arrested and taken away during the night. Satellite images provided perhaps the most disturbing pieces of information. Taken from space, photos showed that entire villages had disappeared and military camps had greatly expanded – indicating potential movement of entire groups into military detainment. Significant movement was also detected along the borders of Burma, as protestors and other Burmese refugees attempted to flee the regime's brutal purge.

After a few days, the Burmese state-run media reported that 10 people had been killed and 2,000 had been imprisoned. Foreign sources estimate the numbers are closer to over 100 killed and over 6,000 imprisoned.

However, to those that had followed Burma for years, the tale of a peaceful movement for democracy violently suppressed had an all-too-familiar air. In 1988, pro-democracy protests had also reverberated throughout Burma. Elections were even held. But as soon as the military regime suffered a lopsided loss at the ballot box, they swiftly and brutally crushed democratic activist groups. The democratic movement's leader, Aung Sun Suu Kyi, was placed under house arrest and has remained there ever since. The military has remained all the more entrenched in power in the 20 years since.

An importance difference however

distinguishes this past month's protest from that of 1988. That difference is the pictures and reports that leaked out of Burma reached the internet. This time, through a global mass media, Burma caught the attention of the world. In London, where Suu Kyi's children currently reside, 3,000 marched in support of the Burmese pro-democracy protests. Hundreds more turned out in other cities – Paris, Vancouver, Melbourne, among dozens of others. In Montreal, protestors came out in spite of pouring rain, and in Taiwan, protestors came out in the midst of a typhoon. Southeast Asia practically erupted as Burmese expatriates gathered in support of the protests in their native country.

Yet the international community at-large has done little to address the recent brutality that the Burmese government has exacted on its own people.

Impoverished, fragmented, and frequently repressed – Burma has seemingly nothing that would generate any controversy in the international community. Still, no UN forces have entered, the US has threatened no bombing, and Burma's neighboring states have remained silent. Indeed, Burma has the one thing that keeps the world from calling for an outright end to the regime – it has oil.

Blood for oil. The same Burmese oil whose price hike sparked an economic protest is ironically the same oil that keeps key nations from joining the rest of the world in economic sanctions and open decial of the violence. The same Burmese oil whose price hikes hurt the millions of poor Burmese is the same oil that keeps money flowing to high-ranking Burmese military officials.

China. Russia. India. These nations have continued to keep major oil investments in Burma, proceeding with business as usual – buying oil and even selling weapons to the Burmese regime. These nations have expressed only concern and restraint, while avoiding any action that could upset the oil-supplying partner they've found in Burma. Regardless, China still has to maintain a decent image to the rest of the world since it hosts the Olympics in 2008. And India must maintain its image as the leader of democracy in Southeast Asia. However, in the weeks since the protests, the lack of any measures has indicated that these countries still value their rising energy needs over addressing nationwide violence in Burma.

Even the European Union has not imposed official oil sanctions, as one French oil company, in partnership with Chevron, continues major oil investments in Burma. Burma's neighbors in Southeast Asia meanwhile have only announced their concern about recent events, despite the marked outrage and mass protests from their populaces. A UN envoy was allowed by the Burmese military government to visit Burma and even met with the regime and with Aung Sun Suu Kyi, but again, little was done. The most significant action the UN has announced it will undertake? Another visit to Burma, scheduled for mid-November.

Despite the Chevron's involvement with Burma, the Bush administration has taken a rare move of moral rectitude, openly condemning the Burmese regime and freezing more and more of Burma's military leaders' overseas assets. But a scolding from the Americans means little to a highly xenophobic Burmese government that could still rely on Indian, Chinese, and Russian trading partners to line their pockets. Burma's military rulers indeed live in luxury while the country drips with poverty. A recent wedding of a general's daughter was reported to cost \$50 million, while other reports tell of the malnourishment of one third of Burmese children. One UN official observed that while Southeast Asia has seen steadily growing standards of living, Burma has been the anomaly, where its people have actually seen conditions worsen over time.

With each passing day, another blanket declarative is issued by another ostensibly outraged country or corporation. But every few days, another smuggled report leaks out of Burma, telling of worsening atrocities. One October leak to the British Times spoke of troops lining up monks against a wall and then smashing in their heads. Another leak told of captured protestors being systematically burned alive. One military officer who defected from the regime personally reported that in the passing weeks, several thousands had been killed and that the bodies of monks were being dumped in Burma's jungles.

Indeed, without decisive action from the international community as a whole, and without a strong push for India and China to oppose the Burmese regime, the hope for democracy and progress in Burma may very well stay just that – a hope.

This is a story about Burma. Where blood-for-oil policy has begot the starvation and deaths of at least hundreds. In the weeks since, coverage by the international media of Burma has declined drastically. Still, now and then, reports slip out of the country. The military continues to scour cities and villages for protestors. Refugees continue to flee into neighboring countries. And thousands remain imprisoned.

This is a story about Burma. And, like most stories about Burma, it's riddled with tragedy and injustice. But more importantly, it's a story that needs to be told.

For 40 years, millions of Burmese have lived under one of the most corrupt and repressive governments in the world. The bravery of hundreds of thousands to risk their lives and march against that government brought that plight to international attention. But as time passes and the interest of the

international audience wanes, to leave that story in the past is to do further injustice to the cause of the protestors. To continue to tell that story is to keep such hope alive.



# Follow Up to the Cha Vang Case

by susan moua

## More Tensions in the Woods: Update on the Murder and Case of Hmong Hunter Cha Vang

In issue 10.5 of *hardboiled* last spring, I wrote an article about Cha Vang, the Hmong hunter who was killed in Peshtigo, Wisconsin. At that time, the case had barely begun to unwrap, as James Nichols, the man accused of murdering Vang, plead innocent to first degree intentional homicide and felony possession of a firearm. In a recent verdict, Nichols was found guilty of second degree intentional homicide.

Wisconsin law classifies the crime of intentional homicide into first degree intentional homicide and second degree intentional homicide. Both are defined as an act committed by any person causing the death of another person with the intent to kill that person or another person. A first degree intentional homicide can be reduced to a second degree charge if mitigating circumstances are provided, such as imperfect self defense, adequate provocation and coercion or necessity. If a mitigating circumstance is presented by the defense, as it was in this case, the burden of proof lies with the prosecution to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the mitigating circumstance did not exist in order to get a first degree conviction. First degree intentional homicide results in a lifetime sentence, while a second degree results in a certain number of years.

Nichols's conviction of second degree intentional homicide means that he will be spending sixty years in jail instead of a lifetime. Asian American communities, especially the Hmong in Wisconsin are incensed by the verdict. Many, including UC Berkeley Hmong students I had interviewed for my first article, believed that the evidence in the case pointed to both a hate crime and first degree intentional homicide, deserving

prosecutors sought conviction of a hate crime and first-degree intentional murder.

The prosecution emphasized the way Vang was murdered, how he was shot with a shotgun and stabbed five or six times in the throat. The prosecution also brought up the way Vang's body was hidden under debris, showing Nichols' intentions of hiding the body. Firearm experts testified that Vang's gun had only been fired once, contradicting what Nichols had told police. In the *Associated Press*, Korte, an assistant attorney general for the state, said about Nichols, "He never expresses any fear of Hmong, just anger, just hate."

The defense stood strongly in the case and plead Vang's murder as an act of self-defense. Nichols claimed that Vang shot at him multiple times until he was able to run up to Vang to take control of Vang's gun. After that, he said, he stabbed Vang in the neck twice with a pocket knife. The entire trial lasted four days.

Gerald Heroux, the foreman of the all white jury, described deliberation process as a difficult one. According to the *Associated Press*, Heroux said that after agreement was reached that it was not first degree intentional homicide, the jury had to vote multiple times on the lesser charge of second degree intentional homicide before they could come to a unanimous decision. Heroux believed that based on the evidence it was the only possible decision that could be made.

A case quite similar to the Cha Vang case had occurred three years prior. Chai Vang, also a Hmong hunter, found himself in a struggle with six other Caucasian hunters after Chai Vang had apparently trespassed into private property. Chai Vang testified that he was first shot at and in his defense, shot back. Six were killed and two were wounded. The two that were wounded testified that Chai Vang shot at them intentionally. Chai Vang now sits in a prison cell for life. The recent Cha Vang incident adds to the larger context of escalating tensions among Hmong communities and Caucasian hunters in Wisconsin.

