



hardboiled

October
2006

THE ASIAN AMERICAN NEWSMAGAZINE!





hardboiled

october 2006

editor's note

The word "deception" is fraught with negative connotations. However, on Thursday, September 21, 2006, deception proved to be a welcoming, humanizing concept.

Earlier that day, *Game of Shadows* authors Lance Williams and Mark Fainaru-Wada were indicted for refusing to disclose their sources in a federal investigation. *Game* focused on the use of steroids in sports and led to investigations within Major League Baseball and sweeping revisions in MLB's steroid policy. Journalists, editors, and concerned citizens have been calling for a national shield law that would protect journalists from divulging their sources. A shield law, proponents argue, would facilitate communication between sources and journalists, opening streams of communication with those people who cannot speak out without revealing themselves and putting themselves in danger (legal, physical, or otherwise). If sportswriters cannot guarantee anonymity to their sources, what chances do political writers or news writers have in extracting information, from say, criminal gang members or terrorist insiders? There are cases when the national government should be able to demand information from journalists, but only when such information would ultimately illuminate or prevent an extremely dire threat, something on the scale of mass murder or a potential national attack; Williams and Fainaru-Wada hardly deserve such inquisition.

While a federal judge ordered the two authors to prison that day, Vietnamese activist Cong Thanh Do returned home later that night, emotionally drained from his month-plus prison ordeal in Vietnam. In August, Do was vacationing in Vietnam with his family when the Vietnam government arrested and detained him, claiming that Do planned to attack the US consulate. Do denied the charges, then let loose the secret that he had hidden from his own family: he was a chairman for the People's Democratic Party of Vietnam, an underground collective devoted to establishing free speech and multiple parties in the Southeastern Asian nation. Working from his home computer, right under the noses of his unsuspecting family, Do worked in conjunction with the New-York-based Committee to Protect Journalists and Paris-based Reporters Without Borders. Do translated articles, disseminated pro-democracy information, and served as a liaison to human rights groups when dissidents were harassed or detained.

People like Do, Williams and Fainaru-Wada illustrate that there are still people out there who are willing to risk their own lives to muckrake for the good of society. These activists spent countless thankless hours, working for what they believed was right, and were rewarded with public and government scrutiny. Ironically enough, the type of deception Do (keeping his activism from his family for protection) and Williams and Fainaru-Wada (refusing to disclose sources as a manner of professional ethics and personal principle) committed does not irrevocably scar their reputations; rather it augments their integrity. The impressive resolve all three displayed, through the personal sacrifices and dangerous circumstances, should garner only our highest praise and respect. As journalists, as students, as citizens, we can only hope to be as deceptive as these three.

Happy tenth, hb.

kevin lee
copy editor

STORY EDITORS

jason coe
lina peng
pauline sze
adrienna wong

MANAGING EDITOR

matt hui

LAYOUT EDITORS

wendy gu
joanna kim
owen leong
christine yang

COPY EDITOR

kevin lee

CONTRIBUTING STAFF

bonnie ho
kory hui
robin ikegami
steve kim
brian lau
ethan lee
ashik manandhar
chi nguyen
samantha paik
erin pangilinan
tracy trinh
erin wong
karen wu

COVER ART
owen leong

3 api quick voter guide

4 five years from 9-11, a look back

5 terrorists or refugees?| *drawing restraint 9*

6 china bears politics

7 watada you doing?

8 *flower drum song* revived

9 the journey of iva toguri

10 crashing hollywood's plane

11 east meets west: asian films remade

12 comic: mom and my major

in this issue

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

Correction:

Jordan Gonzales' name was spelled incorrectly in the article titled, "Has Ethnic Studies Sold Its Soul?" published in issue 9.6.

hb meetings

Wednesdays 6-7PM

243 Dwinelle

hardboiledmagazine

@lists.berkeley.edu

for more information



QUICK VOTER GUIDE

by lina peng

2006 CA november election

ASIAN AMERICAN VOTING TRENDS (U.S. CENSUS BUREAU 2005)

- Number of Asian American residents in California rose from 3.8 million to 4.7 million, from 2000 to 2005, accounting for 38% of California's net gain in population.
- The percentage of Asian Americans eligible to vote in California climbed by half-a-million people, from 10% to 12% from 2000 to 2005.
- Asian American voter turnout increased 71 percent from 1.7 million in 1996 to 3 million in 2000 (2006 Report by Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund).
- In the 2000 presidential election, 43% of eligible Asian Americans cast a ballot, a total of more than two million votes.



register to vote!

