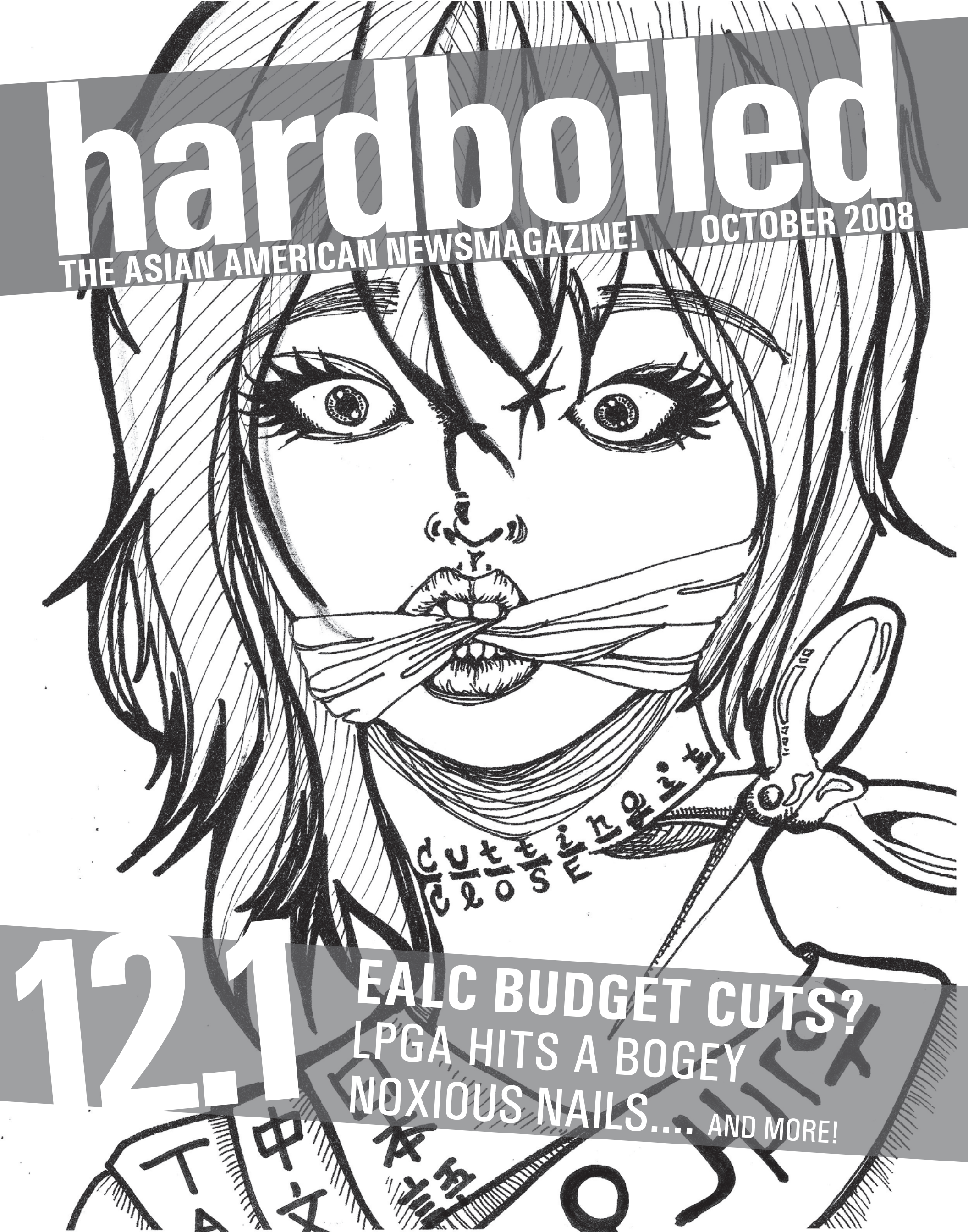


hardboiled

THE ASIAN AMERICAN NEWSMAGAZINE! OCTOBER 2008

12.1

EALC BUDGET CUTS?
LPGA HITS A BOGEY
NOXIOUS NAILS.... AND MORE!



12.1 **hardboiled**

OCT 2008

hb meetings

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COVER ART

naomi oren

Cover: "Close Call!"

Last May, the East Asian Language and Cultures department (EALC) faced a proposed budget cut that garnered tremendous student protest against this measure. The cover illustrates how cutting a crucial department that fosters educational bridges between students and Asian cultures leaves students speechless -literally. For more information, read *A System at Fault* on page 7 by Cecilia Tran.

editors' notes

Dear reader,

As you peruse the contents of our publication, I realize that some questions may arise. For example: "Why is there a nearly headless woman on the cover?", "What is **hardboiled**?", "Why **"hardboiled"** ?", and near the end of the issue perhaps: "Where is the FREAKING Sudoku?"

Our cover is a response to the tenuous state of the East Asian Language and Cultures department here in Berkeley (explained in detail by the lovely Cecilia on page 7). Inadequate funding threatens the very existence of many courses that are integral in upholding the values of liberal education. Essentially, the budget cut neglects our histories, silences the tongues and voices of our predecessors, and frankly, is an all encompassing slap to the face.

As our campus' only Asian American newsmagazine, we are here to address API issues that are overlooked by mainstream media. Asian Americans comprise more than 40% of the students on campus and we are here to provide a medium for your voices to be heard. The term "**hardboiled**" is a reference to the 1992 John Woo flick and its tough detectives, pursuit of truth, and simple badass-ness.

Finally, sorry folks, there will be no Sudoku, but I'm sure that after reading this issue you will find it in your beautiful hearts to forgive us.

alice tse
internal managing editor

I joined **hardboiled** with a false sense of security. I thought I was committing myself to becoming a part of an organized, established publication – one in which I would be a shiny new screw in a giant machine that had been running smoothly for over a decade. This mindset quickly crumbled under the chaos that characterized my first semester with **hardboiled**.

Since then, more order has been introduced into our production process, but there's still a comfortable messiness about **hardboiled** that I've come to appreciate over time, especially while working with this year's staff. We talk too much, show up late to the meetings (okay, so that might just be me), and at times, we disagree. We disagree on many issues, from how to run our publication, to politics, to whether the cupcakes at our staff retreat were insufferably dry or mostly edible. I don't agree with everything that is written in this issue and I still stand by my stance that those cupcakes were unacceptable, but if there's one thing **hardboiled** has taught me, it's that journalism isn't all about presenting the correct angle, or taking the proper stance, or winning over your readers; sometimes it's about getting to express yourself and putting your ideas out there. It's taught me to stop being a snot head and appreciate the humanness of journalism, with its capacity for error and for brilliance that can't be produced from even the most well-oiled machines.

Whether you agree or disagree with the words printed in this issue, I hope that you can appreciate **hardboiled** for what it is – a publication to provide coverage for Asian Pacific American issues, but also a place for Asian Pacific American students to take risks and share what's on their minds.

eunice kwon
story editor

Liked what you read? Want to join our staff? Want to send us angry letters? Then contact us!

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Pale in Comparison

by montague hung

Deconstructing Senator McCain's Choice for Vice President

Election 2008

GO VOTE!



When considering which ticket to support, one needs to know the facts about the candidates. Although assumptions should not be made, Senator John McCain is 72 and has had four malignant melanomas removed. According to the American Cancer Society, only 66% of men who have a Stage IIA melanoma removed survive within ten years; Senator McCain had his Stage IIA melanoma removed in 2000. Therefore, the real implications of a Sarah Palin presidency has to be examined given Senator McCain's age and health issues. Inflammatory topics such as abortion rights and gay marriage rights will be avoided in this article because a) people's stances on such topics are pre-established and are rarely subject to change and b) the president has relatively little impact on such issues as Congress is the only body that can pass national legislation on those topics. The following analysis on Palin will instead be done based upon her ability to understand issues of national importance and her leadership qualities.