A second-degree intentional homicide conviction leaves a lot of unanswered questions for many Hmong college students in Wisconsin. When asked about what she thought about the verdict, Pa Houa Lee from the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire says "How could the jury believe that this was an act of self defense? Obviously Nichols was not acting in self defense when he decided to stab Vang six times in the face and neck. Nor was Nichols acting in self defense when he decided to shove a stick down Vang's neck until Vang died. Nor was it self defense for Nichols' attempt to bury Vang." Lee believes that Nichols conviction of second degree murder implies that the jury did not believe Nichols had intentions to kill Vang and that only excessive use of force was the result of Vang's death.

Gue Vang, a student from the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay is also outraged by the verdict. Before knowing the verdict, he believed that Nichols was going to spend a lifetime in jail. He questions, "Why was it that the police department did such a detailed investigation on one case but not the other hunter shooting? Is there prejudice, discrimination, and racism at play?" Gue Vang truly believes that aside from racial tensions within the communities in Wisconsin, there is discrimination towards the Hmong, "I hope the courts did not think they could justify the Chai Vang case by letting a Caucasian man not spend a lifetime for murder of Cha Vang."

Cha Vang's wife fainted when she found out the verdict.



The murderer, James Nichols, in court.  
Photo courtesy of <http://graphics.jsonline.com>

She feels little consequence has been paid for the lost life of her husband, taken away so quickly. For many people, Asian Americans and Hmong, the verdict signals that Hmong

hunters are dangerous in the woods; that if a white hunter comes across a Hmong hunter in the forests, the white hunter should take caution and prepare him or herself. Pa Thao, a graduate from Wisconsin Eau Claire says, "The verdicts...for Chai Vang who now will spend his life [in jail] for killing six Caucasian hunters and for Cha Vang's killer who will spend sixty years in jail, are two ugly legal precedents against Hmong hunters. If there is another incident in the woods, the two cases will be used to back up reasonable cause for white hunters to defend themselves against Hmong hunters."

Thao goes on to say that the Hmong students at his

college have not done much for their people, "The Hmong organizations here are quite conservative. They talk about it...but nothing has gotten done."

“... second degree murder implies that the jury did not believe Nichols had intentions to kill Vang and that only excessive use of force was the result of Vang's death.”



Vang's wife testifying her husband can't speak English.  
Photo courtesy of <http://a.abcnews.com>

of heavier sentencing. Not only were the hate crime charges dropped, but now Nichols will not be spending a lifetime in jail.

Vang was found dead on January 7th, 2007 while on a hunting trip in northern Peshtigo, Wisconsin. When his body was discovered, authorities and investigators concluded that this case was a homicide. On the night of Vang's disappearance, Nichols was found stumbling into a local hospital with a gunshot wound in his hand. He was arrested that night when he reported that a gunman shot him miles from the hunting area, incidentally around the same time Vang's hunting party reported Vang missing.

The evidence found against Nichols were the gun and knife used in the murder. In the questioning cell, Nichols made racial remarks about Hmong hunters and made it clear to police that the Hmong should not be trusted. With this evidence and the description of the way Vang was killed,



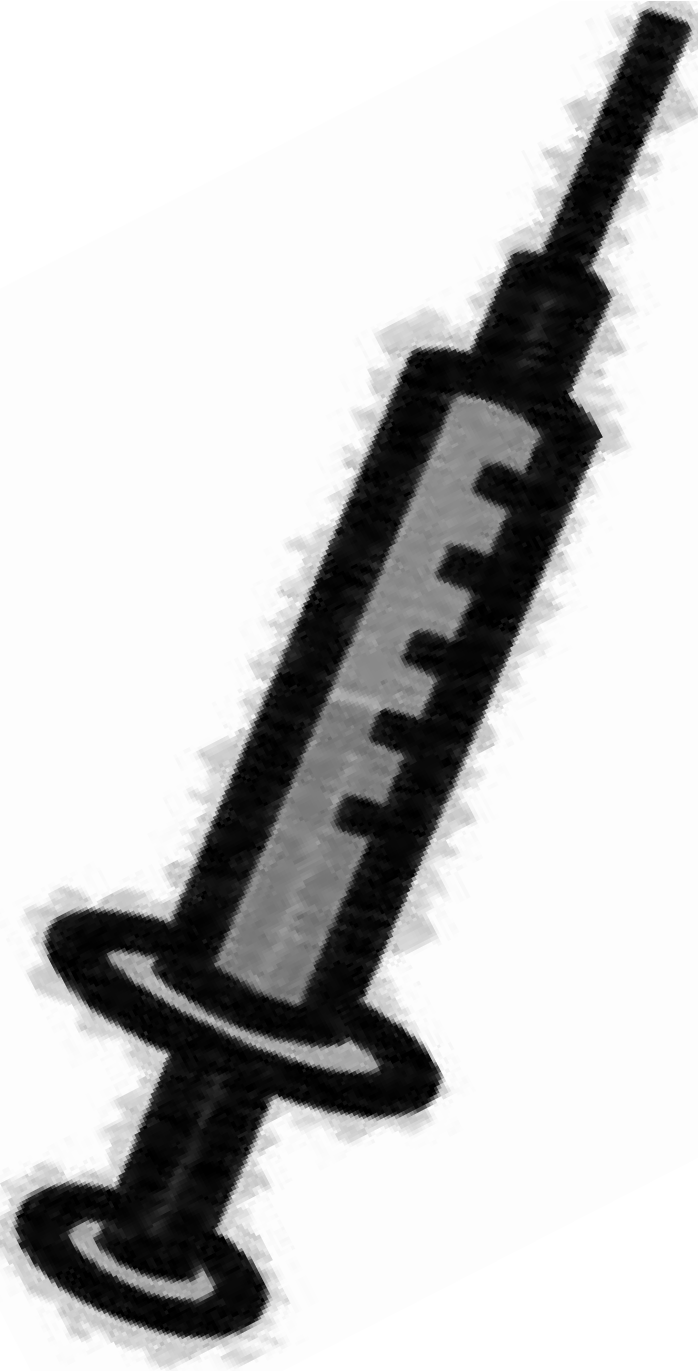
Investigators hold the knife that Nichols used on Vang.  
Photo courtesy of <http://d.yimg.com>



# the HOT SHOT

by cecilia tran

The high risk of cervical cancer for Vietnamese women  
and the controversy about the HPV vaccine



Strapping on a seatbelt is usually the first thing that people do upon entering a car. Why? The obvious answer is prevention of physical harm in the event that something might go wrong. Yet in the realm of health, preventative measures are often met with much more reluctance even when the result of taking these measures is the same as wearing a seatbelt. In the female population, the seatbelt is analogous with a vaccine called Gardasil that can greatly reduce the risk of cervical cancer. However, among women in the Vietnamese community, there is a hesitation and lack of awareness when it comes to taking preventative measures for cervical cancer because of the taboo topic of sexuality and the correlation between cervical cancer and sex.

Studies show that Vietnamese women are about 30 times more likely than non-Hispanic white women to get cervical cancer. Yet the rate of cancer screenings and vaccinations for Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), a sexually transmitted disease that causes 99.7% of cervical cancer cases, are alarmingly low among the Vietnamese population. Some researchers of cervical cancer believe that the high rate of this disease in Vietnamese women has historical links to the Vietnam War.

In a 1996 Stanford case-control study, gave evidence that the spike of cervical cancer cases among in the currently middle-aged generation of Vietnamese women is connected to events of sexual behaviors during the Vietnam War. The study documented that there was an influx in the number of sexually monogamous women contracting HPV due to male promiscuity during the war. However, while it is true that there are large numbers of Vietnamese women with cervical cancer in this age range, the conclusion of this study may in fact be a stretch because women generally discover cervical cancer during their middle-aged years. Some experts believe that the high rate of cervical cancer is not involved with the Vietnam War rather in the reluctance to speak about matters that are associated with sex.

Thoa Nguyen, a staff member of the Vietnamese Community Health Promotion Project at the University of California, San Francisco, believes that the root of the problem is that many Vietnamese women are simply uncomfortable talking about cervical cancer or getting a Pap smear test, which tests for cancerous cells in the cervix. "The reason more Vietnamese people have cervical cancer, is because they are very shy and don't want to ask about cervical cancer or getting a Pap test unless the doctor tells them about it and a lot of doctors don't." While they feel compelled to be screened for cervical cancer at the recommendation of a doctor, many women do not see the urgency in the situation. Instead, they avoid the topic because it is a topic that brings them discomfort. Nguyen concludes, "They don't know about it and the cancer has no symptoms and so they don't think about it."