Look for voter registration tables around Sproul Plaza

Register online: www.ss.ca.gov

Deadline: 15 days before election

for entire list of propositions and election information:

www.votercircle.com

www.calvoter.org

✓ Proposition 85 ✓ Proposition 86 ✓ Proposition 88

Amends California Constitution to prohibit abortion for minors until 48 hours after parental notification, except in medical emergency or with parental waiver.

for

- Minors will avoid reckless behavior
- Parental notification needed for all other surgical procedures, abortion should not be an exception
- More than 30 states have passed laws like 85, resulting in substantial reductions in pregnancies and abortions among minors

www.yeson85.net

against

- Delays medical care and counseling
- Places teens from abusive homes in jeopardy
- Good communication cannot be imposed by government
- May lead to self-induced or back-alley abortions

www.noon85.net

asian american-related facts

- 35% of pregnancies end in abortion for API women, compared to 18% for white women, representing the second highest percentage for all racial and ethnic groups
- From 1994 to 2000, abortion rates fell for all groups except API women

www.americanprogress.org

Imposes additional 13-cent tax on each cigarette distributed (\$2.60 per pack), to provide funding to qualified hospitals for emergency services, nursing education, and health insurance to eligible children.

for

According to the California Department of Health Services:

- Prevent 700,000 kids from becoming adult smokers
- Prevent approximately 120,000 additional deaths due to smoking among current California adult smokers who quit smoking
- Save Californians \$16 billion in health care costs

www.yeson86.org

against

- Almost 40 percent goes to hospitals, many of which are funding the campaign for the new tax
- Less than 10 percent of the tax revenues go toward helping smokers quit or keeping kids from starting
- Very limited oversight to ensure that the funds are allocated as intended
- Burden not on tobacco companies but consumers

www.noprop86.org

asian american-related facts

- Asian Americans have the lowest smoking prevalence rates among adults of all racial/ethnic groups. In 2004, 11.3 percent of Asians smoked
- In 2004, 11.2 percent of Asian American high school and 2.2 percent of Asian American middle school students smoked cigarettes
- Among API men, lung cancer is the second most common cancer, and among women, the third

www.lungusa.org

A \$50 tax on property parcels to raise money for class size reduction, textbooks, school safety, Academic Success facility grants, and a data system to evaluate educational program effectiveness. Exempts senior and disabled homeowners.

for

- Estimated \$450 million annually directly into our local schools
- Funds are prohibited from being used for administrative overhead and the Legislature cannot redirect the money to other programs; annual independent audits
- Relatively small, fixed assessment that protects property owners from runaway taxes--especially seniors with fixed incomes

www.votefor88.org

against

- Tax is levied by the State that decides distribution among school districts, not local governments
- Sets a bad precedent, allowing other special interests to pass more, potentially bigger, state property parcel taxes to fund their specific causes
- The new parcel tax is permanent, whether or not it results in improvements to our education programs

www.noprop88.org

asian american-related facts

- In 2005, 80.5% of Asian Americans, 25 years and older, have high school diplomas, as compared to 76.8% for the general population
- 19% of Asians, age 25 years and over, have an advanced degree (e.g., masters, Ph.D., M.D. or J.D.). The corresponding rate for all adults in the age group is 9 percent

U.S. Census Bureau

Five Years from 9/11

A Look Back

by ashik manandhar



www.nsa.gov

This past summer, I went to Radio Shack to pick up a few regular, run-of-the-mill, electrical components for an Electrical Engineering lab. When I went to register to pay for my items, the salesperson jokingly asked if I was planning to build a bomb and if so, he would have to report me to Homeland Security. While I do not have ties with al-Qaeda, nor am I Muslim, the salesperson made a quick assumption that because I could pass off as someone of Middle Eastern descent, I was an easy target for "terrorist jokes." In my case, it was a seemingly harmless, yet offensive joke; such sentiments have been magnified since September 11, 2001.

From the wars raging in Afghanistan and Iraq, to the terrorist bombings in Spain and England, the events of 9/11 continue to impact lives worldwide. America's "War on Terror" has shifted the global landscape; yet what should not be lost is the war's everlasting impact on individuals and groups throughout. Many Muslim and South Asian communities in America have been severely affected by citizen-powered hate crimes and racial discrimination as well as government-led racial profiling, interrogations, detentions, deportations, and bank account freezes. In the *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* journal from the Duke University Press, Louise Cainkar notes in the article "Post 9/11 Domestic Policies Affecting U. S. Arabs and Muslims: A Brief Review" that, "Of the roughly twenty policies and initiatives implemented in the first twelve months after 9/11, fifteen explicitly targeted Arabs and Muslims. It is important to note that these policies are not part of the USA PATRIOT Act; they are largely creations of the executive branch." In a country whose Constitution calls for "equal protection" and "due process," the government's response appears unrelenting and contradictory.