Before becoming the GOP vice presidential hopeful, Palin had been governor of Alaska for a year and previously served as mayor of Wasilla. She rose to power on a platform of being a reformer of political ethics. Once in office, she replaced a lot of veteran officials with her own new team, claiming that she was cleaning up corrupt politics. In addition, to help the city expand its infrastructure she passed road and sewer bonds while cutting property taxes and raising the sales tax. When asked about her ability to be vice president, Palin cited her experience as mayor to be the foundation of her leadership skills. At the Republican National Convention, Palin backed up her executive credential by telling how as governor she constructed the deal to forward a gas pipeline project that would lead America in the direction towards energy independence. Palin also claims to have continued her ethics reform crusade by standing up to oil companies and their lobbyists. In addition, Palin sold the private jet and fired the private chef that was reserved for the Governor of Alaska, in an attempt to erase unnecessary costs. While these accomplishments are newsworthy, there are many things about Palin's past experience that suggests she is not ready for the role of vice president.

As a mayor of a city numbering 5,500, Palin's inexperience is clear as her largest project was actually building a new ice rink for the city. The mayor of Wasilla also had the responsibility of overseeing the library and history museum. During her term, Palin asked the local librarian about the process to censure books and fired both librarians and historians who disagreed with her policies. Palin also has a habit of appointing personal friends to government positions and giving them extremely high salaries. Franci Havemeister, a high school classmate of Palin, was appointed to the \$95,000-a-year directorship of the State Division of Agriculture. Additionally, Palin's magnum opus gas pipeline may actually never materialize. The project is very much insecure as construction has yet to be started and federal approval will not be given for several

years. Even Palin's image as an ethics reformer is tainted. She is currently being investigated by Alaska's legislative council on charges of abuse of power. The charge brought against Palin is that she fired her public safety commissioner illegitimately because he would not fire her former brother in law. The cases of the former librarians and public safety commissioner reveal a style of leadership that is very much founded upon loyalty and intolerance for divergent ideas. The appointment of friends to positions of power to ensure loyalty to the executive is eerily reminiscent of George W. Bush's administration. Furthermore, Palin's strong position against earmarks (money given from Congress to local projects) as corrupt is extremely hypocritical seeing as how Governor Palin actually requested in the form of earmarks the most amount of money per capita out of all the states. Overall, Palin's experience as an executive in Alaska fails to demonstrate strong leadership qualities.

The biggest issue for this upcoming election seems to be foreign policy and Palin displays little talent in that area. During her much hyped interview with Charles Gibson on ABC, Palin showed not only ignorance but also questionable judgment. While her willingness to engage in diplomacy over the issue of a possible nuclear Iran is admirable, she seems to be at lost in other issues. During Gibson's questions concerning U.S.-Russian relations, Palin's view was ambiguous because while she said that she wanted to avoid a second Cold War, she also stated that America needed to be "vigilant" against Russia's advances in Georgia. To even leave open the possibility of war with Russia is an extremely dangerous position. In addition, America is at war against terror and the president needs to know how to effectively combat terrorism. However, the following is an excerpt from Palin's interview:

Gibson: "Do you agree with the Bush doctrine?"

Palin: "In what respect, Charlie?"

Gibson: "The Bush—well, what do you—what do you interpret it to be?"

Palin: "His world view."

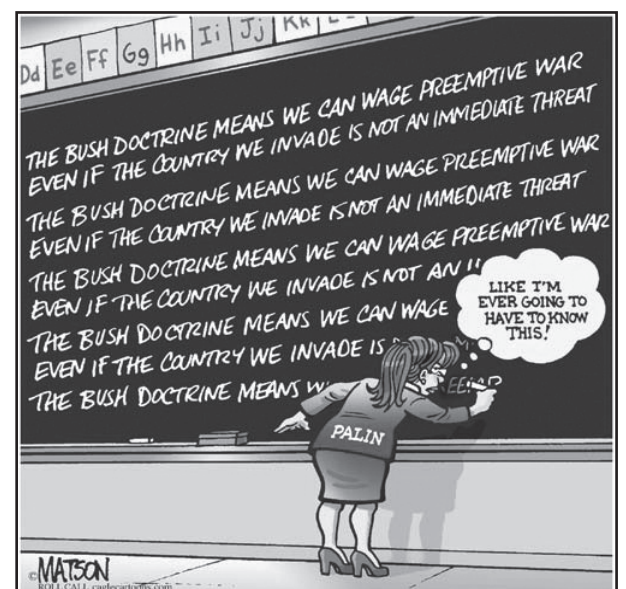
Exasperated, Gibson finally explained Palin that the Bush doctrine is the philosophy that America has the right to engage in preemptive war for anticipatory self defense. The Bush doctrine also includes a philosophy that emphasizes unilateral action, a "with us or against us" mindset, and a mission to spread democracy. When Palin's ignorance on the Bush doctrine was lifted, she showed that she supported it. Palin responded to a question regarding the possibility of an invasion of Pakistan by saying, "We must not blink, Charlie, in making those tough decisions of where we go and even who we target." This attitude of unblinking resolve to the mission is the same attitude that led to the disastrous and baseless war in Iraq. After so many years of failed foreign policy based on firm resolve, it would seem wiser instead to conduct foreign policy with an open mind and careful considerations of policy consequences.

Palin also seems to be confused with the situation of Iraq. When addressing a brigade of soldiers who were being deployed to Iraq, Palin said that they were going to "defend the innocent from the enemies who planned and carried out and rejoiced in the death of thousands of Americans." However, the link between Iraq and the terrorist attacks on 9/11 has been discredited numerous times. Palin also mentioned that she sees "victory in sight in Iraq." It is unclear as to what criterion a victory should be measured as, but it is clear that the situation in Iraq has actually not improved for a while now. In Iraq, anti-American animosity continues to grow and terrorist networks such as Al-Qaeda continues to operate. Palin's claim brings back memories of President Bush's own declaration of victory five years ago.

It is tiring and frustrating to see Asian Americans continue to treat politics with ambivalence. Who is elected president clearly will affect everyone. There were Asian Americans whose security was affected during the attacks on 9/11. There were Asian Americans affected by the government's inability to provide clear aid to Hurricane Katrina victims. Asian Americans cannot escape the far reach of presidential decisions. Sarah Palin's ability to manage a country of 300 million has yet to be seen, but her past experiences and current views are clear. To all Asian Americans: don't let the next four years be shaped without your input. Go vote.

They say never to talk about politics or religion, but it is necessary today to address a need. The problem is that Asian Americans are not voting. The dominating stereotype is that Asian Americans are politically apathetic because they think politics is uninteresting and does not affect them. This is not reflective of all Asian Americans, but the statistics do perpetuate the stereotype. Asian Americans have the lowest voter turnout among all major racial groups. According to the U.S. Census Bureau in for the 2004 election, 44% of voting age Asian American citizens voted compared to 67% of non Hispanic whites, 60% of blacks, and 47% of Hispanics.

It is time for change. Asian Americans need to realize that politics do affect them and that only by active participation in the voting process then will their interests be advanced. Asian American citizens can no longer sit politically idle. The stakes have never been higher and contrary to popular belief, every vote counts; the results of the 2000 election by itself speaks volumes of the importance of voting. As of Monday, September 22, the Democratic ticket leads the Republican ticket by less than 2%. The next president will lead the new (or continue the current) era of American politics and their impact will without a doubt be felt by each and every single American. Whether the impact appears in taxes, education standards, the war on terrorism, or the economy, the decisions of the future president will shape American life for the next four years. With what is becoming a close election, it is time for Asian Americans to make a difference in politics and make our voices be heard.



<http://politicalhumor.about.com/od/sarahpalin/ig/Sarah-Palin-Cartoons/Remedial-Republican.htm>

Attacking Athletic Stereotypes:

Asian American Olympians

by jin zhang *Then and Now*

If I were to ask you to name one Asian American Olympic medalist within the past 10 years, who would you name?

Michelle Kwan and ...? Let's face it, Asian Americans are not known for their superior athletic abilities. Sure, we may be constantly labeled as "over-achievers" in school, but such stereotype always mysteriously disappears in the PE class. In the world of sports, Asian Americans are stereotyped as small, weak, and passive. However, in the past 60 years, the Olympics demonstrated that there is a place for Asian Americans.