Despite the undeniable fact that cervical cancer poses a great danger for Vietnamese women, there are mixed feelings in the Vietnamese community about receiving the Gardasil injection, the newly discovered vaccine for HPV.

Even though 75% of women from all ethnic backgrounds do contract HPV at some point in their lives, the fact that HPV is a STD has made the vaccine a controversy. Berkeley undergraduate student My Pham relates the issue back to parental consent. "My mom is a hypochondriac but my dad believes in herbal medicines and natural treatment. And yeah, there's the stigma of sexually transmitted diseases. My parents are conservative. But if there was more hype about it I think I would consider getting it [the HPV vaccine]." In some ways the taboo subject of sex has given a negative connotation to the vaccine because it relates it to the promotion of sexual promiscuity. The prospect of getting the Gardasil injection is unappealing to people who feel that it will send the message that premarital sex just got a little less scary because there is one less STD out there to worry about. There has been the argument on the pro-vaccine side that no one would find it controversial if a vaccine was found for leukemia even though cervical cancer is just as detrimental of a disease as leukemia.

However, in the case of someone who has had a close encounter with cervical cancer, the perspective is much different. Berkeley undergraduate Christine Le knows the trauma that cervical cancer can cause. "My cousin actually has it and that is how my family knows about it and it encourages us to all get it [the HPV vaccination]—because of cervical cancer she can't have kids." After seeing how it affects her close relatives, Le and her family views the risk of getting cervical cancer as a reality rather than a hypothetical scenario. The impact of cervical cancer on someone's life makes the vaccine more of a health necessity rather than a statement about sexual behaviors. Le states, "I am definitely doing it. My sisters have already gotten it and it's harder for me because my family doctor is far away. My mom was actually the one who called me to get it and showed me brochures when I went home." It seems as though close experiences with the disease is often the impetus for a development of new insight and motivation to take action against the disease.

There is a growing need for cervical cancer information in the Vietnamese community to prevent the jarring realization that arrives when the situation is experienced by a loved one. Since 86% of Vietnamese Americans get their healthcare from Vietnamese doctors, there has been a recent push for Vietnamese doctors to approach their female patients about the risk of cervical cancer. Currently, research groups are also promoting the display of commercials on Vietnamese channels that show women making appointments to be screened for cervical cancer and talking about the issue with friends and family members. The hope is that these media portrayals start a trend in which the cervical cancer and the Gardasil vaccination are no longer taboo nor associated with sexual promiscuity.

While the controversy about Gardasil is inevitably going to continue, the reality of cervical cancer for Vietnamese women as well as women of all ethnicities is also guaranteed to remain. The ultimate weapons against the disease are simply knowledge and the vaccine and since both are readily available for those who seek it—why not use both?

facts about  
cervical cancer

1 Vietnamese women are 30 times more likely than non-Hispanic white women to get cervical cancer

2 99.7% of cervical cancer cases are due to HPV

3 75% of women will have HPV some point in their life

4 70% of cervical cancer cases can be prevented with the Gardasil vaccine

5 The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends Gardasil for girls and women 9-26 years of age.

# A UNITED FRONT:

## AN INTERVIEW WITH THE MUSLIM STUDENT ASSOCIATION ABOUT THE COALITION FOR PEACE NOT PREJUDICE WEEK

by naomi oren

"I want peace today, tomorrow, and forever!" shouted a sea of students dressed in emerald green t-shirts. On October 25, students, faculty, and guest speakers including Rabbi Michael Lerner from Tikkun and Jonathan Poullard, the dean of students at Cal rallied for tolerance and acceptance for the Muslim American community. Organized by The Coalition for Peace Not Prejudice, the rally was a peaceful reaction to the leftist-radical-turned-crazed-racist conservative thinker David Horowitz's explicit hate campaign "Islamofascism Awareness Week."

For those of us who have taken an Asian American history course, the rhetoric of blame-shifting a major political issue on a certain group is nothing new. For instance, Japanese Americans faced similar racist sentiment particularly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, which resulted in the internment of JAs in concentration camps. Blame-shifting in order to push political agendas is increasing more than ever in recent times (such as blaming Mexicans and Mexican Americans for our "illegal" immigrant problem).

hardboiled interviewed Narmin Nuru Vice President of the current Muslim Student Association (MSA) and Fereshta Paghmani member of MSA for the low-down behind the Peace Not Prejudice Week.

**What's the real purpose of Islamofascist Awareness week that is put on by the Berkeley College Republicans (BCR)?**

FP: David Horowitz announced Islamofascist Awareness Week all throughout the US. this week. And I what I think his purpose is, he wanted to provoke Muslims all throughout the US to get a rise out of us and document it and send it to Congress.

**Has there been similar activities like I-FAW in the past?**

FP: This isn't the first time this has happened. I think a couple of years ago Daniel Pipes was invited in 2004. He is the author of a book that suggests that Muslims be put in internment camps just because of their religion because all Muslims are terrorist in his opinion. They invited him to come to our campus and the Muslims got angry. This was the first time invited someone who clearly promotes prejudice. When one of the conservative groups on campus invited him, the Muslim community on campus went in and interrupted his talk. He video-tapped it and sent it to Congress. Congress in return sent a bunch of FBI agents on our campus

NN: It was a huge problem

FP: It was a huge problem. This was before the seniors of this year, so people don't know about the history of the Berkeley College Republicans (BCR). David Horowitz wants a rise from the Muslims, but this time.

**Who invited Daniel Pipes to speak on our campus?**

FP: I am pretty sure that the BCR did this. Two years ago they invited Michelle Malkin. They are pretty much doing things like this all the time..

**Islamofascism has been thrown around not only on the Berkeley campus by groups like BCR but also by major political conservative players...such as President Bush. How do you feel about the term "Islamofascism"?**

FP: I had a conversation with BCR yesterday and they're saying that the culture oppresses women, the culture is this and that and I was like all around the world almost every culture oppresses women, even in the US by forcing women to undress themselves. That is a form of oppression. But I told them this, if it is the culture that oppresses people, why are you calling it Islamofascism? In foreign countries, we do not blame Christians because we are educated about our religion. We know that our religion comes from Christianity, from Judaism but they do not know about Islam, they do not know what Islam stands for. They read the newspaper and they listen to the media

and get a few verses out of the Koran out of context and they use that against us. Then they have some fool come on campus holding a sign saying that Islam abuses women, it preaches pedophilia, polygamy, and wife beating. They don't know anything about Islam.

FP: And then I asked them, "if this is about culture, then why don't you call it cultural-fascism instead?" And they said, "the enemy, Muslims...." And then I said, "excuse me?" then he replied, "No, no no. The enemy that claims to be Muslims call each other Islamofascists in Algeria." And I said to him, "We know where we are coming from. When someone does something 'Islamofascist' we know because we know our religion. What they [the extremists] do is anti-Islam. So we call them Islamofascists.



Many people gather for the Peace Rally during the Peace no Prejudice week.

Photo courtesy of Muslim Student Association

**What are your reactions toward their campaign picture?**

NN: It's [the event portrayed on the campaign picture] not even real. They got it from a Danish movie and it's an image of a Muslim woman wearing a headscarf burring her alive. We looked up where the picture came from because it's not something we know of that has ever happened. We don't burry people alive. We asked them where they got this picture from and they said David Horowitz sent it to us.

**How was the Daniel Pipes demonstration different from your current campaign "Peace Not Prejudice Week?"**

NN: Basically the aim of I-FAW campaign is to get a reaction from us and that is the exact opposite of what we were trying to give them. They really expected us to act out the way we did when Daniel Pipe came.

FP: even though they didn't act badly...

NN: The conservative campaign said that we don't know anything about free speech. So yeah, you [BCR] have the right to free speech so we're going to let you do what you do and what we're going to do is put on Peace Not Prejudice week. Not to directly counter-act BCR's campaign. That is not our aim. To tell you the truth, we didn't know if they were really going to go through with this or not. We just found out last week (about I-FAW). But either way we were planning to have a Peace Not Prejudice week just to build community and unity on our campus. We are not going to do this alone. ISFAW is not even about Islamofascism. These people have hatred against all minorities. David Horowitz is known for saying that slavery is good for the African Americans. That is why the African Americans are on our coalition. This coalition has a diverse amount of groups, it's just amazing – it's history.

**Could you name a few groups that are apart of your coalition?**

NN: The Cal Democrats, the Afghan Student Association, Pakistani Student Association, ASAPA Association of South Asian Political Activists, Cal Poetry Slam, Progressive Students of Faith....