On September 11, 2002, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) created a special mandatory registration program for "certain non-immigrant aliens": Muslim, South Asian, and North Korean males over the age of sixteen. According to Cainkar, "82,880 persons living in the U. S. had been 'specially' registered by 1 June 2003 in domestic call-in registration. Another 127,694 persons were initial registrants at their U. S. Port of Entry." The government then used this data to conduct hundreds of raids and roundups to detain and deport many from those communities. Many people were convicted for minor infractions; some examples include overstaying traveling visits by a couple days, not taking enough credits necessary for a student visa, and failing to meet the ever-changing registration program requirements – infractions that most people are never convicted of.

"Of the roughly twenty policies and initiatives implemented in the first twelve months after 9/11, fifteen explicitly targeted Arabs and Muslims."

The issue at hand is clear: the government selectively enforced the laws to target members of the Muslim and South Asian communities. Bypassing formal charges and legal hearings, the government recklessly detained suspects for months on end, while restricting access to legal representation and loved ones. In addition, many were locked up in solitary confinement or in overcrowded prisons. Most importantly, Cainkar notes, "Of the domestic call-in registrants, 13,434 were placed in removal proceedings for visa violations, though *none* of them was charged with terrorism, terrorist affiliations, or otherwise suspected of terrorist affiliations." The constitutional rights of these people were infringed upon to "protect the country," when the only crime they had ever committed was being of an ethnic group similar to those who committed the crimes of 9/11. The government's plan was destined for failure; many of the government infractions against minorities went unfounded, and anyone who was culpable for terrorist activity would simply not have complied with the INS and voluntarily registered in the first place.

In addition to the mandatory registration program headed by the INS, the government froze the bank accounts of people or organizations the government believed to be linked to terrorists. In the five years since 9/11, the government has shut down six major Muslim organizations without convicting anyone of a crime. Recently, the government used this line of reasoning to shut down a number of Muslim associated charities and non-profit groups. Organizations such as Foundation for Appropriate and Immediate Temporary Help (FAITH), a small charity local to Virginia, were completely surprised and overwhelmed when the



government shut them down. Unlike many of the larger charities that the government acted upon, FAITH did not have any overseas donors, and therefore thought themselves immune to such government investigations. FAITH, however, may have been subject to account freezes because they received a substantial donation from a Muslim businessman the government had investigated a few years prior. The role of freezing accounts had gotten so out of hand to the point that Muslim community members of Illinois felt that they had to push for a resolution titled, "Charity Without Fear" to be passed. The purpose of the resolution was to compile a list of charities and non-profit organizations that the Muslim community could donate to without fear that the federal government would shut them down.

Has half a decade allowed tensions between society and the Muslim and South Asian communities to reconcile? While initial tensions may have died down, the shallow, McCarthy-like witch-hunt for South Asians and Muslims continues, fueled by government action. The government wrongly detained thousands of Muslims and South Asians for infringements in other circumstances most courts would dismiss. Their constitutional rights were infringed upon in order to "protect the country," but the overwhelming majority of these people were not terrorists. Such shortsighted investigations wasted numerous man-hours while separating loved ones for years and draining individuals and communities alike. Five years after the attack, the government is still on the campaign to unjustifiably target Muslim and South Asian communities. The US must ultimately show greater foresight when acting in the name of national security.

TERRORISTS...

After nearly 10 years of being confined to a refugee camp, a group of 9,300 Karen refugees from Burma finally have the opportunity to resettle in the United States. The Karen people are an ethnic minority from Burma and Thailand who have struggled for autonomy from the repressive Burmese government. For decades, the Burmese government has subjected the Karen people to torture and forced labor. The Burmese army has forcefully displaced civilians by burning and looting homes, planting landmines in civilian areas, and threatening execution. Until a recent State Department declaration, the US banned many of the Karen refugees from seeking asylum in the United States because they were included under expanded definitions of "terrorism" instituted by post-9/11 legislation, including the Patriot Act and the Real ID act.