The first Asian American Olympic gold medalist is Dr. Samuel "Sammy" Lee a diver from Fresno, California. Dr. Lee was born in 1920 to Korean American parents. He went to University of Southern California School of Medicine where he received his M.D. This kind of academic accomplishment from an Asian American may not have come as a surprise to most of us, but two Olympic gold medals? Definitely!

Dr. Lee won his first Olympic gold medal at the 1948 London Games in 10m Platform, along with a bronze medal in 3m Springboard. Four years later, at the 1952 Helsinki Games, Dr. Lee won his second Olympic gold medal again in 10m Platform, making him the first man to win gold medals in platform diving at two consecutive in Olympic Games. Dr. Lee's amazing performance shocked America and changed the way people view Asian Americans.

Before Michelle Kwan made her debut in figure skating, there was Kristi Yamaguchi, one of the most recognized athletes in the world. Yamaguchi is a third-generation Japanese American from Hayward, California. Her mother was actually born in an internment camp during World War II. In 1992 Albertville, France Winter Olympic Games, Yamaguchi won a gold medal in Women's Singles, and the first Asian American female athlete to win an Olympic gold medal.

In this past Beijing Summer Olympic Games, a handful of Asian American athletes found seats on Team USA.

Raj Bhavsar, 28, is an American artistic gymnast of Indian descent from Houston, Texas. Prior to the Olympic Games, Bhavsar has represented the U.S. in the 2001 and 2003 World Artistic Gymnastics Championships, and won silver medals with his team both times. He participated in the 2004 Athens Summer Olympic Games only as an alternate and suffered the same fate in the 2008 Games. Reflecting upon the disappointments, Bhavsar said that "being an alternate is not an easy position. It's difficult to train sometimes when you don't know what that training is truly for or whether you'll get that chance. It can be a disheartening experience."

However, his persistence paid off after Paul Hamm announced his withdrawal from the Games due to injury. Bhavsar replaced him and was given the opportunity to rise from the status of an alternate to a competing athlete. Bhavsar is known for his strength and consistency. Like Paul Hamm, his best events are rings, vault, parallel bars and the pommel horse.

As a part of the U.S. Men's Gymnastics Team, Bhavsar received a bronze medal after China and Japan, making him the third Indian American Olympic medalist following the footsteps of Mohini Bhardwaj (2004 Women's Team All-Around Silver medalist) and Alexi Grewal (1984 Men's Individual Road Race Gold Medalist).

The other reason that Asian American athletes seem to be forgotten in the sports scene is that the media often overlooks the fact that some Olympic medalists are half-Asian and regard themselves as members of the Asian American community.

For many Olympic fans out there, it may be a surprise to hear that the gold medal decathlete Bryan Clay, 28 identifies himself as an Asian American athlete. Clay's mother is a Japanese immigrant, and his father was African American.

He was raised by his mother in Hawaii, under the influence of traditional Japanese culture. "We ate ozoni [traditional Japanese rice soup] on New Year's Eve. My life was very Japanese," says Clay in an interview. He received a silver medal in decathlon at the 2004 Athens Games and won the gold medal in Beijing. His gold medal in the event also made him the world's greatest all-around athlete.

Furthermore, the media does not provide nearly enough coverage for the less popular sports such as table tennis and badminton. In the 2008 Beijing Games, the U.S. Badminton and Table Tennis team each sent out five members who are Asian-Americans.

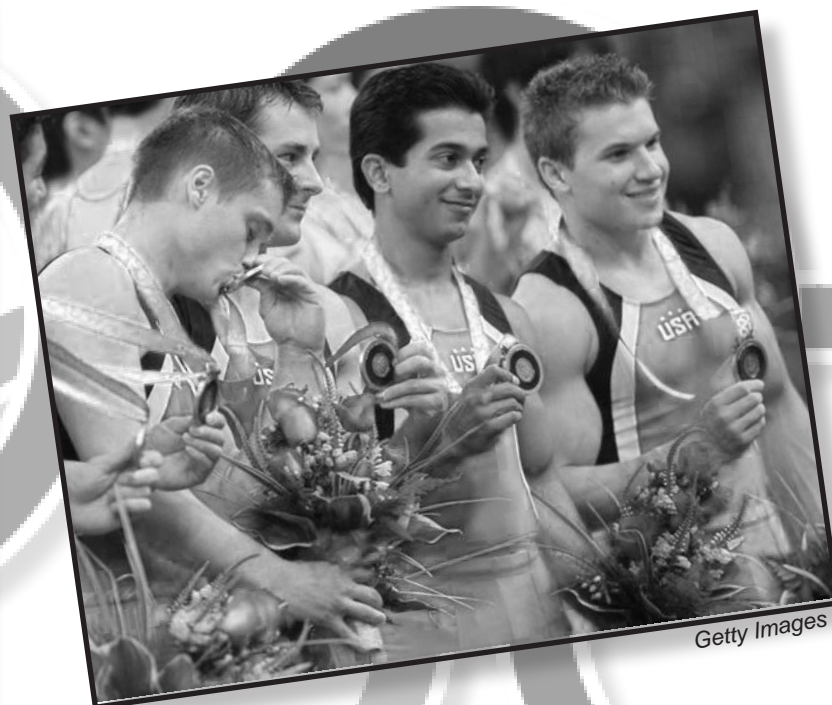
However, unlike football and baseball, table tennis and badminton appeals to only a small group of American audiences. Coincidentally, those sports happen to be where large numbers of Asian American athletes are concentrated. As a result, the sport hardly gets any air time on television.

Dr. Samuel Lee, Kristi Yamaguchi, Michelle Kwan, Raj Bhavsar, Bryan Clay, and all the other Asian American Olympians have opened the door for Asian American athletes, breaking the stereotype of bookworms and math geniuses. In the future, we hope to see more Asian American athletes competing in the international arena, taking home medals and demonstrating that there is a place for Asian Americans in sports.



Getty Images

The legendary Olympic figure skater Michelle Kwan.



Getty Images

Third Indian American Olympic medalist Raj Bhavsar, 28, stands with his team mates with their bronze medals for the Men's Gymnastic's Team Final.



Associated Press

Biracial athlete Bryan Clay, 28, emerges triumphant as the gold medalist in Track and Field at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.



LPGA hits a bogey

by annie cho

LPGA Language Policy



LPGA proposes English proficiency requirement

On Aug. 20, the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) made an announcement during a mandatory South Korean player meeting addressing a new proposed policy. LPGA commissioner Carolyn Bivens informed the players that beginning in 2009, all players who had been on tour for two years must pass an oral evaluation of their English skills, and that failure would result in a suspended membership. Information about the policy trickled out from this announcement before the LPGA had finished drafting a written version of the policy and the resulting public outrage caused them to nix the idea. Hilary Lunke, president of the Player Executive Committee, stated in *GolfWeek* that this initiative grew from the LPGA's concerns about the tour's appeal to American sponsors by being able to communicate with them without a translator. The LPGA insisted that the primary purpose of the policy was to help players maximize their earning power and promote the LPGA tour simultaneously.

Because 45 of the 121 international players on tour are South Korean, critics believe that this policy was an act of discrimination stemming from the fact that Asian players have won seven of the 24 LPGA events this year, including three of the four majors. The policy was first announced in a mandatory meeting that all 45 South Koreans attended. Commenting on the covert discrimination in the policy, second-year player Angela Park stated in *GolfWeek*, "The LPGA could come out and say that they only want 10 Koreans, but they're not." For the last several years, LPGA has stressed the importance of learning English but never gave signs of actually implementing harsh penalties for low English proficiency. It seems more than a little suspicious that the English policy was created now that players from Asia are dominating the game.

Fortunately, the policy did not go through because of outrage from the public and local lawmakers. Bivens said to the *International Herald Tribune* (IHT), "After hearing the concerns, we believe that there are other ways to achieve our shared objective of supporting and enhancing the business opportunities for every tour player." It is extremely surprising that the LPGA could try to pass a rule like this in our time. Sure, the arguments supporting the policy make sense; it would be beneficial for players to interact with sponsors and be able to give acceptance speeches without

a translator since the LPGA is an American tour. However, the penalty of suspension seems too harsh for the international players. California Assemblyman Ted Lieu stated, "I can only conclude this is borderline racist. It'd be like France requiring Lance Armstrong to pass a French test."