FP: The list is so long...

NN: Also, a lot of other organizations added to our coalition this week including the Turkish Student Association, a variety of ethnic, cultural, and political organizations and a few departments including the International Area Studies Department, the Graduate Theological Union...

NN: So it's not about attacking Muslims but it's an attack on people who are different; it's a hate campaign. That's why ours is Peace Not Prejudice. What is their goal? To stir up hate on campus and people were scared.

Have you faced any backlash from organizing this event?

NN: We have members in our Organization who were verbally attacked. We had a poster that was ruined...

FP: People have gone up to girls wearing a hijab (the headscarf worn by Muslim woman) and to one of the girls, they walked up to her and made a loud noise to her face and went away.

NN: The other day when there was like a group of us, when a guy was holding a banner and there was a whole bunch of us, and a few of them walked by and were like “Fuck Peace! Fuck Peace”

FP: Another girl has come up to me and said that your religion does preach hate. I told them, what do you know about Islam? What do you know about my religion? I told the College Republicans, “Do you educate yourself on religion and then host these kinds of events? Your listening to David Horowitz and what does he know about Islam?” Very few politicians have read the Koran, but they still go around bashing Islam.

NN: They claim that it’s for us to protect our rights...

FP: My parents are oppressing me by not letting me wear the hijab because they think that by me walking down the streets in the US, I’ll be a target of hate. That is oppression. In an Islamic country, you are allowed to wear a hijab and no one will mess with you. But in America, when they give you the right to follow your religion, and you walk wearing your religion with the hijab not because some male relative told you to wear it but because your religion tells you to wear it. You wear it and you get oppressed for wearing it. What is that? That’s hate. It’s not just in the Middle East but in America too.

How is the usage of Islamo-fascism a misnomer?

NN: Islam is all about moderation and balance...and those who take it to another extreme, it’s wrong.

FP: In countries where there is a diverse population such as Morocco and Egypt, they have the most respect for Muslims because they share the same culture but religions are different. When you meet someone from Morocco who is Jewish or Christian, they know our religion: that the amount of food you consume, the amount of money you spend, has to be moderate – not just in your character but also in your political views and in your practices. Everything is supposed to be balanced. If there’s a bad, you have to balance it with the good. We never say or preach in the name of God to go kill innocent people. It’s wrong.

NN: BCR was saying that Islamo-fascists kill in the name of God. We recognize that these people are wrong, so why are you putting a campaign attacking us all? David Horowitz on his website says that MSA organizations are the frontline of Hamas and political organizations in the Middle East and they are Jihadists organization. He is saying that people like Muslim students and me are Jihadists...

FP: First of all, you are a “woman who is not supposed to have a voice in MSA” (laughs)

What is, in your opinion, the overall reaction of Peace Not Prejudice Week by the campus?

FP: Berkeley as a whole is a very educated campus and people are socially aware. It makes me proud to be going here because I know that if I were in Louisiana or Missouri or any other states in that area, I wouldn’t have the liberalism that we have here putting on Peace Not Prejudice events.

NN: Everyone thinks that they are absolutely wrong. The chancellor just came up to me and he said that I admire you guys. That this is wonderful and great. You are being under attack but you are handling it in a very mature respectful manner. That was the whole aim. We are not going to give David Horowitz and BCR what they want. We’re not going to fall into their trap and we made sure that we got that into our members, coalition, and student groups to not act out. Let them do what they want to do. The most irritating thing is when a person is provoking you, and you walk and you just say please.

FP: That’s what our religion preaches. When the prophet was preaching the message of peace. His neighbor used to put trash by his house everyday but one day there was no trash in front of his house. The Prophet became concerned. He wondered, “Why isn’t there any trash? Is my neighbor okay?” So he checks on his neighbor to see if he is okay because he didn’t see any trash on his door step. That is what Islam preaches: always care about your mankind. Even if they are attacking you or assaulting you - peace to them. That’s our message: Peace to them because we answer to a higher authority. But BCR preaches that we just want to kill ourselves and bomb ourselves...

NN: Because they are picking out of context whatever that they’re trying to interpret.

How has the turnout of events been?

NN: absolutely amazing. Our first event [Screening: The Ghosts of Abu Ghraib] was a great success. Also on Tuesday we had the Cal Poetry Slam. It was once again a full house. I’m really happy about the turnout.

NN: The Ghosts of Abu Ghraib screening was hosted by Progressive Students of Faith. They are also part of our coalition. Wednesday we are having a huge event with Progressive Students of Faith and the Religious Studies Department about the similarities of the Abrahamic Religions.

FP: All in all we are proud of the campus. Seriously, even people who are in these coalitions just come here to study, their reaction to what’s going on is what makes Berkeley worthwhile. It makes me proud that the people here are not ignorant as the people who are putting on Islamo-fascism Awareness Week. Even this girl started crying when the posters came out. She said that she could not believe that this is going on even today. People think that America is past civil rights era. That there is no racism but it’s [campus activism] like the 60s all over again. Honestly, if I could go around hugging people I would because this campus is awesome.

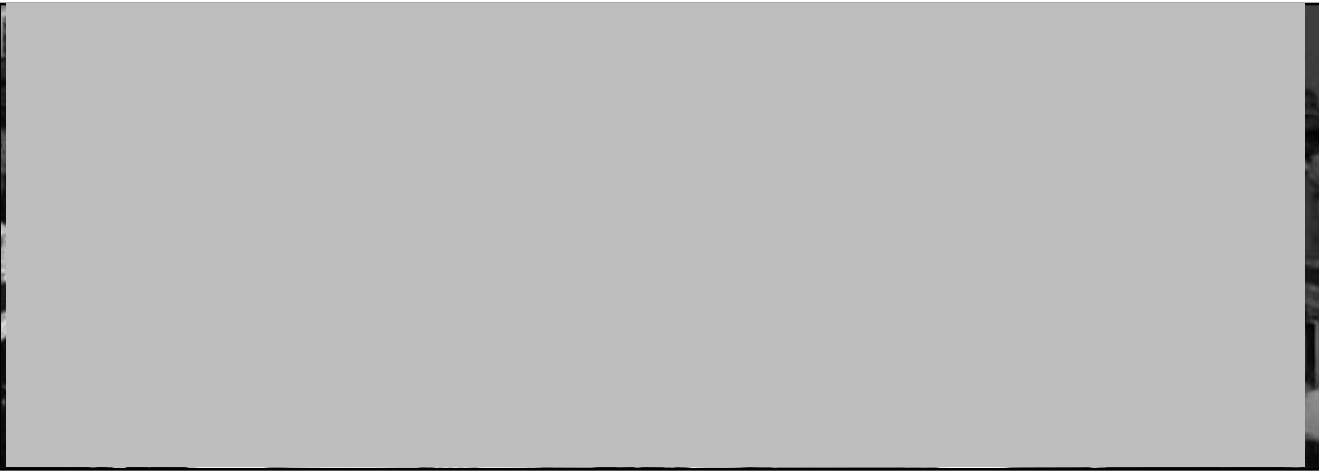
Asian Americans are generally stereotyped as being the silent Americans. We’re quiet and often typecasted as being the obedient model citizens. A large portion does stem from historical happenings such as the internment of JAs during WWII where people thought they couldn’t do much against the government to show what an injustice it was because they lacked the know-how and the power to take action. In your community overall, do you feel that people are standing up for injustices that they face? Or do you feel pressure to be silent?

FP: Overall, because our community is first or second generation, if my parents knew that I was wearing this t-shirt right now [the infamous green t-shirt proudly stating Peace Not Prejudice], I would be in big trouble. But you know, they tell us to quiet down but we don’t listen to them because we’re here for a reason.

NN: A lot of parents are afraid of what’s going to happen, but we behave differently from our parents.

FP: My father was a rebel in Afghanistan. He had to leave Afghanistan because we were threatened. We came here and my father stopped all of his activism. He’s like that was the life then. He was in prison and tortured by the Russian communists there. In America, similar things are happening. They just take a whole bunch of them and throw them into Guantanamo. I am so happy because it seems that in certain regions of the US, Muslims are standing up.

NN: We felt that Muslims students on campus were apathetic but this campaign has got-



The open mic event: “Unity Through Diversity Poetry Slam” brought in a full house at the Naia Lounge. This event was one of the many Peace Not Prejudice events that happened on campus during the Peace Not Prejudice week.