The new legislation has expanded the definition of terrorism to include any use of "explosive, firearm, or other weapon" that is unlawful "under the laws of the place where the act is committed". Under this definition, any individual who takes up arms in resistance to state oppression and violence would be classified as a terrorist. Groups like the African National Congress (ANC), which fought apartheid in South Africa for the greater part of the 20th century, could today be legally classified as "terrorists." Such laws apply to many of the refugees fleeing Burma. A Harvard Human Rights Clinic Study from February 2006 found that as much as 82% of the refugees trying to flee Burma could be labeled as engaging in "terrorist activity" by US doctrine. Since ethnic minorities are persecuted in Burma, many minority groups have formed resistance movements such as the Karen National Union (KNU). As the US State Department itself reports, "The KNU historically has functioned as the de facto civilian government of the Karen people... resisting the repression of and seeking



autonomy from the Burmese regime." Despite this positive description of the KNU, US immigration law still bars former KNU members like 86-year-old Lincon Khya, who decades ago served six months of compulsory KNU military training, from entering the United States.

The new US immigration codes also ban resettlement for refugees who have provided "material support" to anyone who falls under the new "terrorist" classification. "Material support" has been interpreted to include the most basic of needs: shelter, food, and drinking water. Refugees who provide relatives with reasonable humanitarian aid could legally be treated the same as if they had provided Osama Bin Laden with a ten-course meal. Equally unnerving is that these laws do not take into account whether support was given knowingly, or if it was given as a result of coercion. A refugee forced at gunpoint to give shelter to ostensible terrorists would not be eligible for asylum, despite the terrorists' coercive methods.

US immigration exclusion has impacted the Asian American community since the first waves of Asian immigration, from the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act to the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act up until the 1960. The Cold War gave US policymakers political incentive to admit refugees from Asia and the rest of the world. With the rise of communism the US could ostensibly showcase itself as a political "haven" by opening its coasts to new immigrants. Such an influx led to the growth and rise of new Asian American communities. As time passed and the threat of communism died down, however, the US had less incentive to be so equitable in refugee admissions. For example, while 94% of the world's refugees were people of color in 2001, half of the refugees admitted to the US were white. Since the War on Terrorism has become the major determinant in immigration policy, vulnerable refugee communities in Asia have been further disadvantaged by shortsighted definitions of "terrorism."

Many Karen refugees have been given a second chance

at life outside the refugee camp through a recently issued State Department waiver that exempts them from being excluded under this "material support" clause. Yet hundreds of other refugees are still denied asylum under post-9/11 legislation because they have had direct contact with KNU, like the 17 year old interviewed by the Harvard Human Rights Clinic who did administrative work and human rights documentation training with a KNU office when he was 13. The waiver also does not help the countless other refugees and asylum-seekers facing unfair exclusion due to the expanded definitions of "terrorist activity." Other Burmese ethnic minorities like the Chin and Karenni groups face problems similar to those that Karen refugees have experienced. Of 18,000 Karenni refugees, only 100 have been referred to the US for resettlement. Moreover, as aforementioned, the law's inability to distinguish between coerced and non-coerced refugees bodes serious shortcomings. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) reports that a Liberian woman who was forced to give shelter to a rebel group after they raped her and killed her father has been denied asylum under the new regulations, as have 2000 Colombians who paid off armed guerillas under threat of death to themselves or a loved one. Absurdly enough, the new "anti-terror" legislation has caused problems for Cuban rebels currently seeking asylum who fought in the CIA-backed war against Castro.

It is easy to think of countless armed rebel groups that the United States have backed throughout the history of the last 50 years, making it seem ridiculous that the government of this country can give "material support" to certain groups on the one hand and condemn individuals in contact with those groups as "terrorist" on the other. Through foreign policy, the US sends the message that people can not take up arms against oppressive regimes – apparently, only the United States can do that for them. Meanwhile, as the drums of the "War Against Terror" beat on, vulnerable individuals are left in dangerous situations, surrounded by violence or detained indefinitely in refugee camps, waiting for relief that seems unlikely to come.



...OR REFUGEES?

by adrienna wong

Film Review: DRAWING RESTRAINT 9

by karen wu

Matthew Barney and Bjork, dressed up as pseudo-sea creatures, sensually lap each other's faces amidst a pounding thunderstorm. Their bottom halves become submerged in petroleum jelly that has flooded the ship. The two pull out sharp knives and begin to cut into each other's legs, sinking their fingernails into the gashes until droplets of blood trickle out. Next, they reach and pull at the flesh on their legs, dispersing chunks of meat throughout the melted petroleum jelly. Their legs, feet already gone, are reduced to wispy strings that sway like seaweed in the liquid. They feed on the flesh, grow blowholes, and dive under, thus concluding their transformation into whales.

Matthew Barney's film *Drawing Restraint 9* (2005) takes place on the Japanese Whaling Ship *Nisshin Maru*, backgrounded by Bjork's hauntingly appropriate soundtrack. The lyrics from the song in the opening sequence come from a Japanese citizen's thank-you-letter to General Douglas MacArthur upon his lifting of the whaling ban in 1946. *Drawing Restraint 9* centers upon the creation and collapse of a 25-ton petroleum jelly structure, and the encounter between two Western guests, played by Barney and Bjork.