In addition, I'm disappointed at some of the reactions to this proposed rule as well. Although I am glad that most Americans opposed the rule to the point that the LPGA was forced to retract its statement, some people believed that English should be a requirement for international athletes, which makes me wonder what being an athlete is about. A subscriber to the IHT posed the question, "Does that mean if you're mute you can't play golf on the LPGA tour?" The question sounds ridiculous, and it underscores the point that a player's language ability should not jeopardize their eligibility for the LPGA or any other organization. Players should be judged by athletic ability and not penalized because of language barriers.

To a certain extent, it is understandable that the LPGA would propose a policy like this because it is true that professional golf tours depend heavily on corporate sponsors for their financial survival. Therefore, it would be logical that the players be able to communicate with the sponsors of the tour. Moreover, the sports industry these days is becoming more and more of an entertainment industry. However, demanding English proficiency under threat of suspension is not the right way to go about promoting a pro-American cultural experience. Furthermore, it must be noted that not all of the sponsors speak English and the LPGA plays in non-English speaking countries.

What is really frightening is the implication that such a statement could have been thought up at all. Is English proficiency a requirement for pro-American sentiment? Most international athletes are grateful for the opportunity to tour with LPGA, and when the proposed policy was announced, they made an effort to hide their feelings of unfairness, even saying that they would

take up tutoring to brush up their English skills for the oral examination. The LPGA did not elaborate on how this examination would play out, except that they expected the players to be able to speak "effective" English.

On a positive note, this incident has demonstrated that there are people out there who act as watchdogs to ensure that such a discriminatory policy is not passed. Bay area lawmakers railed the policy as a potential violation of state and/or federal anti-discrimination laws. State Senator Leland Yee stated in IHT, "In 2008, I didn't think an international group like the LPGA would come up with a policy like that." Also, Gerald D. Kim, a senior staff attorney for the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, stated in IHT, "Until they completely retract it, issue an apology to the players and the fans, I think we'll remain very concerned and interested in what happens." Bivens' announcement to retract the language policy came only two hours before the center planned a news conference in Los Angeles to demand that the LPGA overturn the policy.

While history has shown us that racial discrimination in sports has not been an unheard of phenomenon, no athletic organization has proposed any rules remotely resembling the LPGA's policy. Pat Courtney, a spokesman for major League Baseball, said that baseball would not consider such a policy because it wanted its players to be comfortable in interviews and wanted to respect their cultures. "Given the diverse nature of our sport, we don't require that players speak English. It's all about a comfort level," he said.

Although the LPGA has decided to retract this particular language policy, it is not completely ruling out the possibility of creating another one that will not incorporate a suspension penalty. The LPGA has a history of promoting pro-American culture and aiding in the professional development of its players, and this culture will continue to encourage members to learn English. Hopefully, any subsequent policies that the LPGA enacts will be in good taste. But even if the LPGA makes another blunder, I have full confidence that the community will still be there to rectify the problem.



<http://www.golfwallpapers.net/Images/Golf-Ball-Hole-Wallpaper.jpg>

SPREADING THE SOLUTION

by annie kim noguchi

From a decal to a nation-wide campaign, Team HBV talks about its rapid growth

February 2005. Fifteen students start the Jade Ribbon Campaign DeCal, dedicated to the awareness and prevention of Hepatitis B and liver cancer.

April 2005. The Jade Ribbon Campaign raises \$50,000 in a single fundraising event to fund medical missions to China.

September 2008. Three and a half years later, the Jade Ribbon Campaign has evolved into Team HBV and now operates at a national level with chapters across the United States at UC Berkeley, Harvard, Duke, Cornell, and UC Davis.

How did a DeCal of fifteen students develop into a national campaign with projects that include grant-writing, political advocacy, media production, and public health research?

Often, we talk about the programming or events that

organizations sponsor, or the achievements organizations have made. Rarely, however, do we ever hear the inside details about how to structure and run a successful organization. As important as the issues and causes are, a strong organization is also needed in order to advocate for these causes. Denis Lam, the original founder of the Jade Ribbon Campaign DeCal and Team HBV National, tells **hardboiled** how to create this.

When and how did you begin to expand beyond UC Berkeley?

Team HBV at UC Berkeley began as the "Jade Ribbon Campaign DeCal" which David Chao (Cal Alumnus) and I started in Spring 2005. A year later, I got in touch with my colleagues Amanda Wong (Cornell) and Jian Lin (Duke) who used to intern at the Asian Liver Center and we formulated the idea of creating official ALC chapters at colleges nationwide to address the hep B issue. That sounded like money so with a bit of blood and sweat and working with our University Administration and Colleges, it became reality soon after.

Why was it important for Team HBV to expand to a national level?

Expanding to a national level was a vision the original founders had since Day One. As with any successful movement or campaign, expanding the message beyond borders and other forms of social constructs is the natural result of coalition building efforts. Team HBV's vision is to have college students nationwide come together to raise their voices about the often-overlooked issue of hepatitis B and liver cancer endemic to ethnic minority communities in their own campus and local communities, their own state, their nation, and their world - in that order.

What are your ultimate goals, both terms of your campaigns and in terms of the organization and future of Team HBV?

To eradicate Hepatitis B (HBV) worldwide. And I'm confident we can see this happening within our lifetimes - how exciting is that?

A vaccine that can prevent uninfected people from getting HBV has already existed for over 20 years. It wasn't until the 1990s that the U.S. started making newborn HBV vaccinations mandatory. But vaccination policies alone won't do the trick. Education and testing (which we're strong advocates of) must also be emphasized to address the 400 million chronic carriers in the world that have already been infected - once tested, an infected individual will not only be able to receive care and treatment that will allow them to retain normal lives, but will also end one strand of the disease from being passed on to others.

What are some of the obstacles that you've faced or are still facing in your expansion?

Like many other student groups, the largest barrier to our development is the flux of students coming and going each semester. All of us are constantly trying new strategies each semester to address this issue and increase our membership and volunteer base.

But one thing in particular I've realized is that the success of an organization SHOULD NOT be defined by the NUMBER OF MEMBERS they have, especially if the organization is a service or advocacy based organization.

What is your advice to other student organizations who hope to expand and have an impact at the statewide or national level?

Of course, any organization needs a core officer staff

to function, but when building a large member base becomes the number one priority for an organization, the organization may be distracted from its actual mission and be counterproductive.

For instance, the mission of Team HBV is to address the issue of Hep B and our vision is to do that through many small outreach projects, events, and/or larger programs such as Cal Hep B Free. Given the limited time and resources all of us have, we would not have been able to get anything done if we were to only focus on recruitment. Rather, by focusing on the tasks that we will do each semester and ensuring that tasks are delegated to the core staff to coordinate the logistics, we then go out to the Cal community, our volunteer email lists, Community Partners, DeCal class to recruit volunteers. And lastly, everyone loves to be appreciated and rewarded - so organizations should not forget those that have done great things for them!

Any more tips on how to create and sustain a successful organization?

1) **Clear Mission and Baby Steps:** Rather than doing a million things at once, have the organization focus on one or two projects at a time. These projects can later become a subset of a larger project or they can evolve to become actual programs themselves! I'd advise the group to try small and medium magnitude projects first - going for the big fish at first will really maximize the chances of failure - after that it's hard to pick up momentum again especially when team members become disillusioned with the results. On the other hand, having small specific projects will allow everyone to be on the same page and prevents confusion when it comes to recruitment of new members.

2) **Specific Objectives:** Once the group has decided on the projects with specific objectives, a good place to start is to start forming partnerships with other entities on campus. This is actually what I did with Cal Hep B Free. Toward the end of last semester, I basically started pitching my vision and Cal Hep B Free campaign plan to various folks in the ASUC, ASUC Auxiliary, Tang Center, Berkeley Innovation, etc. and slowly people came on-board when they realize what they're taking part in is a worthy cause. The result is what you see today...with more to come!

