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April 2012

issue 15.4

# hardboiled

THE ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN NEWSMAGAZINE!

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*featuring*

# HARD MEN

*for hardboiled*

**15.4**  
APRIL 2012

# hardboiled

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## ABOUT THIS COVER

Exoticized,  
objectified,  
feminized; nerds,  
sidekicks, ninja  
assassins; and, "all  
Asians look the  
same," -- These  
are all stereotypes  
that continue to  
be propagated by  
the media. This  
cover shows how  
despite our progress  
in film, comics,  
music and other  
media, we continue  
to be forced into  
these cookie cutter  
roles. It renders us  
invisible, clumping  
us together and  
forcing us into mere  
categories and  
checkboxes. But  
we are individuals.  
We are artists. And  
we all have our  
own stories to tell.  
(Original photos by  
Jeffrey Pu)

## editors' note

I vaguely remember the first time **hardboiled** caught my attention. It was during Calapalooza way back when. Out of the corner of my eye, there was something blue. Too blue. And so I grabbed a copy of **hardboiled** issue 11.6 because, you know, I like hoarding shiny (blue) things. Little did I know, it would give me powers! Reading the issue opened me up to this world of issues pertaining to the Asian Pacific American community that I had not seen previously. It equipped me with the ability to be more aware and critical of the "little" things that go on.

Through the years in **hardboiled**, I have had a most wonderful time meeting and working with so many awesome people who are so passionate about and dedicated to APA community; there's so much energy there. **hardboiled** has been a welcoming and awesome space where people learn about and discuss important issues, drop knowledge and share personal experiences, go on grocery trips and late night food runs and drink boba and play mafia and uh..., and ultimately, contribute to production and make **hardboiled** the kick-ass (or the bomb dot com as Steven would have it) publication that it is. I can't say it's all ups and no downs, but it's mostly ups, I swear! If after perusing through this issue, anything should peak your interest, I urge you to come check us out, even just for a night.

Looking back at my past few years at Cal, it's really been a blur. With all the lectures, labs, exams, papers, seminars, guest events, spoken word/open mics, conferences, rallies, and... well you get the idea, I can say that it was quite a satisfactory undergraduate experience. And half of it, I wouldn't have had experienced if it weren't for **hardboiled** and my fellow editors and staffers. **hardboiled** really has been that rock. Make it yours too.

wilson chan  
managing editor

Since I was a toddler, I've always aspired for UC Berkeley. Mostly due to the fact that my brother, who probably gave up a significant part of his high school social life to babysit me, went to Cal in my formative years, but I gradually came to the decision that Berkeley was just the best university for me on my own. I didn't particularly have a passion for any subject or issue, so when I arrived on campus I wasn't sure where to wet my feet.

Then while I was patrolling Sproul like an impressionable freshman, I saw it. My niche on campus. When I took the decal my first spring semester, I knew I wanted to be a part of this publication. **hardboiled** has always been an outlet

for undermined voices, for coverage on issues that are rarely spotlighted and heard. This project has always been extremely meaningful and significant to me. I've made a lot of memories, met tons of insightful, passionate people, and read many compelling articles during my time as copy editor.

So as I approach the final few weeks of my Cal undergraduate education, I'm extremely excited about the prospects of my hopefully bright future. But before I bid a fond "see you later" to Cal, I'll impart the best piece of advice I've learned: to always be bold.

eileen tse  
copy editor

I sort of stumbled upon **hardboiled** halfway through my college experience, and since then I have always wished that hb and I had collided sooner. For two years, I was so consumed in doing well in all those science classes and so focused on making sure I take the right turns towards my dream career. I didn't care about anything else. When I joined hb, I realized that even though worrying about my future is a top priority, being concerned with the present, with issues that are directly affecting me right now, is just as important. I never knew how much of APA issues I was ignoring until I came to hb. I will always remember my first semester as a staff member. It really had powerful impact on me. I learned to be more aware of my community and be more critical of the news media. I always look forward to our weekly hb meetings. During our discussions, I've felt pain, anger, distress, happiness and excitement, and through each discussion, I appreciate more and more the space that hb provides. It's a space where I can feel all of these emotions about various APA issues and share them with others who feel the same. As I am finishing my last semester at Cal, I ask myself, from everything I have learned, what will I continue applying to my life post graduation. I know for sure that I will continue discussing these issues and keep on thinking critically. Thanks, hb.

Always in bold,

chi tran  
tech editor

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

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# NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH



From schools to homes, violence lurks in the most unsuspecting spaces of everyday life for Bay Area Asian Americans



*Photo courtesy of sfgate.com*

by alex lee

At Oikos University, April 2nd will be remembered as the day a lone gunman by the name of One Goh shot and killed seven people, while injuring three more. What should have been a normal day for students at the Oakland vocational school soon became the biggest school shooting seen since the Virginia Tech incident in 2007.

So why Oikos University?

It's a small South Korean Christian college that prepares students for careers in nursing, also offering courses in music, Asian medicine and English as a second language, though the school has recently had issues with accreditation.

As it turns out, Goh was a nursing student at Oikos University before he was kicked out several months ago for general misbehavior and anger management issues. His return to the school was a search for the administrative official who expelled him, but when Goh could not find her, he proceeded to shoot students in the classroom nearest to him, having them line up and killed if they refused.

By the time the police arrived, five were already dead and two more would die later in a hospital. Six of his seven victims were female.

Currently, the crime is seen as motivated by Goh's inability to get along with the women on campus. In a school where both students and faculty are predominantly female, Goh did not feel like he fit in, and he felt mistreated and disrespected when the other female students ridiculed his poor English skills. Even officials noted how he simply could not deal with women in general.

Alone and isolated, Goh felt no community connection with the other students, and when he was forced to leave at

the behest of a female official, Goh decided he had enough.

It doesn't help that Goh has also had a troubled past even before coming to California. In his previous state of Virginia, Goh collected over \$23,000 in debt before being evicted from his apartment. In the course of a year, he also lost a brother in an auto wreck and his mother who moved back to Seoul after leaving Oakland.

Still, none of these are justifications for why a man should feel the need to buy a gun and solve his issues violently.

Though Goh may or may not have been mentally unstable, feeling of exclusion in the community compounded with the emotional turmoil of losing two family members within a year could only have exacerbated his instability. This shooting is yet another reason why society should be considering proactive safeguards against this kind of lashing out.

Taking time to recognize the problem in its early stages and counseling people who aren't doing well socially could all be utilized so that people like One Goh and the Virginia Tech gunman could at least learn to get along with their peers, rather than be exiled only to return later with hate and a gun.

As of press time, Goh has been charged with seven counts of murder, three counts of attempted murder, and if convicted, he could face the death penalty or a life sentence without parole. Society doesn't need any successors to the Virginia Tech and Oikos University shootings, but if nothing is done to change how we treat people at high-risk of acting out violently, then this will not be the last we hear about a tragic school shooting.



*Photo courtesy of sfgate.com*

by yifan zhang

On March 23rd, 35-year-old Binh Thai Luc walked into an Ingleside house in San Francisco and left five mutilated bodies: an elderly couple, their son Vincent, their daughter Jess "Yingxu" Lei, and Vincent's girlfriend Chia Huei Chu. The deaths were not inflicted by gunshot wounds as initially suspected, but by blunt trauma from an edged weapon, most likely a machete. The victims, including the women and the elderly, were slashed by a weapon sharp enough to cut through muscles and tissues but too crude to deliver a quicker end. This horrific crime illustrates a dark side of the Asian American community we are often too afraid to recognize. Our model minority stereotypes have no room for the violent deaths of an entire Chinese family.