Photo courtesy of Muslim Student Association

PHOTO REMOVED BY REQUEST

ten them to start becoming active. We were ourselves amazed by the reaction because we’ve never seen Muslim students so unified. We realize that if we’re attacked, no one is going to stand up for us – we have to stand up for ourselves. Their campaign has turned against them because this has made us stronger.

Final Thoughts:

We often separate ourselves from the racial-religious-ethnic discourse of anybody who is not a part of “our” community. Rallies are so common on our campus, but the issues that a particular group rallies for are normally given attention mainly by the host of that specific group. It’s not an exaggeration to say that our campus can be pretty divided on particular issues; however, this week was different. Peace Not Prejudice Week demonstrated that regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion, we are capable of uniting to support an issue that is familiar to many of us.

We thank you David Horowitz, and toast your campaign of hate for giving us cause to unite in the struggle for peace.

For more information upcoming MSA events, visit MSA’s website at: [msa.berkeley.edu](http://msa.berkeley.edu)



# Catching the White Girl's Disease

by monica hui

Mounting reports of starving models and celebrities have brought the topic of eating disorders to the forefront of popular culture. Moreover, the rising number of pro-anorexia websites and networks, such as those on Facebook and Myspace, reveals the disturbing onslaught of voices in our society who are professing lives with anorexia and bulimia. In America, according to the Renfrew Center Foundation, those voices are twenty-four million strong.

So where do Asian Americans find themselves amongst those numbers? They don't. In fact, eating disorders are often labeled as a "White Girl's Disease." The general stereotype is that all Asians are genetically disposed to slim physiques. In addition, many believe that Asian cultural values protect them from the body image dissatisfaction that is so prominent in the Western world. In reality, Asians are just as, if not more, susceptible to this physically and psychologically damaging illness.

Recent studies show that more and more Asians, in America and Asia, are unhappy with their bodies. In a compilation of nearly 100 studies that examined body dissatisfaction among women of different ethnic backgrounds, psychologists from the University of Wisconsin-Madison found that Asian-American women displayed just as much body dissatisfaction as White women. More surprisingly, a 2000 study at the Addictive Behaviors Research Center at UW's Department of Psychology concluded that Asian American college women expressed even more body dissatisfaction than Caucasian women. Here at Cal, the Universal Health Services at the Tang Center reveals that 20% of the eating disorder patients in the fall semester of 2005 were Asian American, further underscoring the issue of eating disorders amongst Asian Americans.

The tendency for Asians to have a smaller frame, as well as the emphasis on thinness from two cultures, add immense pressure on Asian Americans to stay thin. Researchers suggest that acculturation plays a role in Asian Americans' poor body image. Acculturation is the modification of one's own cultural values and behaviors in adapting to and assimilating traits from another culture. Audrey, an Asian women's magazine, summarizes this idea well: "While many Asian women were once admired for their fuller figures and faces. . . today many feel pressure to look like blonde, blue-eyed celebrities. Unable to change their Asian features without footing high bills for plastic surgery, some focus on the easiest thing they can control: their weight." For many young and impressionable Asian American women, this cultural confusion leads them to believe that the further they are from American society's idea of beauty, the further they are from beautiful.

Furthermore, as Westernization continues to take effect in modern Asian countries, one begins to wonder whether Asian beauty standards still exist. In addition to eyelid and nose surgeries, women across Asia are increasingly

embracing the stick-thin physique. In her article Women's Eating Disorders Go Global, journalist Sonni Efron details the stunning shrinking phenomenon sweeping Asia. In Japan, eating disorders afflict one in a hundred women, a rate nearly equating that of the United States. In Hong Kong, twenty to thirty types of diet pills are in common use, including "fen-phen", which was recently banned in the US for causing heart damage. Some of the most fashionable clothes in South Korea are made in only one small size — an American size 4 — so as to reserve them for only the skinniest, and thus presumably most beautiful, girls. Perhaps one of the most eerie indications of the prevalence of eating disorders in Asia appears in Singapore, where a hot-selling T-shirt bears the words, "I've got to get into that dress. It's easy. Don't eat. . . I'm hungry. Can't eat breakfast. But I ought to. . . I like breakfast. I like that dress. . . Still too big for that dress. Hmm. Life can be cruel." Even in countries like India and the

Asians are just as, if not more, susceptible to this physically and psychologically damaging illness.

Philippines, where hunger is an epidemic, an explosion of anorexia cases has arisen, no thanks to the growing number of images of waifish White women on billboards and television sets. Such demands on Asian Americans to conform to such slim and petit figures are highly conducive to eating disorders. As one Korean-American Columbia University student, who was once bulimic, explained, she only "wanted to look like [her] ethnicity." It is not only the White beauty standards that Asian Americans have to meet. They have to contend with a seemingly stricter Asian beauty standard, too.

Of course, it is more than simply body image that drives a growing number of Asian Americans to suffer an eating disorder. Many other cultural factors come into play. The model minority stereotype pressures many Asian Americans to achieve academic excellence, musical brilliance, and overall life success. When one fails to fit this mold, he or she could develop low self-esteem, feelings of inadequacy or lack of control in life, anxiety, anger, or depression, all of which are psychological factors that can contribute to eating disorders. Starving, purging, or bingeing becomes a coping mechanism for the stress of such high expectations. Too much time eating meant that they were not working hard enough. If they could not get the perfect grades, then at least they could have the perfect bodies.

Additionally, eating-disordered behaviors are

manifestations of suppressed emotions. A study published in the International Journal of Eating Disorders suggested a correlation between eating disorders and alexithymia, a state of deficiency in understanding, processing, or describing emotions. In fact, alexithymia is prevalent in 56% of bulimics and 63% of anorexics. In this case, what makes Asian Americans more susceptible to eating disorders is the lack of emphasis on emotional expression in the Asian culture. Emotional suppression demonstrates self-control and strength. As a result, some Asian Americans lack the capability to manage intense emotions, such as anger, guilt, or depression. Eating-disordered behaviors become the source of release that the individual could not get from family.

Not surprisingly, there is very little statistical data out there pertaining to eating disorders in the Asian American community, and little research is being conducted to bring light to the subject. This is a mere case of ignorance. Despite rising reports of eating disorders among Asians in both America and in developed Asian countries, Asian societies continue to turn a blind eye to this, and most other, psychological illnesses. At the Renfrew Center in Philadelphia, America's first residential eating disorder treatment facility, only 1.7% of its patients are Asians, compared with the 91% of its patients who are Caucasian. As explained by Nang Du, MD, Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at UCSF, Asians are hesitant to seek mental health services or even admit to a problem, considering it a "mark of shame or extreme embarrassment. . . not only to the patient but to his or her entire family. . . Families exert great efforts to confine mentally ill relatives to the home, attempting to keep their condition a secret." Moreover, Asians families are discouraged from talking to strangers about family issues because it is a sign of disrespect to the family. Issues about the family should stay with the family. Lastly, because eating disorders are still unrecognized by the Asian community, there are few culturally-specific resources for recovery. According to www.modelminority.com, a study found that Caucasian therapists "misinterpreted some of their cultural traits — suppressing emotion and restricting confidence for fear of shame — as uncooperative behavior." Fear of being misunderstood drives many Asian Americans away from the help that they need.

If even the Asian community refuses to acknowledge exists, then researchers, Asian or not, will not recognize the need to study culturally-distinct factors associated with eating disorders. And neither will the American society push the need to offer specialized resources for Asians with eating disorders. Currently, there are no eating disorder treatment programs in the country specially tailored for Asian Americans. Sufferers in Asia have to travel off the continent to seek treatment. Clearly, the burden only falls back on the Asian community, whose eating-disordered sufferers continue their silent cries for help.

## What are Eating Disorders?

The four clinically recognized eating disorders include:

**Anorexia Nervosa:** Characterized by excessive weight loss, self-starvation, refusal to maintain a normal weight, intense fear of gaining weight, disturbed body image, and the lost of menstrual periods (females).

**Bulimia Nervosa:** Characterized by a preoccupation with food and weight, and binge-purge cycles in which abnormally large quantities of food are ingested in short periods of time, followed by compensatory practices such as self-induced vomiting, laxative or diuretic abuse, fasting, and excessive exercise, to rid the body of the food consumed.

**Binge Eating Disorder:** Characterized by uncontrollable and compulsive periods of eating beyond the point of comfort, with no subsequent compensative behaviors like those of bulimics.