3) **Multifaceted Approach:** What Team HBV is trying to address is pretty specific in scope (Hep B) but its ramifications affect a large community (APIs in particular). The best lesson I've learned working with Team HBV is that social issues need to have multifaceted approaches to draw a broad support and maximize impact. For instance, Cal Hep B Free Campaign does not only focus on the academic portion of the issues such as the epidemiology and virology behind Hep B, but we try to appeal to other students as well by emphasizing advocacy work, grant-writing opportunities, fundraising, marketing, etc. In short, you can view Cal Hep B Free as a non-profit startup company with many products it wants to sell to the campus to achieve our "B SMART, B TESTED, B FREE!" objectives.

4) **Start A DeCal:** If a group would like to quickly spread a worthy message and expand its member base - start a DeCal! Students get rewarded for their time with academic units. And also, DeCals get access to more resources. I'll definitely accredit the DeCal program for making Team HBV at UCB possible today.

Any last words?

You need motivation (to get things done) and responsibility (to get things done right). We try to inspire new recruits about a worthy cause and empower them by showing them that their time and efforts can actually create real, visible change they can see at UC Berkeley.

A System at Fault

A follow-up on the budget cut “resolutions”

by cecilia tran

BUDGET

EALC

Student protests have never been a foreign concept here at Berkeley. In fact, the constant bombardment of cause after cause can leave us so jaded that it takes something extraordinary to grab our attention. For many, that “something” came last May in the form of a protest to save Asian language courses, particularly those of the East Asian Language and Cultures (EALC) department, from predicted budget cuts. Since May, the administration has found that an increase in student fees and a predicted increase from California state funds will be sufficient to restore the EALC and other humanities departments’ budgets back to 2007-2008 levels. While this is great news, the budget is only secure for this year, meaning that the issue is likely to recur. With this in mind, it is crucial to look at the broader implications of last year’s proposed EALC budget cuts.

The uneven distribution of the budget cut has shown that the university does not prioritize education in languages and cultures, especially those of interest to Asian American students. Jeffrey Shieh, a double major in Chinese and Japanese and a minor in Korean, states, “That the university would consider such talented and indispensable lecturers as the most dispensable resources during hard times is draconian and foolish, and that is why I decided I had to take a stand.”

Berkeley is constantly trying to hype the diversity with tactics such as flying banners depicting students who coincidentally reflect every ethnic minority. However, the fact of the matter is that roughly 45% of the student population is Asian Pacific American and the limited range of Asian language and area studies classes does not reflect the demographics. Even before the threat of budget cuts departments like Tagalog still did not have a minor while Korean studies only recently got a minor in 2004 even though the field was established in 1979.

Not only was the cut disproportionately harsh on Asian language and culture classes but the administration also failed to make public its decisions. Rather than releasing a document stating the cuts in every humanities department, Dean of Arts & Humanities Janet Broughton privately notified the department heads only of cuts allocated to their particular departments. This lack of transparency has caused many to question whether or not the budget cut information was timed to be leaked out during the chaos of finals to deter student mobilization. As Shieh, a leader in the student movement to protest the budget cuts, states, “The university seemed bent on ignoring students’ voices and so we had to find another outlet. It was because there was no response that we had to hold press conferences, contact the media, hold a rally, etc. It was a real eye-opener to see that the administration did not care much about students’ opinions and that they cared only about the university’s public image.”

Ultimately, the biggest issue of all is that the restoration of funds is a sloppy patch up for a system that is failing to provide students with a stable, high quality education. Currently, the salaries of most humanities lecturers and graduate student instructors are funded with temporary money tied to the state budget. These staff members receive pay from the Temporary Academic Staff (TAS) fund, meaning that they are untenured and face the risk of unemployment whenever the budget is in crisis.

Andrew Leong, a doctoral candidate in Comparative Literature and a core member of the Committee to Save East Asian Languages and Korean Studies (CSEALKS), states, “While the department has gained a one-year reprieve, serious damage was already done. Some talented and experienced teachers left because they needed to find secure places of employment.”

Tenure is typically reserved for professors with PhD’s who often double as researchers. Their salaries come from a more stable and permanent fund known as the Full Time Equivalent (FTE). While there is nothing wrong with professors receiving tenure, it would only be fair for lecturers and graduate instructors, the people who most directly impact the quality of education, to benefit from a similar kind of employment security that professors receive.

Christine Hong, a postdoctoral fellow and another



Students unite to protest against the proposed EALC budget cuts

key leader in the ad hoc CSEALKS, asserts, “When Berkeley chooses to have a core part of its budget depend on and be tied to the California state budget, it’s demonstrating that that area that it’s funding from the state budget is of a lesser priority than that which it funds through its permanent budget.”

This raises the question of whether or not Berkeley prides itself as a research institution at the expense of its commitment to the educational needs of its students. Although a crucial aspect of this university is its world-class research projects, it is imperative that Berkeley remains first and foremost an institution dedicated to molding well-rounded, intelligent students who in turn will shape the future.

Considering the uncertainty that surrounds both the economy of the state and the nation, the question that should be on everyone’s mind is, “Will these academic departments be lucky enough to survive in round two?” Efforts are currently being made to ensure that this is not an issue that is ignored. CSEALKS has changed its name to API Languages and Education NOW! Members of this organization seek to establish their ad hoc committee along more permanent, ASUC-recognized lines in order to institutionalize their struggle. Their mission continues to be, as Hong states, “to disaggregate instructor and lecturer’s salaries from the TAS fund and to push for program development in underrepresented and under supported API fields.” Hong along with fellow API Languages and Education NOW! leaders, Mary June Flores and Sarah Cho, have also drafted an issue brief on security of employment that has been officially endorsed as a part of the ASUC advocacy agenda for this year.

The Asian language and culture departments can and will survive future budget threats only if the students continue to express their commitment to a stronger API curriculum without letting the passion and fervor expressed in the spring die out. The protest and the committees created by the students last May caused this issue to be reported on by 35 ethnic and mainstream publications and news stations. The organization and dedication of students were extremely instrumental in pressuring the administration to restore funds to Asian language and culture departments. Let us look on these successes as a concrete fact that we do have a voice and that, if united, we will be heard.

Students interested in joining API Languages and Education NOW! should contact Jeff Shieh at jfboy.shieh@gmail.com and check savekoreanstudies.blogspot.com for updates on the status of the committee.

RECAP BOX

APRIL:

- Funding for the EALC is predicted to be cut as follows:
 - Japanese—40%
 - Chinese—55%
 - Korean—66% (the minor is to be eliminated)
- Tamil, Thai, Tagalog, and Hindi are also greatly imperiled by the cuts
- The Committee to Save East Asian Languages and Korean Studies is formed and roughly 20 Asian Pacific American student organizations begin working together in protest

MAY:

- Students take action through petitions (garnering nearly 8,000 signatures), announcements in classes, blogs, and Facebook groups
- The Save EALC @ Cal press conference on May 7th receives attention from many ethnic and non-ethnic publications alike
- On May 8th students march from Sproul Plaza to the C.V. Starr East Asian Library in the name of EALC, South and Southeast Asian studies

MAY-AUGUST:

- The local Korean community raises \$25,000 to support the EALC department

JUNE:

- On June 20, Dean Broughton announces to students in an e-mail that the EALC budget has been restored for one year only to 2007-2008 levels

AUGUST:

- CSEALKS transitions to API Languages and Education NOW! and seeks official ASUC status.

NOXIOUS

Nails



by melani sutedja

Unsafe Products Permeate Asian Dominated Nail Salon Industry

One rule my mom imposed around the house was to always wear those \$0.99 surgical masks whenever we dealt with fumes indoors, including roach insecticide, aerosols... and strangely enough, nail polish.

Slightly obsessive-compulsive? Of course, especially to a prepubescent thirteen year old amidst her desperate attempts at girlhood vanity and flawless WetNWild fingertips. Yet, my mom wasn't actually stretching the truth when warning against the effects of "dangerous toxins" inside numerous nail products and polish removers.

While it might not be a big deal to the average Cal student who gets her (or his!) fair share of ten minute pedicures, it is a growing concern for those making a living using these products. Very much so that organizations such as the Asian Law Caucus, have organized programs such as The Nail Salon Project to outreach to the demographic mostly affected- Asian immigrant women.