Binh Thai Luc was born in Vietnam, but he later immigrated to the United States where he settled into a life of crime. He was sentenced in 1998 to 11 years and four months in San Quentin for the armed robbery of a Chinese restaurant in San Jose. He was considered for deportation, but the Vietnamese government refused him. In 2006, the State of California released him.

The motive of the SF murders is currently under investigation, but seeing that the suspect is Vietnamese and all five of the victims were Chinese, the crime was probably not a family feud. His choice of weapon and number of victims indicate that he had objectives and motivations. At this moment, investigators say that Luc was collecting a gambling debt.

This highlights an understated problem in the Asian American community: gang violence. Luc, who was reported to be affiliated with a Vietnamese street gang, employed a relatively common tactic among

Asian American criminals where gang members barge into a home or small business, tie up the family members, and demand cash and valuables. Asian immigrants who are the victims of such crimes are less likely to report to the police. Some are afraid of deportation while others are afraid of bringing shame to the community.

Yet, even though the Asian American community has problems with criminality, the model minority myth prevents both Asians and non-Asians from acknowledging it. Luc's neighbors describe the convicted felon as a "fine person, not a criminal." A court reporter described him as "boyish-looking." Viewing Asians through the model minority stereotype, people can't grasp the fact that Luc was capable of slaughtering a whole family. We have preconceived stereotypes of what a murderer looks like, and in this instance, the stereotype has blinded us from the reality. The victims might have been wrapped up with criminal elements in the Asian American community seeing that they had gambling debts.

But Jess "Ying Xue" Lei, a software engineer at Qualitative Medical Systems, was described by her employer as a "smart, quiet person." No one suspected her family to be deep in debt with loan sharks and Asian gangsters. These stereotypes prevent policy makers and law enforcement from providing resources to stamp out criminality in the Asian American community. Most importantly, open dialogue between law enforcement and the community must be maintained to prevent gangs from preying on families like the Leis. Everyone needs to stop burying their heads in the sand and stop crimes like this one before they happen.

# SASC: SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDENT COALITION

by jenny lu

Southeast Asian Student Coalition (SASC) is a non-profit, grassroots organization catering, but not limited, to Southeast Asian students on campus. SASC seeks to empower, motivate, and create a community for students while addressing the economic inequalities, social injustices, and political underrepresentation that Southeast Asians face.

Even though it is highly known that a large population on the UC Berkeley campus is "Asian/Pacific Islander," when you statistically break up that percentage, Southeast Asians actually constitute a very low number of students. In 2011, ASUC Senator Larry Bach found that only about 3 percent of students admitted that fall were identified as Southeast Asians: 133 Vietnamese, 11 Thai, 10 Hmong, 8 Cambodian, and 5 Laotian students out of over 5,000 admits.

Southeast Asians are underrepresented on this campus, but SASC is here to help! SASC has multiple programs geared different ways to uplift and enlighten the Southeast Asian community on and off-campus.

SASC Anthology documents the undocumented memories and stories of Southeast Asians and the Vietnam War experience through creative writing. Anthology annually publishes

chapbooks for others to read, learn, and continue to share and pass on these stories.

The External Relations program of SASC fosters Southeast Asian communities outside of Berkeley and across California in an effort to empower one another while creating a community of Southeast Asian organizations and groups. Similarly, Internal Relations works on building a community with other organizations within the Berkeley campus and community.

Southeast Asian Mentorship (SEAM) is a group mentorship for high school students in Richmond, Oakland, and Berkeley. The mentor-mentee relationship is not only for academic support, but also empowerment in pursuing higher education and learning about Southeast Asian history, as well as creating friendships and bonds.

To further reach outside of campus, SASC has a program called SEAPOP—Southeast Asian Prison Outreach Project. SEAPOP is a penpal outreach system between college students in SEAPOP and Southeast Asian prisoners. SEAPOP works on deconstructing the social stigma placed upon the incarcerated by listening to the stories of the incarcerated.

Last but not least, every summer, SASC presents the Summer Institute

(SI). SI provides an opportunity for Southeast Asian high school students to experience the college life along with learning about their SEA history and sharing their own stories and experiences. SI is a 5-day, 4-night, all-expenses-paid program for high school students. Throughout the days and nights, students participate in workshops that incorporate education (SEA culture, food, higher education, and history) into a memorable bonding experience. Mentees from all over California and across the country are placed with mentors from different college campuses to create a more intimate support system.

Susan Vang, a first year undergraduate at UC Berkeley, shares her story as a Hmong student impacted by the works of SASC. Vang was a SASC SI mentee in 2010 and, because of her experience at SI, she applied to UC Berkeley and chose to attend.

"Before my first exposure to SASC SI, I felt shameful of being Hmong," Vang shared, "SASC SI has taught me a piece of my history that no textbook can do... I've learned to love myself; to embrace my identity as a Hmong American woman and to cherish my family. I've learned to be aware of the struggles that Southeast Asians have faced, politically, socially, academically,

Empowerment in  
the SEA Community

and mentally; all of which make me feel that much more thankful for having gotten this far in my life."

Now Vang is an active member of SASC. She is a mentor with SEAM, a student writer in SEAPOP and a committee member for SASC's Benefit Concert.

For a small community, SASC makes a big difference in the lives of youth, college students and the environment at UC Berkeley and the community. SASC continues to build leaders, positively influencing students to pursue higher education and to educate and support one another. Through the roots of struggle, SASC finds love and creates a sense of family.

"In 2011, ASUC Senator Larry Bach found that only about 3 percent of students admitted that fall were identified as Southeast Asians: 133 Vietnamese, 11 Thai, 10 Hmong, 8 Cambodian, and 5 Laotian students out of over 5,000 admits."

# SEA GRAD: a sentiment without barriers

by yen vu

Many of us have heard the expression that the journey is more important than the destination. In the context of college, there isn't a better example than the end-of-year commencement: renting a black gown for a brief eight hours, walking across the stage within less than 20 seconds, an instantaneous picture that artificially summarizes your relationship with the chancellor. One would hope that the journey is more important if that's the definition of our destination.

Graduating is barely the beginning—the commencement of opportunities and new endeavors. But, for many, graduating is also a marker of accomplishment, of a victory, often times not only for the graduating individual, but also for the community in which she or he belongs.

Southeast Asian Graduation (SEA Grad), along with similar ceremonies such as Raza Graduation and Pilipino Graduation, is a unique commencement that acknowledges our journey in a way that a general commencement cannot. SEA Grad "aims to spotlight and connect the achievements of the Southeast Asian American graduating class to the greater community by honoring the families and love ones to support these students." These graduates live various versions of a similar narrative, and the idea of graduating under the same roof, among family and friends who recognize and share our struggles creates a solidarity that coalesces these narratives into one.

This year's SEA Grad theme is graditude, a word that represents the symbiotic contribution of the graduate to his or her community as well as the immeasurable appreciation of the presence of this community throughout his or her education.

Personally, as a graduating senior, I am reminded of so many things for which I am grateful. Firstly, coming from an underserved community, I am grateful for the privilege of education and the resources provided via organizations like REACH! As a Southeast Asian, I am grateful for the expectations of my parents, who see in me potential to accomplish what they were never able to reach themselves. And as an individual, I am grateful for the relationships and lessons that have shaped my college experience in ways that have maximized my mental and emotional growth. I'm sure I do not only speak for myself when I share these appreciations.

This year, SEA Grad, going beyond the acknowledgement of journeys and victories, serves as a medium by which this graditude can be communicated. Because it is a profound sentiment that is often deeply felt and rarely expressed, SEA Grad's ultimate goal is to provide the safe space and the connecting bridge to allow seniors to translate their achievements into two simple, explicit words: Thank you.