**Eating Disorders Not Otherwise Specified:** A category of eating disorders for those who undergo some form of abnormal eating but do not exhibit all of the criteria to diagnose one with an eating disorder. This may include those who match all of the symptoms of anorexia nervosa but manage to maintain a normal weight, or those who binge and purge with less frequency than a diagnosed bulimic.

Physical dangers associated with eating disorders include malnutrition, dehydration, electrolyte imbalances, gastrointestinal bleeding, diabetes, kidney failure, heart attacks, strokes, internal bleeding, and death.

## Local Resources:

Counseling and Psychological Services  
Universal Health Services, Tang Center  
2222 Bancroft Way, Berkeley  
(510)642-9494

Ohlhoff Recovery Programs  
601 Steiner St, San Francisco  
(415)221-3354  
[www.ohlhoff.org/eating.html](http://www.ohlhoff.org/eating.html)

Overeaters Anonymous East Bay Unity  
Intergroup  
510-923-9491  
[www.oaeastbay.org](http://www.oaeastbay.org)

Eating Disorder Referral and  
Information Center  
[www.edreferral.com](http://www.edreferral.com)

A good list of therapists in the Berkeley  
area can be found at :  
[http://parents.berkeley.edu/recommend/  
therapy/eatingdisorders.html](http://parents.berkeley.edu/recommend/therapy/eatingdisorders.html)

## For more information:

National Associations of  
Anorexia Nervosa and  
Associated Disorders  
(847)831-3438  
[www.anad.org](http://www.anad.org)

National Eating Disorders  
Association  
(206)382-3587  
[www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org)



# I AM (?)

the internal struggle for identity  
faced by Asian American adoptees

by annie noguchi

“ You just feel different [from other Asians]. It’s like, yeah, I’m Asian, but I don’t have any clue about how to be Asian—I just happen to be in an Asian body. ”

Growing up, Kazoua Vang wondered why her cousins looked a little bit different from the rest of their family. The Vang clan tended to be short, with dark hair and dark skin.

Their eyes were average size and they had the distinctive Vang nose—triangle-shaped and flat, with a slight upturn at the tip. Kazoua’s cousins, however, were tall and thin, with light skin and slanted eyes. The Vang nose was also absent.

So it made sense, then, when Kazoua found out that her two cousins were adopted—one from Thailand and one from China.

“But you just don’t talk about those kinds of things,” Kazoua, a freshman at UC Berkeley says, explaining why she didn’t know for fifteen years that her cousins were adopted. “Especially not in the Hmong community, in the Asian American community in general. You just don’t bring up those kinds of subjects.”

Juyoung Lee, a second-year at Cal who identifies as Korean, agrees. “[Adoption] is kind of frowned upon. It’s seen as...not natural.” But he also adds that information about adoption is not widely known, both in Korea and in the Korean community in America. Most Koreans do not know anyone who is adopted, nor do they have real knowledge of what adoption is all about. As Kazoua says, it’s just not talked about.

Cherry Nguyen, a first-year Vietnamese American, thinks that there is a general consensus in the Asian American community about adoption: “It’s kind of the same with all Asians—they’d prefer their children to be biological. They’re fine with other people [adopting], but they’d prefer...not to adopt if it can be avoided. The bloodline has to continue, that’s why.” However, she also points out that because adoption is not widely spoken of in the Asian American community, it often doesn’t occur to people to adopt. “Unless they’re infertile, or they know others who are infertile, they’ve never really considered the option of adopting.”

Richard Lee, a psychology professor specializing in ethnic identity and international adoption at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, notes that “the stigma is mostly around blood ties and what it means if you can’t have your own children...”

Kevin Yan, a third-year, agrees: “They just want their own blood.”

And so, when the Asian American community wants “their own blood” and ignores adoption and adoptees, how do the 350,000 Asian American adoptees living in the United States right now fit into the framework of Asian America? The answer is simple. Often, they don’t.

Presently there are over 350,000 adopted Asian Americans in the United States. Their numbers are steadily growing—in 2006, over 10,000 children were adopted into the United States from Asian countries. Currently, there are an estimated 100,000 Korean American adoptees living in the United States. This means that out of the 1.2 million Korean Americans living in the United States, over eight percent are adopted (U.S. Department of State). While eight percent isn’t a huge amount, it is significant to the makeup for Korean America.

Adopted Asian Americans are quickly becoming a significant part of the racial landscape of Asian America. So why, then, does the Asian American community act like they don’t exist?

The Asian American community and the Asian American adoptee community rarely, if ever, associate with each other. Why is this? Why is there so little communication and support between Asian American communities and the adoptive community? Why is there such a lack of representation of non-adopted Asians in adoptee groups and events? Even on campus, there are no active Asian American adoptee groups. In fact, if you were to ask the Asian American community at Cal if they even know of any Asian American adoptees, they might be able to think of only one person. How can this be, in a school with 34,000 students?

To put things into perspective, consider this: of the approximately 250,000 Hmong Americans living in the United States (pbs.org), there are roughly fifty at UC Berkeley. However, while their numbers may be small, there are two Hmong American students on the staff of hardboiled and Hmong Americans are referenced three times in the last issue of hardboiled, with two of the articles being devoted entirely to Hmong American issues and news. Well, then, how about the Asian American adoptees?

“ [...] we can’t keep trying to lump ourselves together with non-adopted Asian-Americans like we’re exactly like them. ”

Over 350,000 strong in the United States, there must be a good number of Asian American adoptees attending UC Berkeley, especially considering the fact that nearly all Asian American adoptees are adopted by financially stable, married parents who must complete a rigorous process in order to adopt a child—an average of 2 years of interviews and background checks and a cost of anywhere from \$15,000 to \$30,000 depending on the agency (holtintl.org). If this is the case, then where is the representation of the Asian American adoptees? Where are their voices? Why are they not active in Asian American issues and events, both in the community and on campus?

Tom Sollitt, a fourth-year Korean American adoptee, explains why he doesn’t take an active role in the Asian American community: “I don’t see myself as part of the...Asian American community. I am more like a visitor who needs to be brought into it as a tourist.”

On campus, there is one organization that works with international adoptees. G2-China Care sponsors a mentorship program for adoptees in the Bay Area and also fundraises for disabled orphans in China, working with the organization Families With Children From China. However, while the group considers itself an adoption-focused group, none of the members are adoptees and the members do not address adoption-related issues with the mentees because, according to Rebecca Kao, co-director of G2-China Care, “these girls don’t want to be constantly reminded that they are adopted.” Instead, G2-China Care seeks to provide the younger girls with positive Asian American role models.

However, in considering G2-China Care, one must consider the absence of adoptee mentors. Why are they not part of the mentorship program? Why aren’t positive Asian American adoptee role models coming forward to mentor the younger adoptees?

Yes, it is important for young adoptees to interact with older Asian Americans in order to gain a sense of cultural and ethnic identity as an Asian American. But however, it’s also important for Asian American adoptee mentors to help the mentees to explore their specific identity as an Asian American adoptee, and how this identity fits in within the larger Asian American community.

And so while it is promising that members of the Asian American community at Cal have stepped up to work with Asian American adoptees, the issue of disconnect between the adoptee community and the Asian American community still remains. It’s apparent in the fact that while Rebecca Kao is working with young adoptees in the Bay Area, she doesn’t actually know of any adoptees on campus.

How can this be?

Even within an adoptee-focused organization, the subject of adoption is still unmentionable and the adoptees themselves are still invisible. Where are the adoptees? Where is the communication?

Is adoption is such a taboo subject that the Asian American community as a whole doesn’t even want to open it up for dialogue, much less interact with adoptees? Is it that non-adopted Asian Americans don’t consider adoptees to be “like them” and choose not to interact with them? Or is it that Asians and Asian Americans feel guilty that the adoptees were adopted internationally, usually by Caucasian parents? Is it that non-adopted Asian Americans only have two feelings towards Asian American adoptees—pity or disgust? All of these reasons have been used to explain why there is little to no communication between the Asian American community and the adoptive community. Are the reasons true? Who knows? There is probably truth in all of them, but there is no definite answer as to why there is a disconnect between the two communities. What is definite, however, is the effect this disconnect has on many of the adoptees.

Marissa Tullock, a Korean American adoptee, says she sometimes struggles with fitting in among other Asian Americans. “Where I grew up, there weren’t that many Asians at all, so when I met my friend Kevin we were both really excited because we were both Asian and could be friends.” However, Kevin, who is Lao, quickly lost his excitement. “When he found out that I was adopted and my parents are white, he said, ‘Oh, never mind...you’re not really Asian.’” Tullock was confused. “When you’re adopted, you’re not really Asian,” she says. “You just feel different [from other Asians]. It’s like, yeah, I’m Asian, but I don’t have any clue about how to be Asian—I just happen to be in an Asian body.”