For many nail salon workers- most of which are of Vietnamese descent- the proximity to these chemicals and the lack of proper ventilation within their miniscule working conditions, has detrimental consequences.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, there have been casual links to "cancer, respiratory irritation, developmental and reproductive

abnormalities... and other health-related problems." What's worse, language barriers prevent the majority of the foreign-speaking workforce from educating themselves upon the real danger of these substances. Why is it, then, that this industry continues to be so popular?

Dominated by a demographic that is 80% Vietnamese in California alone, the nail salon industry attracts a majority of its immigrant population not only because it gives entry to assimilate within the American workforce, but it requires very short-term training and little English-speaking proficiency requirements. But according to an Issues Brief put out by the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF) in 2006, most workers' "immigrant status and limited English skills, earn (them) less than \$16,000 a year." Furthermore, many of these employees "lack knowledge of the legal and health care systems in the U.S. as well as lack basic health care coverage."

How is it then, are workers expected to differentiate between products that are safe to use, and which are hazardous?

While chemical manufacturers are legally required to have data sheets that include "health warnings, storage and handling instructions, and emergency first aid procedures," the catch is that none have been translated to the language of the people the products cater to.

Formulas for ingredients such as acetone or potassium hydroxide, for instance, lists warnings such as "Danger! Corrosive. Causes severe burns to skin, eyes, respiratory tract... material is extremely destructive to all body tissues" that are more than obviously crucial.

Other than that, there is no regulation over which of these ingredients can go inside or by how

"Many Asian nail salon workers feel that they are unable to change their workplace or report the situation to government officials,"

National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum Report

many amounts. Interestingly enough, reproductive toxins and carcinogens that have been outlawed in the European Union since 2004, go unregulated by the Foods and Drug Administration (FDA) in America. Unless there have been reports of error once they've hit the shelves, the FDA does not require cosmetic products to have any approval.

Nonprofit organizations around the nation and the Bay Area itself have since stepped in where public policy has yet to turn its neck.

Formed in 2005 to voice the health and labor concerns affecting workers within the nail salon community, the California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative starts by trying to increase awareness amongst the workers, find alternatives that reduce the hazardous toxins involved in the salons, and influence state-wide policies themselves.

Members of the coalition include the San Francisco-based Asian Law Caucus (ALS), which serve workers from the Asian Pacific Islander community through workshops and informational hearings, such as the one held with Senator Carole Migden (D-San Francisco) on November 15th of last year.

While more projects are shedding more light onto the inequities associated with such environmental toxins, there are still those who feel as they've been institutionally silenced, whether through lack of documents or fear of losing their jobs, and lack the means to voice their opinion. The NAPAWF report states that "many Asian nail salon workers feel that they are unable to change their workplace or report the situation to government officials, given that this may be their sole source of income, and many of the owners themselves are relatives

or family members."

There is the option of "going green," as is the trend in certain upscale parts of West Hollywood and New York City through their use of non-toxic products, recycled goods and environmentally-friendly lighting. Yet, the power of politicization is growing through grassroots organizing, awareness of workers' communities, and more simply, the installation of new ventilation systems.

Employees at Nail Salon on University have taken cautionary steps in ensuring that they have a safe workplace. With all windows open, front and back doors left ajar, there is only the slightest trace of acrylic and varnish fumes.

"When we first moved here, my husband made sure to install that fan," says Helen, the owner of the salon. Pointing to a huge industrial fan screwed to the roof of the doorway, the Vietnamese-Chinese woman is pleased with her working conditions, only because not many customers request acrylic nails. Otherwise, she says, employees are required to wear surgical masks when filing and preparing acrylic materials.

"Some salons may be negligent with their practices, but we can't take chances when it comes to our workspace, especially if it concerns the health of our customers and workers," says Helen.

Non-First-Generation Students:

Forgetting the “Asian” in Asian American?

by leilani gobaleza



Dan Lloyd is a non-first-generation Asian American student who maintains aspects of his Asian as well as American culture

First-generation students, defined by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) as “undergraduates whose parents never enrolled in a postsecondary education,” have been projected in a number of ways. A more common projection, for first-generation Asian American students in particular, centers upon their uncontested determination. These first-generation students are a hybrid of their parents’ culture and that of mainstream America; they strive to provide a more fruitful upbringing for their children; and overall, they are committed to making it in life without any help or cheap shortcuts. Essentially, they look to become self-made individuals. While these assumptions are both criticized and praised in endless debates, I must bring to light an emerging group that is not spoken of enough: non-first-generation Asian Americans.

Second-generation Asian Americans are the children of first-generation Asian Americans. They are not the first in their family to reach higher education—a fact that translates into their different upbringings. A popular opinion of the non-first-generation Asian American community is that they are indifferent to societal issues and simply revel in the fruits of their parents’ labor. This description stands in direct contradiction with that of their stereotypically hardworking parents. In addition, non-first-generation Asian Americans are specifically associated with the slang term “bougie.” Derived from “bourgeoisie,” “bougie” refers to persons who are closely attached to high-maintenance, mainstream culture and act upon it by actively seeking a class of higher status. If we assume this to be true, we must then ask: is this group of people deep enough in the mainstream to claim “I am not Asian, I am American”? I argue that this is not the case. However, it is always helpful to review shortcomings.

Those of us that are non-first-generation Asian American have much to confess. Some of us know more English than the language our ancestors spoke. And as bizarre as it may seem to the rest of the Asian American population, some of us may even prefer a Big Mac over kimchi or pancit. In truth, the hand-feeding of American pride at the expense of various Asian cultures began even

**Is this group of people
deep enough in the
mainstream to claim
‘I am not Asian, I am
American’?**

earlier. Let us recall our elementary school days in which young age correlated well with high vulnerability to mainstream society.

We easily conformed to our American classmates and sung to tunes such as “America the Beautiful” and “Grand Ole Flag.” In middle school, we were all part of some social studies class that tricked us into thinking that history was something that made the clock tick slower—something that extended the number of pages in our textbooks without our knowledge. High school was not much different for most of us. What was not boring was simply irrelevant. The irony of it all is that very few people challenged or even thought to challenge the irrelevance of textbook history. I have recently been drawn to a little something called reflection, and cannot help but reflect on why no one ever asked, “Where are all the Asian Americans in history?” The omission of generations and generations of Asian Americans throughout history is something many of us have just realized. Such a realization has had a profound effect on how

non-first-generation Asian Americans situate themselves in modern society.

Jeffrey Chao, a first year here at the University of California, Berkeley, described, “My parents sent me to Chinese school for ten years and I go back to Taiwan every four or five years.” As a second-generation Chinese American from the East Coast, Chao expresses an impressive curiosity for his family’s culture and history. Similarly, students have enrolled in both language classes and Asian American studies courses to cultivate what they do know. What is more is that I can easily step into an apartment, slip my shoes off without having to be asked, and find a second generation Korean American putting together kimbab.

These things, little as they may seem, reveal that there is genuine intentionality in making the “Asian” in Asian American count. Non-first-generation Asian Americans continue to subtly reveal a more humble and a more culturally curious side of themselves. Sure, it took years, even decades, to realize the significance of what was at first deemed irrelevant. But I can safely say that many non-first-generation Asian Americans have invalidated the term “bougie” as much too cookie-cutter for their diverse community. Let’s take another look at Chao. Instead of prodding across upper Sproul in Gucci loafers (yes, Gucci makes loafers) and a pair of aviator sunglasses, Chao works toward earning a degree in Chemical Engineering. “All my friends that are second-generation are just as hardworking, and I still feel culturally connected to China,” Chao explained. “I don’t know where those assumptions came from.” Perhaps the rest of us should reflect upon the nature of such assumptions as well. Maybe then we will be able to discontinue using them as mere tools of convenience.

a thread of a narrative

by yining chou

how Asian American history reshaped
my perspectives

“Perhaps Asians were in America as historical anomalies. There were no satisfactory stories relating Asian Americans to a larger history, no precedents suggesting how we were to proceed into the future.”

I hadn’t expected to be this excited about a piece of fruit. After reading that Bing cherries were developed by a Chinese horticulturist in the 1870s, I spent the next few days announcing my discovery to anyone who was available to listen. I thought they would be as astounded as I was to hear that a Chinese man, Ah Bing, had lived and labored in an era of America’s past that I imagined to be populated by black and white.