## To get more involved:

E-mail: UCB.SASC@gmail.com

Website: <http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~sasc/>

## Upcoming events:

**April 27, 2012: Party with SASC!** Come to SASC's fundraiser SAS Cerade! SASC will have a party but take people to San Francisco to go to the club! \$20 for tickets and bus ride is included! Funds will go towards SASC's Summer Institute 2012! Visit the SASC website for more information.

**June 20th to June 24th** will be the 11th annual SASC Summer Institute at the UC Berkeley campus.

Check out the website for upcoming events, general meeting times, and e-mails directed to the specific programs of your interest!

# MAKING A STATEMENT

{m}agandá magazine gives voice to the undocumented through its fashion show Invisible Runway

by denise wong and jeffrey pu

photoscourtesyofanthonybongco,dominique(nikki)martinez&jeffreypu,seetheentirecollectionatinvisiblrunway.com

Illuminated by runway lights, a model marches down a catwalk in Pauley Ballroom. More conspicuous than her custom-designed dress, however, is a sign she carries reading "Yesterday's Struggle." She is joined by two more models, this time wielding signs that read "Today's Fight" and "For a Better Tomorrow." At the segment's conclusion, the three models reemerge ostensibly to show off the collection a final time, but instead position themselves at different points on the runway to raise their fists. The audience responds with thundering applause.

The "struggle" to which these signs refer is the quotidian struggle of undocumented immigrants, whose stories the event aimed to highlight. The Invisible Runway, a political fashion show hosted by {m}agandá Magazine, aimed to elucidate the often forgotten stories of undocumented immigrants through fashion, poetry, mixed media, and music.

The event also aimed to fundraise for a multicultural community scholarship for undocumented students, who typically fall under the eligibility criteria for California Assembly Bill 540.

AB 540, or the Nonresident Tuition Exemption bill, exempts students who cannot provide documentation of their residency in California from paying out-of-state tuition, so long as they graduated from a California high school and was enrolled there for at least three years. Notably, UC statistics show that only about 30 percent of AB 540 students are actually undocumented, further obfuscating their stories and experiences from public consciousness.

Though the purpose of this fashion show was to highlight the complicated nuances of this issue, several aspects of the event were still left nebulous. This was particularly

problematic considering the audience members' varying previous knowledge about immigration issues. At times, it seemed difficult to comprehend how the clothing related to the expressed intended creative intention of the collections, and throughout the show, there were various discrepancies between the collections and the theme.

One particularly salient example was the first collection, designer Jaymie Ngov's piece, inspired by Krnsa's "Following DREAMs." The collection was a visually stunning tribute to Joaquin Luna, an 18-year-old Mexican American undocumented student who committed suicide after realizing his status prohibited him from pursuing higher education, leading him to the false belief that he burdened his family.

Beautiful as it was, however, the entire piece made no mention of the circumstances of Luna's death. This trend was unfortunately continual; as individual vignettes the work was beautiful, but many often elaborated little on their context.

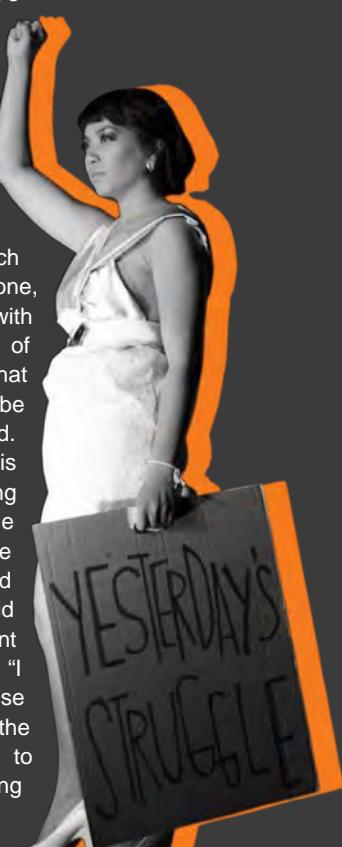
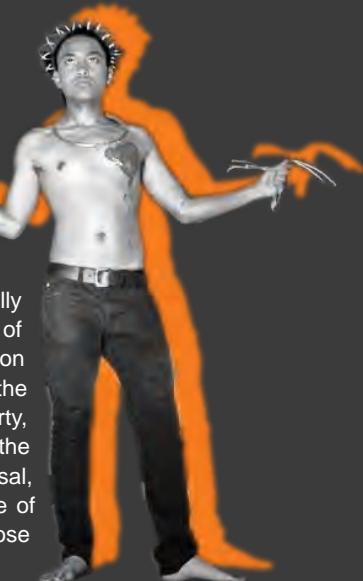
But the event's misgivings, while noticeable, should not define what was ultimately a courageous project to reintroduce a pressing issue that has faded from public consciousness. Three particular outstanding collections expertly integrated coherent political messages into their aesthetic art and thus deserve particular commendation: Romeo Ferrer's "Passage to a Strange Land," whose piece created fashion out of the image of human beings caught in barbed wire, Xinaxtli's "Sin Fronteras," whose piece appropriated punk imagery to convey that the undocumented community will not stay silent in their struggle, and especially Christine Fukushima's "Campaign for an American Dream."

Fukushima's collection, which utilized red, white, and blue striped patterns to indicate a disheveling or dismembering of the American flag motif, used fashion to almost sardonically comment at the farcical nature of the American Dream. The inclusion of one design, which evoked the image of an annoyed Lady Liberty, succinctly illustrated that the American Dream is not universal, and certainly comes at the price of the American Nightmare to those disfavored by history.

The event's primary success was establishing a precedent for future endeavors to shed light on this issue without exhausting people's compassion. Though the undocumented community has been at the forefront of political debates with the 2010 failure of the federal DREAM Act and 2011 victories of the California DREAM Act, the conversation is not over.

There is still much work that needs to be done, and it needs to begin with highlighting the invisibility of these struggles so that these issues may be continuously addressed.

"The fact that this event is even happening is an accomplishment, the fact that so many people worked so hard to shed light on this issue," said Kiki Vo, an AB 540 student who was in attendance. "I hope to see more of these events happening in the future. I'm really proud to be a part of this inspiring community."



# HARDMEN FOR

by denise wong

One of the most prevalent criticisms of the often hyperglorified Asian American movement is the degree of dominance Asian American men had—more specifically, heterosexual Asian American men. Nestled between its historical accounts are feminist criticisms that argue that Asian American men's unchecked male privilege marginalized the contributions of women within the movement. Fast forward to the present day, and the gendered tensions within the progressive API movement still exist—although, some may argue that unchecked male privilege plays a different role, and heterosexual men are conspicuously absent from rallies, protests, and the very spaces that are intended for the community to fight for progress.

This is an indubitably reductive judgment, but not one that is entirely dismissible; a quick look at the past few **hardboiled** staff rosters indicates a growing gender imbalance in activist spaces. So, to what extent is it valid that "only API women and queer men organize?" What is it that makes heterosexual API men so uncomfortable—or, is it that they are too comfortable, and thus unwilling to fight for anything? In this feature, we endeavor to answer these questions and explore the curious intersectionality of straight-identified, male-identified, and API in true **hardboiled** fashion—with a facetious beefcake spread.

Without further ado, **hardboiled** magazine proudly presents our inaugural class of **hardmen for hardboiled**. (Disclaimer: We assume no liability for any readers burning their fingers, because these pages are way too hot. You have been warned.)

## JUHONG

4th year • Political Science Major • Alameda, CA

**Why we love him:** Aside from being a CalSERVE senator, Ju is actively involved with Rising Immigrant Scholars through Education (RISE) and Asian Students Promoting Immigrant Rights through Education (ASPIRE).