“ [...] you just don’t talk about those kinds of things. ”

Another Korean American adoptee reflects about how she feels she will never belong among Koreans. “When I got [to college], I started going to Korean events—you know, clubs, seminars, conferences, everything I could find that had to do with being Korean. I thought that finally at college I could step away from being the ‘adopted girl’ and find other Koreans and be Korean with them. But I was wrong. It was hard. I didn’t speak the language, I didn’t know the customs or the culture, and I didn’t know anyone in the clubs. I didn’t fit in and it made me really sad because I had wanted to badly to find ‘my people.’” She is quick to add, however, that the Koreans she met weren’t necessarily unfriendly, but that “we were just different. I thought I could fit in but I couldn’t. It wasn’t my problem or their problem—it was just the reality of being an adoptee and the nature of the Korean American community.”

While some of the adoptees felt unwelcome or like they don’t belong in the Asian American community, even more adoptees have never even had contact with other Asian Americans.

Jenny Worcester, a Chinese American adoptee, explains how she has never been conscious of the fact that she is Asian American. “I grew up in a part of Oregon that was all white, and so I never even thought of myself as Asian. I don’t truly identify with...being Asian yet, because I haven’t been around enough Asians to know what Asian culture is. Discovering my roots has always taken a backseat to other things in my life.”

However, the internal struggle for identity comes sooner or later for almost all Asian American adoptees.

“As I grew older and went to college,” Lewis Reining, a Vietnamese American adoptee, explains, “My sense of who I am morphed and changed many times before solidifying and growing strong. I started to look at it more like I’m part Vietnamese, I’m part American, and I’m an adoptee. Not just one, but all three.”

This self-awareness also came to the Korean American adoptee who felt she could never fit in among other Korean Americans. “After a while stopped trying to ‘find myself’ and instead just simply accepted myself—I’m a Korean American adoptee, which is its own entity, similar to the way ‘hapa’ people have carved out their own identity. I’m not simply Korean, because I didn’t grow up with Korean culture and I do not speak the language. I’m not simply American, because I have an Asian face and therefore my experiences living in America have been racialized my entire life—how others view me and treat me are directly related to the fact that I am Asian. And also I’m an adoptee, because I’ve struggled my entire life to understand how I fit into America, how I fit in with other Asians and other Koreans, and because of the fact that yes, I was relinquished at birth and no, I don’t completely know where I ‘came from.’”

And what is needed for adoptee communities and Asian American communities to have a better understanding of themselves? “We need a voice,” she continued. “We are our own people, and we can’t keep trying to lump ourselves together with non-adopted Asian Americans like we’re exactly like them. We can’t keep trying to live up to this racialized ideal of what it means to be Korean American, or Chinese American, or Pilipino American. Yes, we are Asian American. Yes, we are part of the Asian American community. But the fact that we are part of the Asian American community is an indication of the changing definition of what it means to be Asian American... The face of Asian America looks vastly different than it did in the past—now we have new immigrants, refugees, people who are fifth or sixth or seventh generation, hapa people, adoptees. Asian Americans and Asian America needs to realize this... Our community is changing, and in order for us [adoptees] to be recognized, we [adoptees] need a voice. Of course, this is hard to do because we [adoptees] are spread out across the country and some adoptees are not interested yet in claiming their Asian American identity... But hopefully in the future, and I believe it will happen soon, Asian American adoptees will get their voice, and the Asian American community will realize that it is changing—that it has changed and will continue to change—and this is absolutely crucial for our community to move forward.”



# WONG FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST

by eunice kwon

A lone Asian American woman sits on stage, surrounded by a nest of yarn, happily knitting as the audience shuffles in to fill the seats. The ceilings are decorated with unfinished knitting projects and Judy Garland's "Put On a Happy Face" fills the room.

The setting seems incongruous to the somber issue of suicide, depression and mental illness among Asian American women -- the topic of the show I've come to watch, *Wong Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Held at the La Peña Cultural Center in Berkeley, this one-woman theatre production, written and performed by Kristina Wong, has received excellent reviews by many respected publications such as *bitch* magazine.

Naturally, I have high expectations. The musical theatre soundtracks and the unfinished legwarmer that droops above my head only increase my anticipation.

By now, I am confident that the woman on stage must be Kristina Wong, the same woman whose face is plastered on the posters in the lobby. Wong stands up and introduces herself with enough enthusiasm to scare a small child. She welcomes us to her "landmark, historic show" and adds a disclaimer that no one in her family has ever suffered from mental illness or depression. "In fact," she reassures us, "no one in China has ever suffered from mental illness or depression."

"It's fiction. FICTION."

This is a central point in the play. Wong ironically goes out of the way to insist that she has no real connection to any of these issues. In this way, she points out how many Asian American women fall into the trap of "fictionalizing" their lives to save face. "We're very good at brushing

things under the rug and denying that this issue exists because it is considered a sign of failure or weakness," Wong says in a post-production question session. "In touring the show I had heard one Asian American psychological counselor describe how he never knew that he had a brother who had killed himself, because his family had hid all traces of his brother's existence after he died. They hid all the pictures," Wong explains. "I use the motif several times of my character saying, 'I'm fine, I have this under control,' when the exact opposite is true. And this is how I feel a lot of women or people 'fictionalize' their realities. By saying, 'I'm fine. I'm fine.' instead of what's really going on."

The stigma of depression and mental illness causes many Asian American women to refrain from seeking help until it's too late. While Asian American women ages 15 to 24 have the highest suicide rates of women in any race in that age group, this high percentage does not correlate with an equally daunting percentage of depression and mental illness among Asian American women. The issue then becomes why so many Asian American women prefer death to showing weakness or admitting they need help.

Wong pulls up famous Asian American women and attempts to dissect their histories in order to get a better understanding of a life of an Asian American woman. Connie Chung and Lucy Liu's lives seem to be perfect and flat, made up of a string of one accomplishment after another. The other famous Asian American women she finds online are Asia Carrera and Anabelle Chong, two porn stars who both had tumultuous lives but later went on to do great things like pioneer on-screen triple penetration. Her logical conclusion is that an Asian American woman can either be perfect or be a porn star.

It is a bit of an exaggeration, but it supports her point well. "There's an assumption that Asian women are genetically inclined to have their shit together, that we are naturally neat, perfect, smart, whatever. In pop culture, we are either perfect (newscasters, actors, novelists) or porn stars. Where are the women in between?" Wong wonders.

The show reminds us they do exist. The insecure Korean teenager who excels in school but struggles with her body image, the Chinese woman who is in an abusive relationship, the Cambodian grandmother who still has traumatic flashbacks from her childhood, and countless others that have committed suicide for reasons still unknown to their family and friends.

This is only a tiny segment in the entire production. In the rest of the show, Wong yells, cries, sings, talks to the leg warmer, and threatens members of the audience. She passes around her application to get free psychiatric help that claims that she has been raped by chickens and molested as a fetus. She dresses up in a coat made of USPS envelopes and creates her own fictional world where everyone is chipper, depressed, bipolar or just plain crazy. She is pure energy and emotion as she darts from subject to subject, attempting to save every Asian American woman from the clutches of suicide, depression and mental illness.

Of course, she fails. The show ends with her exhausted and confused. She takes off her cardigan and pants to reveal a patient's gown underneath and walks off the stage.

The show poignantly conveys the idea that there is no single solution, no pill to swallow to end depression and mental illness among Asian American women. It cautions the Asian American community to refrain from forcing themselves into a dichotomy in which they are either perfect or sick, good or bad, sane or crazy.

"We're all ill," explains Wong, "We live in a world that is fundamentally bipolar, manic and schizophrenic. It's on all of us."

Background image courtesy of  
kristinawong.com



# Hip Hop:

by yer yang

## Living Within the Rhythm, Freeing My Soul



Not quite "American" nor what our parents call "culturally acceptable," we go on a crusade to find our identity and a voice of our own. Where many of us end up after suffering from a cultural clash is at the doorstep of hip hop; it takes us in and becomes our escape, companion and resolve.

Popularly seen as a part of an African American culture in inner cities, hip hop has for the past few decades also influenced the lives of other people of color, including Asian American youth. Although often excluded from consideration when we think about urban communities, Asian Americans represent a significant number of those who have been pushed into low

group he can relate to. "If you listen to Frontline [a hip hop group from Richmond], they talk about stuff that happens in Richmond."