In College Park, Georgia, I grew up alongside children of European or African ancestry. Elementary school teachers taught how these groups made their homes in America through very different means, but despite their vast differences, these histories had a singular impact on me in showing that both peoples had earned a place here. The Pilgrims were familiar figures to me by second grade, “Emancipation Proclamation” the two longest words in my third grade vocabulary, and I read enough historical fiction to know about NINA, Brown v. Board, and Eastern European enclaves in New York City before I was done with fourth. In my eyes, these stories were what made my friends and their families Americans – they lived as extensions of a continuing American story that we all knew very well.

I didn’t resent being educated in terms of the African or European American experience. I did, however, become uncomfortably aware that I had no similar explanations for my own presence here. High school’s periodic references to coolies or the Japanese interment failed to solve the problem, for the Asians in question were always transient beings that dropped out of our discussions as suddenly as they appeared.

The more I tried to make sense of my presence here, the less I was able to fit Asians into America as I knew it. My parents maintained strong ties to Taiwan, and a number of our Asian friends set aside a good deal of time and money to visit family members overseas. After moving to California, I found that many of my Asian friends referred to their parent’s place of origin as some sort of home country despite being born in the States or having lived here for most of their lives. I began to wonder whether other immigrant groups had shown such consistent failure in expressing their intentions to stay. In my mind, this already disqualified us as a legitimate immigrant community. To make matters worse, my parents had arrived in America as educated, reasonably well-funded students, my father had a stable job, and I attended school alongside black and white children without any threat of segregation. Immigrants were supposed to fight from the bottom up. I felt oddly anxious that we had secured a middle-class lifestyle when I wasn’t aware of any struggle to bring us this far. Perhaps Asians were in America as historical anomalies. There were no satisfactory stories relating Asian Americans to a larger history, no precedents suggesting how we were to proceed into the future.

This may have been one of the reasons why, when I was smaller, I’d talk as if I intended on moving to Taiwan when I grew up. I picked up my parents’ habit of saying “*hui Tai Wan*” - “returning to Taiwan” - whenever I referred to our visits, and regarded time spent there as respite from the questions cluttering my American life. Unlike Georgia, where things were often too new to be significant, Taiwan held continuity with the past. That continuity was present in the language we spoke, in the graves of my grandparents and my parents’ childhood homes. I assumed that if I were to ever live in Taiwan, I could just pick up the legacy that my family had established there for generations.

When I became older I recognized complications in my plan that had escaped my childish perceptions. My spoken Mandarin is fluent but my literacy abysmal. My palate, style of dress and manner of speech

are all markedly different from those of my cousins. I disagree with my parents over the values they were brought up with and the values I’ve acquired, and it eventually occurred to me that our disputes did not bode well for my chances of assimilating into Taiwanese culture. We spent last December in Taiwan, and as I anticipated, one of my uncles couldn’t stop exclaiming over how “American” I had grown up to be.

The fantasy of claiming Taiwan as a homeland had died years before my uncle pronounced me a foreigner. Being recognized as

“Knowing that Asians have labored and dreamed in America, and, most importantly, left evidence of their striving gives some relief. If there have been Asians before me who moved to occupy an American space, perhaps I would not be wrong in taking a few steps into America rather than feeling as if I should try to find my way out.”

such didn’t sting; I think it wasn’t Taiwan itself that attracted me, just its idealization as a place where I would belong. After the December visit, I concluded that there were aspects of Taiwanese society I could never be reconciled to, and realized with some reluctance that I actually preferred America for many reasons. My uncertainty in claiming America as a homeland didn’t translate into an automatic affinity with Taiwan; I couldn’t fit comfortably into the sensibilities of either location. Existence as an Asian American seemed to be defined by isolation, for it was profoundly detached from everything I understood.

When I learned of Ah Bing’s accomplishment, I was a little dumbfounded at finding something so common to supermarkets and summer barbecues to be associated with an Asian person. Bing cherries are ubiquitous enough to be unremarkable, and it is precisely their ordinariness that grips me. They’re no less established in this country than African or European Americans, and yet they are linked to Asian Americans, a people I perceive as passing through too invisibly to leave a mark. Ah Bing must have worked hard at perfecting this fruit in order for it to bear his name. He must have dreamed stubbornly to become an orchard foreman when social norms were working against him. Evidently he made a way for himself, and the aftereffects of his experience are this small but pervasive legacy - Ah Bing is the first to convince me that Asians have pressed through these foreign atmospheres in the past, for he left a token I could recognize. Knowing that Asians have labored and dreamed in America, and, most importantly, left evidence of their striving gives some relief. If there have been Asians before me who moved to occupy an American space, perhaps I would not be wrong in taking a few steps into America rather than feeling as if I should try to find my way out. The fact of the Bing cherry itself is a small matter, but it has extended the narrative thread I have been trying to get my hands on for years.



Samurai Girl: An Asian American Perspective

by katherine nguyen

“Samurai Girl” is a new six-part TV show starring Jamie Chung (of “The Real World San Diego” fame) based on a series of young adult novels from the early 2000s. It is a story of an orphaned Japanese girl, Heaven, who is adopted by a wealthy and prestigious family. The family, which has some sort of Yakuza connection (cliché 1), arranged a marriage (cliché 2!) for the young woman. Her brother is killed during her marriage ceremony causing her to seek revenge (cliché 3) through the tutelage of a samurai master (cliché 4, which is also interchangeable with “Kung Fu master,” “ramen master,” “Shaolin soccer master,” and you get the idea). The master is, of course, an easy-on-the-eyes white guy played by Brenden Fehr (“Roswell”) who is more jarhead than samurai master. By the way ABC, buzz cuts aren’t very authentic.

The biggest issue I have with “Samurai Girl” was that it had so much potential. After several months of hype from ABC, including endless commercials and a panel at Comic-Con, “Samurai Girl” failed to deliver an “original” event as promoted. While clichés are clichés because they are constantly repeated in mainstream media, “Samurai Girl” could have grounded these clichés in reality. But instead ABC underestimated their audience and went for the not-quite-family drama-comedy. The ethnicity of Heaven is clear but those that surround her (such as the stereotypical geeky friend and the overly-spunky friend) are denied of character depth and diversity. According to AngryAsianMan.com, “It’s worth noting in the book series, this sensei character is actually a Japanese guy, Hiro Uyemoto, described on the book website as “Heaven’s crush-worthy samurai mentor.” I was told by someone who read an early draft of the pilot script that this character was indeed an Asian guy.”

So what happened? This brings up all sorts of long-standing issues concerning Asian Americans on screen: the casting of white actors (AKA white casting) to replace Asian actors like in the film “21”, the emasculating of Asian American males to nerd status, and the absence of Asian American males in any type of commercial media. These are serious issues that fails to be recognized by the mainstream media execs.

As a 22-year-old Asian American female, I would give an arm and leg to see fair representation of Asian American males onscreen---any screen! I am not alone. Even the ABC audience is aware of the “white casting”. On the official website forum, there is only one thread titled “Whiteout of Asian Characters???” which garnered passionate responses. One person describes the show as “totally ridiculous writing with a premise that caters to the white male perspective, albeit they will always have the Asian woman around as a lust interest. Such typical whitewashed bilge!”

It is also problematic that most the threads on ABC’s webpage are devoted not to the “whiteout” of Hiro Uyemoto, but rather the obsession with seeing some action between Heaven and Jack. (Google “H&J needs to hook up for good!”). ABC must figure out a better way to balance commercial romance with the diversity of its audience.

In addition to this, many felt that portrayals of Asians in the show were too limited and hinged on overused stereotypes. A

After several months of hype from ABC, including endless commercials and a panel at Comic-Con, “Samurai Girl” failed to deliver an “original” event as promoted.

person writes, “Too bad they were almost all tired old stereotypes. Faithful old driver? Evil crime lord? Henchmen in black suits? Ninja warriors? Is this all that Asians are good for in American media? ABC even changed the love interest from a Japanese guy to a white guy.” Nothing against your Fehr, but we’ve seen too much of the like.