**Why do you do what you do?**: As an undocumented student, I am passionate about fighting for immigrant rights issues and advocating for the underprivileged immigrant community at large.

**What gets you hard?**: As a first-generation AB540 transfer student, I understand the sacrifice one has to make in order to pursue of a higher education. Thus, I am passionate about providing equal access to higher education to all students regardless of sex, gender, sexual orientation, or immigration status.

**What is your ideal girl like?**: Anyone who has the U.S. citizenship status. :]



## BRYAN MAEKAWA

4th year • Asian Studies Major • Los Angeles, CA

**Why we love him:** Bryan organizes with the Nikkei Student Union, Asian Pacific American Student Development Office, and Asian Pacific American Coalition.

**Why do you do what you do?**: Though I have been fortunate enough to have been born with many privileges, I too have felt the pain and indignity of discrimination in my life, and I want to confront all forms of this injustice in order to see a more equitable society.

**Do you think a gender imbalance exists within API progressive spaces?**: I have never really felt that there was a gender imbalance. I understand the logic behind such a belief being that men, benefiting from male privilege, have more life advantages and are thus less inclined to be motivated to fight for anything. Fortunately however, I have met and

been inspired by many heterosexual men who are passionate about social justice. Perhaps this is due to the positive influence of API womyn? Or maybe it's thanks to having such role models like Richard Aoki, Mike Honda, and Jere Takahashi?

**What's one thing someone can do to win your heart?**: Make me laugh. People with a good sense of humor are always fun to be around.

## MICHAEL MURATA

3rd year • Bioengineering Major • Asian American Studies Minor • Los Angeles, CA

**Why we love him:** Michael is an officer in the Nikkei Student Union and serves on the board of directors for the Japanese American Citizen's League. He also is one of the student coordinators for the Asian American and Pacific Islander Health Research Group. Shameless plug: if you are interested in API's and health, check out [www.aapihrg.berkeley.edu](http://www.aapihrg.berkeley.edu).

**What gets you hard?**: I am very passionate about eliminating disparities in health, particularly those due to racial issues. Health and medicine have been interests of mine for many years and so I combined them with my passion for the community by focusing on community health whether it be physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, or something that cannot be categorized!

**Do you think a gender imbalance exists within API progressive spaces?**: To be honest, I did not stop to think about whether there was a gender imbalance in API spaces or not. I have felt comfortable with and supported by the people I have worked with and most of the focus has been directed towards the issues at hand.

**What's one thing someone can do to win your heart?**: I'm not really sure what someone could do to win my heart, but one girl figured it out and I have been ridiculously happy being with her ever since.



# HARDBOILED

photos by jeffrey pu



## NHAN VU

3rd Year • Environmental Economics and Policy Major • Reseda, CA

**Why we love him:**

Nhan is involved with SASC, the Southeast Asian Student Coalition, as an Internal Relations co-chair and a Summer Institute co-chair. Previously he has been a REACH! Coordinator, and has also been involved with VSA and PAA.

**Why do you do what you do?:** This is my passion. I do this because I never had a mentor growing up, so I had a void within me. It wasn't until I went to college that I realized how important a mentor was. For me, there are few things greater than a smile on a mentee's face when they realize they can believe in themselves.

**What gets you hard?:** Access to higher education is an API issue that I am really passionate about. API youth have so much potential, but there are many distractions that could deter them from staying on the path. The best thing you can do for a mentee is to make them believe in themselves. Once they have that self-confidence they can begin to challenge the inequalities and injustices that they face in order to transcend the expectations placed on them.

**What is your ideal girl like?:** My ideal girl is someone who is confident about herself. She could be the most awkward human being, but as long as she is comfortable with who she is as a person, I think that is the sexiest thing ever.

## JEFFREY PU

4th year • Asian American Studies Major • Political Science Major • Monterey Park, CA

**Why we love him:** Jeffrey is a hard man actually FROM hardboiled, and while we love men in suits, what we love are men who are always in bold. (Check his feature on {M}agenda Magazine's Invisible Runway out on page 5!)

**Do you think a gender imbalance exists in API progressive spaces?:**

I would agree that there exists a gender imbalance within API progressive spaces. I mean, that's part of the reason why this feature exists right? While I'm sure there are a number of reasons why this is the case, some of which are beyond my analysis, I definitely believe there are many elements of our socio-historical context that play into the privileges and attitudes that lead to our own political apathy. This apathy stems from a combination of many different factors with race, gender and class fulfilling just part of the list.



**What gets you hard?:** As a college student, API in higher education remains an issue that is very salient to me, including issues related to access, the model minority and stereotyping. One simple manifestation of all of these is the simple question of why so many members of our communities are involved in majors that are supposed to lead to middle-class, white collar professional jobs and what are the implications of that for the rest of our community?

**What's one thing a girl can do to win your heart?** I suppose what a girl could do to win my heart is to just spend time with me. But dinner at a nice restaurant and a love of Star Wars couldn't hurt. ;P

## KENNY KIM HOANG

2nd year • Rhetoric Major • Social Welfare Major • Lawndale, CA



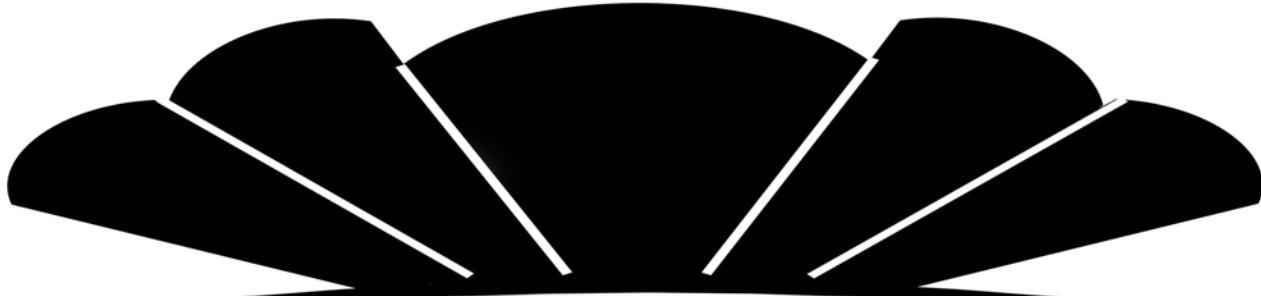
**Why we love him:** Kenny is REACH's Outreach Co-Coordinator and SASC's Anthology Co-Chair, working to recruit underrepresented APIs into higher education and document the stories of families impacted by the Khmer Rouge, Vietnam War, and Secret War in Laos.

**Why do you do what you do?:** Love.

**Do you think there is a gender imbalance in API progressive spaces?:** I would agree that a gender imbalance in API progressive spaces does exist. I think that API straight men do not get involved in community organizing spaces as much as women and queer individuals because there are a lot of straight API men out there who are not knowledgeable about the disparities, disservice, and injustices that target them. Perhaps the experience of a straight man differs largely from a woman and the experience of queer men where a straight man does not see the immediacy and importance of progressive spaces. This kind-of nuance of male privilege plays off unrecorded and indirectly perpetuates the representation as it keeps stagnant. Therefore most straight API men are never even given the chance to consider community organizing yet alone work in progressive spaces.

**What gets you hard?:** One API issue that I'm passionate about is the lack of an API narrative in the K-12 education system. The realization of how the API community has been disenfranchised in history, in struggle, in voice is what drives my passion to diminish these inequalities.

**Would you rather give flowers or chocolate?:** Flowers. My mom looked overwhelmed the last time I snuck a bouquet on the living room table.