Current mentee Nalee Sanpalan expresses her sentiments as well. "I listen to hip hop music because sometimes when I'm goin' through rough times, all I want is to listen to something that I can relate to. Hip hop has always been there for me."

SEAYL is an organization which strives to expose these students to their histories while also promoting higher education. It started as a result of the STOP THE VIOLENCE summit, which has been held annually in Richmond for the past few years. This summit started a few years ago after a high school student was shot and killed in a Richmond drive-by. Since its first year, the summit has been a successful way to get community members to gather in a space to firmly stand against violence. This year's summit was on October 27th and had a very successful turnout.

In addition to the organizing of this conference and the many other activities they engage in, many SEAYL students are also involved in BEATZ, a musical program which allows them an opportunity to fuse hip hop music with traditional music. Rather than producing this music to distribute, the students use this time to just put down what they feel. They use the BEATZ program as a time for self-expression. Having something tangible that they can claim to be their own empowers their voices. For these youth, being given an opportunity to speak means being given a chance to finally be heard. In a way, the music that they produce is also a counter of the cultural clash that many SEA youth inevitably encounter.

Instead of continuing a battle of identifying with only American or Southeast Asian, these students pronounce their interconnectedness to these two different cultures by fusing them through music. Although hip hop is more or less seen as a part of a black culture rather than a component of the American culture, for these students, this black culture that is predominant in the inner cities is their American identity.

As demonstrated by some of the SEAYL students, hip hop is more than just a medium for self-expression but can help keep a relationship healthy as well. Mory Saengsourith, a current member of SEAYL, describes the positive impact his participation in the production of music has had on his relationship with his parents. "[My parents] respect [my work]. They say music is music and they support me because it keeps me out of trouble and [they know] it helps me through life. They know I love music and singing [and] they want me to be happy with it." Mory and other SEA individuals from Richmond have proven that if they take the initiative to learn their stories and those of their parents, they can stop the generation gap from growing and even possibly decrease it.

Despite the positive messages some artists portray, there is hip hop music that is seen as inappropriate because of the explicit content it may include. Some hip hop music promotes violence while other blatantly

disrespect women. These students, however, have stated that they do not agree with the negative messages that some artists depict. The SEAYL mentees have made it clear that they consciously pick and choose what they consume. Whether it be sappy hip hop songs

"It helps me through life in any situation. As an artist, I can relieve my pain, thoughts, and feelings by making music and writing lyrics. It's just when I start writing I just can't stop. I just love it!"

-- Mory Saengsourith

about a broken heart or living in a neighborhood where it can be difficult to stay optimistic, it is evident that hip hop plays an immense role in these students' lives. What moves them the most is listening to music where artists talk about people who struggle in economically impoverished cities. When they hear such music, they feel as if their stories are finally being told. For these youth, acknowledgement means visibility. It seems what these SEAYL students want most is a voice. Hip hop gives them this voice whether it comes from a mainstream artist who indirectly talks about them or from the music these students produce themselves. For the SEAYL students, hip hop is more than just rap music; it is what keeps them motivated to continue



Some of the SEAYL students contribute to the SASC benefit concert in the spring of 2007. Photo courtesy of Mory Saengsourith

income communities. Many of these youth, especially those from the inner cities of the Bay Area, have since a very young age embraced hip hop culture.

Among these Asian American youth, there is a particular group that I have been acquainted with and find myself extremely attached to. Since spring of 2007, a group of Southeast Asian youth has been taking BART every Saturday from Richmond to Cal for a mentorship program with SASC, a student group on campus. Being a mentor myself, I felt as if I was hanging out with old friends from high school again because I also grew up in an urban community as a Southeast Asian youth. While I see so much potential in these students, I also see the struggles that they must encounter in their day-to-day activities. Out of curiosity, I asked them what kept them hopeful and empowered and found a large part of the answer to be music, more specifically hip hop. For this reason, aside from connecting to them via our history of the "Vietnam War", I feel I can also connect with them through music.

Although I grew up listening to hip hop, I myself never really saw the music I listened to as a form of empowerment until I came to Cal. These students however, have realized that hip hop is more than just music but a medium through which those who struggle tell their stories. It provides an opportunity for others to listen and relate. Hip hop not only brings people together through physical acts such as dance, but also unites minds and reminds us of the interconnectedness of our experiences and struggles. One of the SEAYL students, Souriya Chanthanasak, mentions a hip hop



SEAYL mentees with SASC mentors at this year's STOP THE VIOLENCE summit.

fighting adversity  
As Mory Saengsourith puts it, "It helps my through life in any situation. As an artist, I can relieve my pain, thoughts, and feelings by making music and writing lyrics. It's just when I start writing I just can't stop. I just love it!"

# Race To Disgrace:

## Countdown of Asian American sellouts

# #5 Kenneth Eng

by pauline size

Kenneth Eng, who affectionately calls himself an Asian supremacist, peaks *hardboiled's* "Race to Disgrace" list of Asian American sellouts at number five. A New York based so-called "journalist" and science-fiction writer, Eng is best known for his *AsianWeek* column, "God of the Universe." *hardboiled* is here to dish out five reasons why Eng is living in another universe and just doesn't get it.

## REASON #1

Topping the list is the article that made his name well known, "Why I Hate Blacks," published on February 23, 2007 in *AsianWeek*. Let's examine some of his reasons for why he hates blacks:

"I would argue that blacks are weak-willed. They are the only race that has been enslaved for 300 years. It's unbelievable that it took them that long to fight back."

That's a pretty bold statement to make for someone who has never been enslaved.

"In high school, I only remember one black student ever attending any of my honors and AP courses. And that student was caught cheating."

I won't even allow myself to comment on the part about cheating. What I will say is that Eng fails to look at the social and institutional structures that resulted in only one black student ever being in his honors and AP courses. Where are you from Eng? That might have a lot to do with it—ever heard of urban renewal or redlining? Also, what does it say when a so-called "journalist" will use his personal experience to make broad generalizations about a race of people? Yeah...it doesn't say much about him.

The title of Kenneth Eng's *AsianWeek* column. Courtesy of [asianweek.com](http://asianweek.com)



## REASON #2

Before his infamous "Why I Hate Blacks" article was published, Eng contributed to the newspaper with an equally lackluster piece entitled, "Why I Hate Asians." This piece of work ends with, "I love the Asian race, but every race has its inferiors." When you start ranking people, which is ultimately what he is doing by indicating that there are "inferior" people among us, it starts to smell a lot like the work of anthropologists who spent decades trying rank the races in order of "superiority." You know we aren't down with that at *hardboiled*.



The infamous Kenneth Eng.  
Photo courtesy of [newyorkpost.com](http://newyorkpost.com)

## REASON #3

Another dim-witted article published in *AsianWeek* entitled, "Proof That Whites Inherently Hate Us" takes us to reason number three. Some of what he actually says in this article sounds dead-on ...WRONG. He notes, "Yet Rosa Parks was pretty much honored as a hero just because she refused to give up her seat. This is curious because Vincent Chin died to defend his race. Why hasn't he been given an award?" No doubt, Vincent Chin died because of a hate crime but don't belittle what Rosa Parks did. Anyway, how can Eng even compare the two as if they are the same type of events?

## REASON #4

His constant referrals to "we" or "my people" in his articles are problematic. Take, for example, "We slaughtered the Russians in the Japanese-Russo War," or "I have had fistfights and verbal altercations with many who discriminated against me and *my people*." Sorry Eng, I will never be a part of "your people" and don't act like you had anything to do with the Russo-Japanese War.

## REASON #5

This leads into my last point about Eng—his arrest for threatening his neighbor. The *San Francisco Chronicle* indicated that in late April of 2007, Eng "allegedly approached the mother and daughter as they stood in their driveway with their pet and said, 'If your dog bites me, I will kill you and your family.' He then called the mother fat and lazy and swung a hammer at her and the dog, according to the Queens district attorney's office." From this arrest, he was sentenced to a twelve-month mental health program.

\*Please note: This arrest has nothing to do with the other crazy shit that he has said or done, including threatening to kill students at New York University.

As much as most of us just want to forget about him and his legacy of dreadful and appalling articles in *AsianWeek*, I can't help but think in the back of my head, "What was this guy thinking?" But then I look at reason number five and I can only hope he's getting the proper help he so desperately needs. Nonetheless, Eng will always be a sellout to *hardboiled*.