I’m a little ashamed to admit that I have read the books during my high school years. Instead of picking up the next “Sweet Valley High” or “Gossip Girl”, it was surprising and refreshing to see a cover that reflected someone I’ve seen in the mirror while growing up. While the story is not always believable, it features some poetic and poignant moments. Compared to the TV show, the opening line of the book “My name is Heaven Kogo, and I died on my wedding day...” says a lot more than the first episode of the series. The TV show surprised and disappointed me in a few ways. “Samurai Girl” is not quite as saccharine as a Disney’s teen-empowerment-through-music-and-fame message à la “Camp Rock” or at best, “Wendy Wu: Homecoming Warrior”. While “Wendy Wu” was the one of the first to show Asian American girls kicking butt, it was highly tailored to a Miley Cyrus crazed Disney audience. “Samurai Girl” is a couple steps up in story-telling with themes like murder, revenge, dislocation, adoption and deep dark family secrets. Heaven is a strong character and Chung holds up well early in her acting career. I can forgive her stilted lines in place of her believable teenage angst, ass-kicking and pretty profile. In fact, the original book and concept provided fertile ground for different kind of show. However, the show needs a lot of work to effectively convey the original concept and avoid being offensive and tiresome.

“Samurai Girl” stands on the verge of being something good, a fantastical show that serves to repeal old stereotypes and bring about a new perspective on Asian Americans. But in the end, it downgrades itself by tailoring the script to provide an excuse for a good-looking white guy to take his shirt off.



Photo from IMDB.com

5 Asian American bands and musicians

by davin chang

- Priscilla Ahn**
Latest CD: “A Good Day”
Genre: Acoustic Folk Pop
Check her out if you like: Norah Jones, Rachael Yamagata
- The Morning Benders**
Latest CD: “Talking Through Tin Cans”
Genre: Indie Pop
Check them out if you like: The Shins, The Beatles
- Lyrics Born**
Latest CD: “Everywhere At Once”
Genre: Hip Hop / Funk
Check him out if you like: Outkast, Blackalicious
- Love Like Fire**
Latest CD: “An Ocean in the Air”
Genre: Indie Rock / Alternative
Check them out if you like: Blonde Redhead, Siouxsie and the Banshees
- Vienna Teng**
Latest CD: “Dreaming Through the Noise”
Genre: Pop / Classical
Check her out if you like: Tori Amos, Vanessa Carleton

NOW FEATURING...

CHING CHONG CHINAMAN

by jack wang

A pizza place hardly seems like the ideal location for a theatre production, let alone the basement of a pizza place. Yet, it is in LaVal's Subterranean that "Ching Chong Chinaman" executes its biting satire, delivering the story of an ultra-Americanized Chinese American family without pulling punches.

Written by Bay Area native and Yale graduate Lauren Yee and directed by Desdemona Chiang, the story begins and takes place mostly in the Palo Alto kitchen of the Wong family. The play, which began as Yee's senior thesis and debuted during the New York International Fringe Festival in 2007, explores what it means to be Asian American.

Ed (Dennis Yen), the dad, leads his life as the breadwinner of the family, while his marriage with his clueless wife Grace (Lisa Kang) loses its spark. Desdemona (Cindy Im), the daughter, clings desperately to her dream of getting into Princeton as her math grades plummet. Upton (Arthur Keng), the son, aspires to qualify for—and win—a World of Warcraft tournament in Korea, but his schoolwork and family obligations get in the way of possible gaming hours.

In one of the very first scenes, Ed tells the family to make sure their eyes are nice and wide for the family portrait. They comply and

smile brightly as the shutter clicks and the stage dims. The audience—both Asian and non-Asian—drops its everyday pretenses and laugh.

The attack on stereotypes and clichés intensifies as Upton finds a solution to his problem. In a soliloquy in front of his laptop, Upton cites the practices of Charles Crocker, one of the railroad barons responsible for the Transcontinental Railroad, and decides to hire his own indentured servant to do his homework and chores. The dark irony is, of course, that Upton has lost touch so much with his heritage that the only thing he learned from Asian American history is how to exploit immigrants to his own advantage.

The next morning, the family discovers Jin Qiang (Sung Min Park) sitting at their dining table. Unable to pronounce his name properly, he becomes known to them as Ching Chong. When Desdemona takes offense to the racial slur, Ed claims that since they themselves are of Chinese descent, they are allowed to use it, "like the n-word."

And he's right. Whether it is right or wrong, racial epithets are generally accepted when they are used by members of the offended race. The existence of this very play proves it.

Drawing back to the title of the play,

Yee shows that she is not afraid to address racism and stereotypes head-on, blatantly using "Ching Chong Chinaman" to attract a somewhat shocked but curious crowd. In some sense, she follows in the path of comedians such as Richard Pryor, Chris Rock, and Dave Chappelle in bringing humor into what is ordinarily an uncomfortable subject. She doesn't quite hit the funny bone as deftly as those comedians do, providing more chuckles than roars (though LaVal's beer could help with that).

In just under two hours, "Ching Chong Chinaman" pushes us to laugh and think about the fluidity of our own ethnic identities. By forcing upon the audience an over-the-top whitewashed Chinese American family, the play compels us to think about how much race really functions in our own lives. It questions the importance of retaining cultural heritage in the face of



<http://www.impacttheatre.com/press/index.php>

an assimilative society, and allows the viewers to come up with their own answers.

The play will continue its run at LaVal's Subterranean on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights at 8 p.m. through October 11.

PING PONG PLAYA

by james yeh

Jessica Yu's lighthearted comedy pokes fun at racial stereotypes

"Access denied!" is all that can be heard on the basketball court as a young, tall Christopher Wang (Jimmy Tsai) asserts his dominance on the court through a flamboyant display of dunking prowess and blocking ability.

At first, it seems as if Ping Pong Playa is going to be about an Asian American basketball player with the skills to bring his game to the professional level. In fact, given director Jessica Yu's track record of critically-acclaimed documentaries (including the Oscar-winning *Breathing Lessons*), it wouldn't have been surprising if the movie started detailing Wang's journey to becoming the next Yao Ming (heck, he was even wearing a #11 Rockets jersey).

The sense of inspiration is short-lived, however, when the camera zooms out to reveal that "C-Dub" Wang

has been playing against 10-year-olds on a miniature basketball hoop. This situation is reflective of Tsai's character, who is a hopeless underachiever overshadowed by a stereotypical physician brother—who also happens to be a ping pong champion. Only when Wang's mother (who runs a ping pong class) is injured in a car accident does our unlikely protagonist realize that he must choose between his dreams of playing in the NBA and fulfilling his family duty.

In addition to the predictable storyline, the humor in Yu's first attempt at a comedy is often a hit or miss. The movie has its fair share of witty one-liners and sexual innuendo—the central ping pong tournament that Wang must train for is called "The Golden Cock"—but a large chunk of Yu's humor comes from mocking racial stereotypes. Most of it is amusing and upbeat (Wang's sidekick is an African-American who speaks Chinese), but some of the jokes are stretched far and could easily come off as distasteful. No race is spared in this film, as Yu pokes fun at blacks, whites, and of course, Asians.

Moreover, the movie never really

scrapes beneath the surface on issues of identity, family, and culture, all three of which permeate the film. While Wang's nonstop and well-executed trash-talking makes for some entertaining fodder, any attempt at making social commentary on the dilemmas that exist in the movie are as lackadaisical as Wang's attitude towards life. As a result, the novelty of having an unlikely hero quickly wears thin as Wang prefers to settle most encounters by opening a can of smack talk.

Ping Pong Playa is a clear departure from Yu's other films; rather than delving deep into the topics of the film (as she has done with her documentaries), Yu has chosen a more fun and lighthearted approach to her first comedy. The result is slapstick humor that provides plenty of cheap laughs but plays it safe. In fact, the producers have decided to play it so safe they every word of profanity (and there are a lot) is censored with the conspicuous sound of a bouncing basketball. It's almost as if this movie was deliberately geared towards a younger audience, such that any profound social commentary would neither be understood or necessary.



<http://nymovies.blogspot.com/2008/02/ping-pong-playa.html>