# Leaving a stamp on the big screen

by steven cong

As a student delegate for the Center for Asian American Media's San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival that took place March 8th-18th, I had the incredible privilege to watch films like *White Frog* and *In the Family* in historic theaters and meet the people who created them. The films we watched addressed themes like LGBT issues, death, and social justice in a number of innovative ways. However, none of these themes are commonly associated with APIs, as mainstream media portrays APIs through one dimensional stereotypes. It was unusual at first to watch these American themes placed within API settings amongst API characters, and this fact alone meant these films challenged conventional notions of what is "normal" and who gets to "belong" in America and its national discourse.

Aside from the political implications of these movies, it was great to just think about what these films would do for Asian America on a cultural level. Too often in American history, APIs have just been viewed as that Long Duck Dong or William Hung, and made to embody only fragments of what constitutes well-rounded and complex characters. The reality of Asian America is that we are unique individuals in a community that encompasses the entire spectrum of human personality and character.

The movies at this year's festival represented that

diversity in moments like Patrick Wang's fight for his son during *In the Family* and Booboo Stewart's compassion for his brother in *White Frog*. They represented the transnational character of Asian America by addressing the crusade of Ngawang Choephel to preserve his native music and ways in which APIs on both sides of the Pacific interact with Christmas. They preserve the pieces of API ancestral homelands that we carry within ourselves, and they set a firm foundation for APIs to grow in America. To put it simply, they humanize us against the monolithic stereotypes we see in Hollywood.

Many of the films were very ambitious, and the stories of the filmmakers themselves were inspiring. *Bang Bang* offered a very realistic depiction of Asian American gangs, and one of my fellow delegates told me that "it hit closer to home than *Better Luck Tomorrow*," which is a seminal piece of Asian American cinema by director Justin Lin. Byron Qiao, the director of *Bang Bang*, claimed that he wanted to paint an "authentic picture" of an Asian American gangster.

Mye Hoang, the director of *Viette*, depicted her own story in her thought-provoking and ambitious first film. Through the telling of her own personal experiences, she was able to communicate issues of generation gap, domestic abuse, and mental health issues.

The aggregate experience of watching those films, meeting the people who made them, and observing the ways in which they supported each other blurred the line between the fiction we create and the stories we build in real life. And the way that both supplements and develops each other is what really excites me.

Through our journey within different theaters watching different films and our talks with legendary directors like Quentin Lee, I am excited at the potential of API cinema and where it could still go. The range of this year's films was diverse. However, a good friend once told me that art imitates life, and I would expect no less from an API cinematic movement that seeks to emulate the diversity of its community. As the community continues to grow, I have no doubt that the quality, diversity, and creativity of our cinema will grow as well.

As long as Hollywood continues to cast API men as emasculated males and API women as submissive China Dolls, we'll need the artists within our community to represent who we are on the big screen and in pop culture. If anything, moments like the packed theater's prolonged applause after the screening of *White Frog* only affirm this persistent need.



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[widelanter.com](http://widelanter.com)  
[genevaanderson.wordpress.com](http://genevaanderson.wordpress.com)  
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# The New Dog in Town

## The rising popularity of Asian fusion cuisine within the food truck phenomenon

by laurie song

Upper Sproul is a UC Berkeley landmark usually packed with various student groups and students trying to avoid their flyers. Though the students are a permanent fixture, the food trucks dotting the entrance to our campus seem to be ever-changing. This year, one of the notable additions is Dojo Dog, a small Asian fusion food truck with big ambitions.

Food trucks serving specialty foods are a relatively recent phenomenon in the United States. Though food trucks and street vendors existed well before the 21st century, entrepreneurial food trucks with an emphasis on creative, gourmet foods have experienced a resurgence in popularity since 2008, with the economic downturn and the advent of social media. For aspiring restaurateurs, food trucks are a relatively inexpensive way to sell food and bring it to the people. The medium also allows chefs to take greater creative risks. Menus are often not only fun and inventive but fluid, taking into account customers' feedback and suggestions. Once established, food trucks rely on word-of-mouth and social media such as Twitter, Facebook, and Yelp to maintain the truck's fan base while expanding the brand to new customers.

Perhaps the most well-known food truck on the West Coast is Kogi BBQ in Los Angeles, which serves Korean Mexican fare such as spicy pork tacos and kimchi quesadillas. Kogi, which took off in 2008, now has almost 98,000 followers on Twitter keeping up with its ever-changing locations and menu, and has become something of a traveling landmark. Their success has been so great that they have now expanded to five trucks and one sit-down bar. In the wake of its success, many Asian American entrepreneurs have followed in Kogi's tire tracks and started their own Asian fusion food trucks.

Asian fusion cuisine has roots in Asian colonial history when Western imperialism initiated the diffusion of different food culture elements across Western and Asian boundaries. Some foods we consider to be familiar today—chicken tikka masala, pearl milk tea, halo halo—incorporate both sides of that colonial history. Later, with the increase of globalization and transnationalism around the 19th century, Asian immigrants came to the United States, bringing their cuisines and food traditions with them. Though some settled in ethnic enclaves such as Chinatowns, assimilation and acculturation

were inevitable, resulting in distinctively Asian American foods such as Chinese chicken salad, spam musubi, egg rolls, California rolls, and fortune cookies.

Today, Asian foods and their Americanized fusion counterparts are relatively established in the American mainstream food culture. A century ago, raw fish on vinegared rice would probably have been met with disgust and a lot of questions. Trying a new food, while potentially eye-opening, can also be seen as an accessible and safe way to demonstrate one's cultural curiosity and open-mindedness.

Today's new generation of Asian Americans is creating a different and deliberate form of Asian fusion cuisine, and the mobile food truck is quickly becoming their investment of choice. Though they all share the same passion for delicious food, regardless of origin, each proprietor has a different story to tell.

Michael Koh, a 3rd year Environmental Economics undergraduate student at UC Berkeley who emigrated from Taiwan at the age of 16, is the owner of Dojo Dog, which opened for business in January 2012. Dojo Dog "combine[s] the classic American hot dog with the unique flavors of Asia," with hot dog toppings ranging from seaweed and Japanese mayonnaise to teriyaki sauce and pork sung.

The story behind Dojo Dog starts out as perhaps many a Berkeley student's Friday night does: after a night of inebriated revelry, Koh and his friends decided to go to Top Dog. However, upon their return, they realized they had forgotten to add any condiments to their hot dogs. With no ketchup or mustard at home, they grabbed the closest thing, a bottle of teriyaki sauce, which yielded surprisingly tasty results.

After the first inspired creation, Koh began to experiment with different flavor combinations, and eventually his friends suggested that he take the concept a step further. He researched different mobile food regulations and finally settled on a bright blue food truck branded with a cartoon image of his own Shiba Inu in Taiwan—creating Dojo Dog.

When asked how he balances school and his new business, Koh is nonchalant. "To me, school is a good place, but I want to do more while I'm still a student," he says.

"Being a student allows me to fund the business because I'm using my living expenses and tuition money my parents gave me to do this. My parents still don't know anything about this to this day. My dream is: when they come here to visit me from Taiwan for my graduation, I'm going to take them to the truck and I'm going to be like, 'Hey, let me show you this great place, it's very delicious,' and after they've tried it I'm going to be like, 'That's mine.'"

Despite the fact that Koh's father and sister are both entrepreneurs, he doubts that his parents would be supportive of his venture, which is why he's keeping his business a secret until the big surprise.

"Though my parents are adventurous themselves, they don't want their kids to take risks," says Koh. "They're very, very strict, and they'll call me every week to ask me how school is, how my grades are, how I did on the midterm. That's all they ask, and I just hated it. I wanted to do my own thing."

Koh credits Taiwan's diverse food culture as part of the reason he is so passionate about food, though his current menu is still mainly Japanese-inspired because Americans are more familiar with Japanese ingredients.

"You can have the greatest food in the world, but if people don't want to try it and are scared of it, then it's not going to work," he states. However, after he establishes a strong brand image and customer base, he looks forward to expanding the menu and introducing Asian ingredients that are less familiar to the American palate.

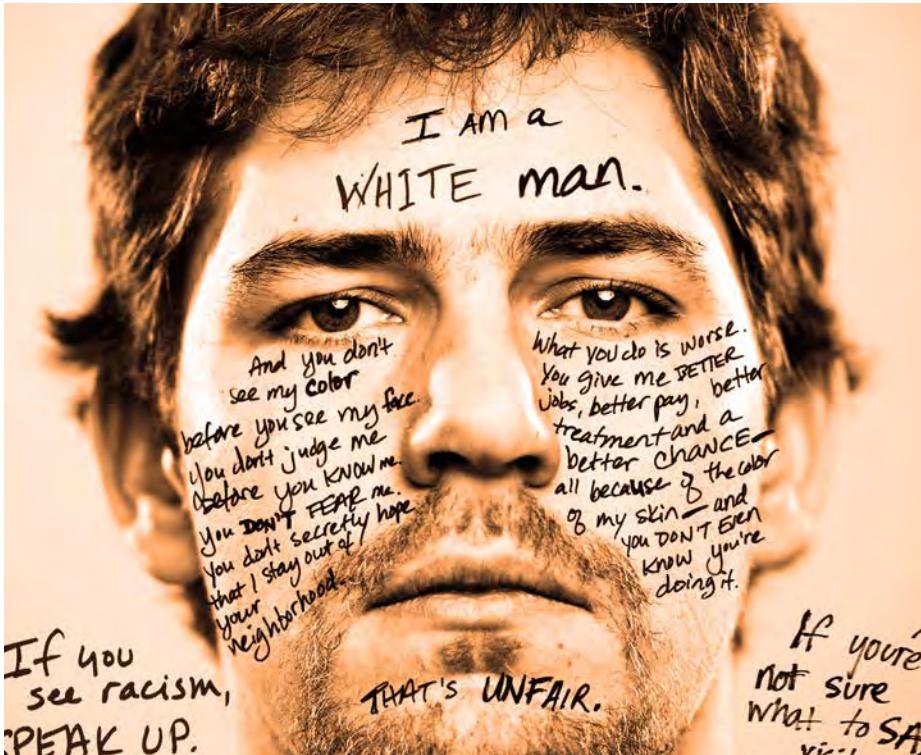
A self-professed "foodie," Koh looks forward to one day expanding Dojo Dog as part of the food truck trend, possibly into San Francisco or as a part of Off the Grid, an organized group of mobile food vendors that travels across the Bay Area (including a stop in North Berkeley) as a weekly "market." He sees potential for his business not just as another quick bite on Upper Sproul, but as the newest Asian fusion addition to the ranks of other like-minded entrepreneurial food trucks before him.

Ultimately, the driving force behind the current food truck phenomenon isn't simply that people are looking to satisfy their hunger—it's that they're looking for a new experience, for an affordable adventure, for food that challenges all of their senses in the most deliciously unexpected way. Dojo Dog and other Asian fusion food trucks aim to do just that.



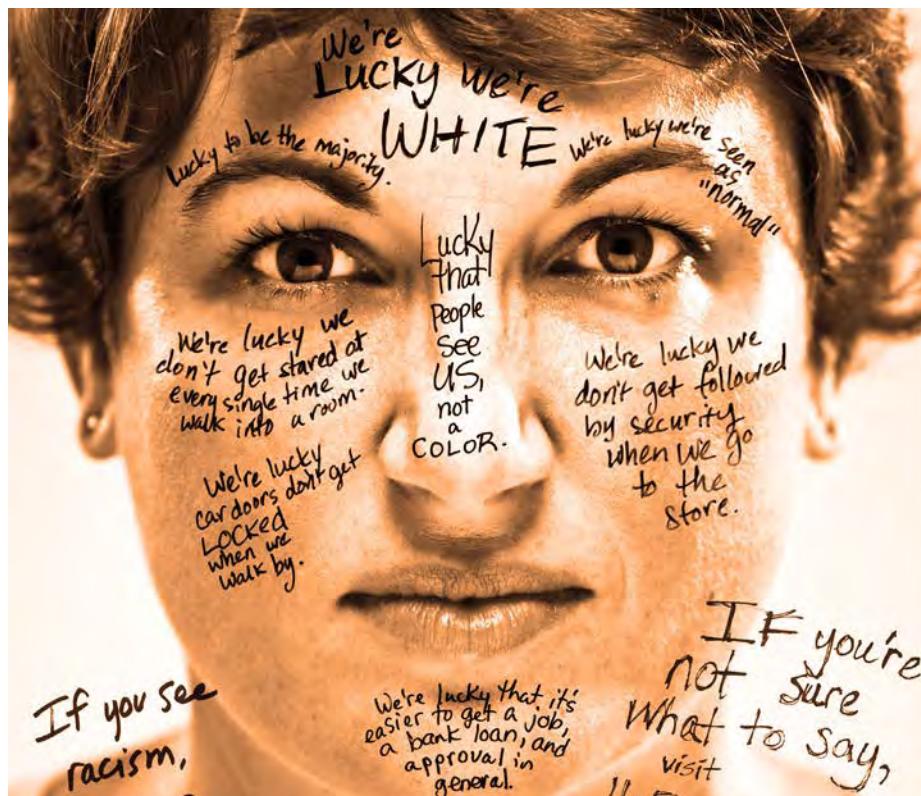
photo courtesy of dojo dog's facebook





# THE UNFAIR CAMPAIGN: RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT WHITE PRIVILEGE

by stephanie wong



Growing up, I would read novels or imagine fiction and fantasy scenarios with predominantly white characters. I never imagined myself to be the princess in my own drawings, who was likely to resemble Barbie or one of the Disney princesses. By the way, I grew up in a community where the only white persons I personally interacted with were my teachers, who did not look like Barbie or any princess.

Why did the default individuals in my fantasies typically turn out to be white? It was not until my second year in college when I was engaged in a course that involved discussions on race that I began to understand how the history of America, Asian Americans, and my

family played a major role in how I viewed and came to understand myself.

Race is oftentimes a tense topic of discussion because it seems to be stigmatized in our society, as if we are racist or discriminatory to even consider the presence of race relations today. Recent events like Trayvon Martin's death and the California federal appeals court's rejection to lift the ban on affirmative action demonstrate how race and racism continue to be difficult topics to address or accept in our era.

However, in 2011, community members of Duluth, Minnesota, came together to break this tension over racial discussion and formed the Un-Fair Campaign. The campaign's mission is "To raise awareness about white privilege in our community, provide resources for understanding action, and facilitate dialogue and partnership that result in fundamental, systemic change towards racial justice."

What exactly is white privilege?

According to Peggy McIntosh, an American feminist and anti-racist activist who wrote "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," white privilege is the "unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits, and choices bestowed on people solely because they are white. Generally white people who experience such privilege do so without being conscious of it."

An example McIntosh provides in her list from "White Privilege" is: "Whether I use checks, credit cards or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial responsibility." No matter what her real strengths may be, McIntosh argues that her skin color has provided her with a set of unearned privileges.

The campaign's resources include definitions, history of race in America, external sources, and links to other guides that might help in educating the public on issues of race.

The campaign seems inspirational, especially coming from a community where whites make up 89 percent of the local area's population. In fact, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), one of the nation's most widely recognized civil rights organizations, supports the campaign as a partner.

Unfortunately, the website ([unfaircampaign.org](http://unfaircampaign.org)) is more like a dump site for resources to "facilitate dialogue" on race and to help visitor's build a beginner's level vocabulary and education on racism and structural racism, which are all necessary before one can truly grasp white privilege. I am not quite sure how the less race conscientious visitor would navigate the site and its sources—or how dialogue may be possible.

Furthermore, the campaign's outreach through billboards and posters can create some "unfair" tension. I am afraid that its publicity has the potential to do more harm than good for its goals toward racial justice and dialogue. The campaign's ambiguous and misleading outreach efforts provide potential for whites to become defensive or for persons of color to feel more silenced from conversations on race.

Every billboard has a fragment of a white person's face, overlapped by the tagline "It's hard to see racism when you're white." All posters have the statement "that's unfair" written on the model's face and invites bystanders to "speak up" and "break the silence" if they see racism. For all outreach advertisements, the only call to action comes from the prints' direction for bystanders to visit its website.

Breaking apart these posters and billboards, I take up two issues with the campaign's outreach efforts. Firstly, the way in which the statements of privilege are written above models' faces resemble the ways in which areas for corrections and changes are drawn on individuals who are about to undergo plastic surgery, or facial reconstruction. Therefore, it seems as if the advertisements are suggesting that these privileges are flaws that can be simply fixed or corrected.

Secondly, these advertisements lack any connection between the privileges written on the models' faces and the actual concept of white privilege and racism. The greatest danger that can come out of this is for a bystander to view the campaign as a campaign against white people or one that raises awareness on whites as a racially oppressed group. If a bystander has never engaged herself in discussions over race or prepared himself with the basic vocabulary, a blunt "It's hard to see racism when you're white" or "[Insert an example of white privilege here], that's unfair" can be offensive and ambiguous. Is it unfair to the white person who carries these privileges that she may not have earned or deserved? Or is it unfair to those who do not have those same privileges, even if these privileges are more like normal standards for how people should be treated?

I fear that even the reasonable bystander exposed to these advertisements would miss the campaign's mission to bring the public toward a more racially just society. I also fear that someone could mistake privileges for stereotypes, or use the two interchangeably. I would not find a campaign to address the Model Minority Myth to be successful or inviting if my face had statements like "I am an obedient student" or "I will excel at math" scrawled across my face.

While I appreciate the campaign's attempts to foster discussions on race and white privilege, I hope to see their publicity attempts change. From my own experience in facilitating and participating in discussions involving the topic of race and white privilege, it seemed that what really helped me and my peers understand these concepts were the literal space and facilitation for dialogue and conversations.

Today, I have come out of these spaces and conversations with tools that allow me to be more conscientious about racial injustice and to be more comfortable discussing race with others. Now, I understand how white privilege in American society has been a strong influence on my childhood imaginations.

The default characters of my imagination's products no longer resemble Barbie or Cinderella but take on the faces of persons of color. I have also become more sensitive toward how I perceive others without real grounds for knowing what kinds of individuals they may be.

In order for the Un-Fair Campaign to reach the public and generate similar paradigm shifts, I hope they reconsider the ways in which they have been approaching the conversation. As of now, I feel like only greater harm and misinformation are added to the mix through their outreach, and *that's unfair*.

# Beneath the color Of the skin:



I thought that in this day and age society's stereotypes and prejudiced behaviors have died down. With the steadily growing emergence of Asian and Asian American representatives in the media today, I was almost ready to say: Asians are making really positive progress in society. But what I wasn't expecting was a racist attack from our very own Asian/Pacific Islander community.

The Philippines edition of For Him Magazine released the cover of its next magazine issue on its Facebook page in hopes of stirring excitement and anticipation among audiences. FHM, however, did not expect the actual reactions it received. Disappointed and angry, readers began to complain and comment on the FHM magazine cover, continuously shouting the words "racist" and "racism." The news quickly spread throughout social media outlets and across the seas.

Actress Bela Padilla of Filipino and British descent graced the cover of the magazine in a hot pink bikini with her light skin glowing as the center of attention. Surrounding Padilla were three other models with much darker skin tones dressed in all black bikinis, a juxtaposition emphasizing the depiction of Bela as "Stepping out of the shadows"—the headline for Padilla's article.

What is most disturbing is that Padilla, in an attempt to defend the magazine,

mentioned that two of the models on the cover were Filipina and they were actually painted to look darker.

No matter what ethnic background you identify with, many of you have heard about some Asian cultures and their attraction to lighter skin. That is why it was almost no surprise when the juxtaposition used to represent Padilla's emergence was the contrast of skin colors.

Some students on campus agree: traditionally in their families, parents and the elders prefer lighter skin color. Dereck Pan, a 4th year undergraduate at UC Berkeley shared, "Traditionally, most people with lighter skin color are more desirable. People with darker skin color are associated more with 'hard labor' and 'field work' and 'lower class.' It's just a relic of my culture. It means nothing to me personally."

Daisy Lei, a 1st year undergraduate, added, "It's more preferable to have lighter skin—especially for girls. It's seen as 'purity.'

Padilla apologized on her personal twitter account saying, "I meant no harm with this cover. I'm so sorry to everyone who got offended. I hope all of you see the beauty of the cover and appreciate it... The concept was stepping out of MY inhibitions, MY fears, MY shadows. Not bashing a certain race."

Along with Padilla's apology, FHM's publishers released their apology, stating,

## Racism and the underlying struggles of the Asian/Pacific Islander community

by jenny lu

"When FHM hits the stands in March, it will have a different cover... we will strive to be more sensitive next time."

While Padilla sincerely apologized, both Padilla and the FHM publishers do not seem to regret their initial decisions of creating and releasing the cover. The attitudes behind the apologies push for the thought that the readers were "sensitive" and misunderstood the intended idea of the cover—not admitting that the publishers made a racist mistake.

FHM is the top selling men's magazine in the Philippines. We can only begin to imagine the kind of impact and influence FHM has over the men and women who read the magazine. If such a popular and strong magazine was unable to catch such profound racism on their own cover, what other ideas and images are they feeding the people in the Philippines? It's almost scary to realize that none of the magazine staff members were able to point out how wrong and racist their cover was.

The racism embedded behind the image runs deeper than just the idea of "race." It brings to life the struggles many Asians and Asian Americans have gone through with their families, society, and stereotypes. It reinforces the idea of "beauty" as being light skinned over other pigments. It is not simply just a racist cover "bashing another race," it is the bashing of every single person who identifies with the

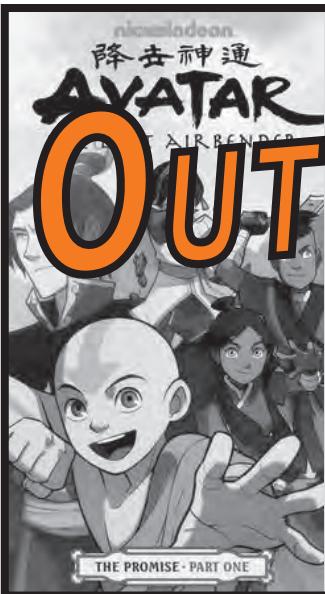
struggle of skin color, regardless of their race.

Young girls who see covers like this will get the wrong image of what it means to be attractive. It's media coverage like this that lowers the self-esteem of girls, girls who think they have to look like Padilla and other models to be beautiful.

Many Asian cultures, especially in countries such as Japan and China, encourage and participate in the marketing of beauty products and cosmetics that lighten the skin. Young women and girls pay attention to these advertisements and in turn become consumers of these products in order to conform to this specific idea of beauty.

Even with the retraction of the magazine cover and apologies from both Padilla and the FHM representatives, the damage has been done. The image will float around the Internet indefinitely as a reminder that racism is alive and that it lingers internally in our own thoughts, beliefs, and culture.

As a community, we can all fight against these stereotypes placed on our communities. We can embrace and love ourselves the way we are regardless of skin color, size, and shape and encourage young girls to do the same. Challenge the stereotypes and rise above them. Stereotypes and media depictions of beauty do not have to define you.



# OUT OF THE GUTTER INTO THE PANEL

by Lark Pien  
**Considering the presence and representation  
of APAs in the American comic book**



Comics have hit the mainstream in a big way. Look at highly rated *The Big Bang Theory* where the main characters have an unabashed love for comic culture. Movie studios have zeroed in on superhero franchises and popular graphic novels as the best bets for film adaptations with their contents' proven marketability and built-in fan bases. Even as the publishing industry precariously negotiates how to deal with digital distribution and major booksellers disappearing off street corners, comics have maintained their strong niche in the book market, weathering through the aughts with sales remaining stable and even growing.

Asians are no doubt huge players in the comic world due to the humongous impact and popularity of Japanese manga. Walk into any Borders. Low and behold, the fire hazard of people reading in the manga aisle. Yet, even with the proliferation of manga into the American mainstream consciousness, manga is a cultural import from Japan. What about Asian Americans? Where do they fit in?

At first glance, one wouldn't associate the American comic scene with Asian Americans. One imagines campy action comics made for the kiddies featuring muscle-y white superheroes created by white dudes hunched over their drafting desks. If you think like this though, you are completely missing out on the richness and variety of the American comic medium.

The forefathers of the American comic book were Jewish Americans composing narratives about special individuals that essentially must pass as "normal" human beings and hide their Other-ness. Although these characters must bear hiding their true identities, their difference is manifested through special abilities that can help mankind. The reader's ability to relate and feel empowered speaks to the general appeal of traditional American superhero comics, but Asian Americans may particularly identify with the struggle to deal with one's own Other-ness in society.

In conjunction with the notion that Asian culture inherently privileges the amalgamation of words and images as high art and sophisticated language, it is no wonder that there are actually tons of Asian Americans in this industry that was founded on the imaginations of social outsiders.

Bay Area native Gene Yang, author of *American Born Chinese* and more recently the canonical comic sequel to the Nickelodeon animated series *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, remarks, "It seems to me that there are more Asian Americans in comics than in any other American entertainment industry. It doesn't matter what kind of comics [people] read: superhero, indie, action/adventure, young adult. Asian Americans are just all over the place. This is not true of comic book characters, however. Just creators."

Historically, traditional American comics have perpetuated negative stereotypes of Asians/Asian Americans. Comics often manifest the sociopolitical attitudes of their time, and America certainly wasn't always so PC. The long graphic narrative form we've come to know and love blossomed in the 1930s right between the World Wars, and the American comic book hit its stride during the Cold War, an era rife with international tension. Alongside patriotic propaganda, it's really no surprise that Asians were vilified and made into grotesque caricatures, which were thoroughly documented in the 2011 NYU exhibit "Monsters and Marvels: Unmasking Asian Images in U.S. Comics, 1942-1986."

The 80s and 90s marked an era when new blood helped motivate the industry to push for more culturally authentic and mature representations of characters. According to Yang during a Feb. 11th lecture at Berkeley's Fantastic Comics, the uniform bright yellow hue for all Asian characters' skin was abandoned, and characters with distinct ethnic heritages were fleshed out and given more humanity.

Asian Americans were indeed among the ranks of fresh talent and have remained an integral part of the American

comic landscape.

In traditional superhero comics, there are Larry Hama (*G.I. Joe: A Real American Hero*), Jae Lee (*Inhumans*), Greg Pak (*The Hulk*), and loads others. In more indie and alternative flavor comics, there are Jason Shiga (*Fleep*), Tak Toyoshima (*Secret Asian Man*), Adrian Tomine (*Optic Nerve*), and also many more. I really could go on and on as there are just so many names and works out there, but I only have so much page space.

Also, let's not forget all the contributors of *Secret Identities: The Asian American Superhero Anthology*. Edited by Jeff Yang, Parry Shen, Keith Chow, and Jerry Ma, *Secret Identities* enlisted the talents of Asian American comic creators to craft original Asian American superhero stories to combat and comment on the lack of Asian American superheroes in comics. The stories are short, but nonetheless shed much welcome light on Asian American representation in mainstream comics.

So, despite the muddy political incorrectness plaguing the history of the American comic book, comics remain a potent storytelling and creative outlet for Asian Americans. In the introductory essay for the Fall 2007 volume of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States Journal, Derek Parker Royal explains, "Because of its foundational reliance on character iconography, comics are well suited to dismantle those very assumptions that problematize ethnic representation, especially as they find form in visual language."

The comic medium may lend itself to stereotyping as visual cues are important, but the medium is particularly special. The image, the narrative, the spatial configuration on the page, and the reader's imagination are inextricably intertwined and actively engaged. Authors of graphic narratives have a unique relationship with their creations, therefore connecting with their audience on a very personal level.

According to Yang, "Of the visual media - comics, film, TV, animation - it's the only one that allows one person to have complete control over everything. One person can do the writing, drawing, and even oversee the production of the physical product. Many, many cartoonists are control freaks. Especially indie cartoonists. We want that control. I think this aspect—the control—makes comics a very intimate medium."

While other entertainment venues are industries trying to get the biggest bang for their buck and are not so concerned about challenging the boundaries of innovative expression, comics provide a liberating creative space for artists and storytellers to compose graphic narratives that speak to personal experiences and the universal struggles of their audience. Comics have become the creative niche for Asian Americans. APAs have long been represented in the by-lines, but not so much in the page. As the comic scene continues to diversify and more creators like Yang continue utilizing the comic medium to tell stories with authentic APA characters, we'll be able to see our true selves reflected more in the panels and the collective imagination of readers everywhere.

by eileen tse



## TRIVIA with Gene Yang

What is your favorite depiction of an APA character in graphic novels/comics?

I love Derek Kirk Kim's *Same Difference*. Nancy and Simon are awesome characters. They feel real, like they stepped out of our lives and onto the page.

If you were to single out three graphic novels authored by APAs as recommendations or personal favorites, what would they be?

*Same Difference* would be one of them. *Shortcomings* by Adrian Tomine. *One Hundred Demons* by Lynda Barry. For the kiddies, *Long Tail Kitty* by Lark Pien and *Amulet* by Kazu Kibuishi.

Who is your favorite Asian/APA fictional character of all time? I'm a comics guy. So I'll have to give you a comics answer. *Yang of the House of Yang*. It's an old 1970s comic. I love him because his name is awesome, for a tragic character. There's Adolf in Osamu Tezuka's *Adolf*. He's a half German/half Japanese Nazi. He's my favorite.

Since you wrote the canonical sequel to Avatar, who is your favorite character and name one particular aspect you enjoy from *AVATAR: The Last Airbender*?

My favorite *A:TLA* character is Zuko. And honest, I love everything about *A:TLA*: the martial arts action, the three dimensional characters, the writing. It's the best American cartoon series ever

What is your current TV obsession? What is the last movie you watched in theatres and at home?

We don't have cable. So everything we watch has to be on Netflix instant play. My wife and I have been really into *Mad Men*. I can't remember the last movie I watched in the theaters! I have kids so we don't get out much. I'm in the middle of *Red Cliff* at home. Pretty good so far.

If you could only read one book for the rest of your life, what would it be?

Dude. Reading the same book over and over again? Forever? That sucks. My wife wrote me a bunch of letters when we were dating. I would get those bound into a book and bring that.