At the start of the movie, Japanese workers shape petroleum jelly into Barney's trademark field symbol, representing a whale in this case. This structure later breaks when Japanese workers remove the mold. Meanwhile, Barney and Bjork arrive as guests of *Nisshin Maru* and undergo dramatic transformations at the hands of their hosts. Barney removes his thick fur coat, loses his beard, and falls asleep on the floor. As he sleeps, a mysterious Japanese man wielding a razor enters, shaving off his eyebrows and a square portion of his hair. At the same time, Bjork strips off her pom-pom adorned fuchsia cloak to take a bath, playing with orange-halves that her Japanese host slices and places in the water. Her hostess shaves off her eyebrows, blackens her teeth, dresses her in a furry kimono, decorates her hair with an array of sea specimens, and puts a furry hood over her head. Barney is also dressed in an elaborate robe, with white fur balls affixed to where his eyebrows used to be, and sea objects placed symmetrically upon the square bald-spot on his head, giving him the appearance of horns. In their "Shinto wedding garments," they shuffle separately to the tearoom, Barney looking like a demon, and Bjork resembling a giant sea otter from behind. There they meet and listen to the tea master's tale

of the *Nisshin Maru*. Aboard the deck, the Japanese crew mirrors the motions of the lengthy tea ceremony by rotating the petroleum jelly sculpture. Later when the storm comes, the sculpture, aka whale, "dies," and Barney and Bjork begin their erotic and gory encounter.

Drawing Restraint 9 was Barney's first artistic venture into the Eastern world. The 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Japan asked Barney to put together an exhibit when he began to look into the Japanese culture. Previously, Barney had been known for his other *Drawing Restraint* projects, which he began in 1987 as an art student at Yale. In these projects, he films himself creating art while applying various "restraints" to his body.

For instance, in one work, he jumps on a trampoline and scribbles on the ceiling, and in another, he draws in drag. Many find his art disappointing and overrated, while others call Barney a creative genius.

However one may see his art, Barney has found success. Born in 1967 in San Francisco, Barney merged his experience as a high school football player and wrestler with his art through the physical "restraints" he imposed on his body. His work has won critical acclaim and was recently featured at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Though visually stunning, *Drawing Restraint 9* begs the question of cultural exploitation. Barney attempts to tell a story of "East meets West" and the interplay between "host and guest." The result is a sense of fetishism when we see him as the lone white man among the Japanese, borrowing and altering traditional rituals for his artistic endeavors. It doesn't help that he does not seem to be making a point about the whaling industry, or that he engages in a highly sexual encounter onscreen with the Icelandic Bjork, his real-life partner who looks decidedly Asian.

Something does not sit quite right, but it's hard to accuse Barney of "stealing" from the Japanese culture, at a time when culture is bordering on universal. Barney's use of Japanese traditions, costumes, and history is relatively benign. The ridiculousness of the scenes and the shock value of the climax overshadow questions about the cultural authenticity of the movie. However, whether he intended to or not, Barney successfully makes Japanese culture seem alien. Although viewers can tell themselves, "It's just art," *Drawing Restraint 9* should be taken with a grain of salt – it is merely another showcase of a Westerner's fascination with the East.



panda diplomacy panda politicians panda politics



china bears politics: taking the furry approach

by erin wong

Not all successful international ambassadors are your typical, diplomatic experts; some in fact are not really human at all. Think furry, big eyes, sleeps on the job all the time, international symbol for “cute!” One of China’s most identifiable icons, the giant panda continues to be instrumental in shaping and building upon China’s international relations. While today pandas are known throughout the world, there was a time when the West did not know of the majestic creature. It was not until China utilized the panda’s natural charms as a means of diplomacy did the animal shoot up like bamboo to celebrity status. The world’s love affair with the panda has made it a treasure of zoos, an emblem of wildlife conservation, and an icon of Americanized Chinese fast food.

The panda’s exclusiveness to the mountain ranges of China made it an instant regional symbol. China offered the cuddly bears to other nations to foment diplomatic relationships and symbolize China’s goodwill; this became known as “panda diplomacy.” The first record of panda diplomacy took place during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), when Empress Wu Zetian sent two pandas as a gift to strengthen relations with Japan.

The animals first captivated the Western world in the mid-1800s. In 1869, the zoologist Père Armand David sent a panda skin he had received while in China to the Museum of Natural History in Paris. Another zoologist, Hugo Weigold, purchased a cub in 1916, and is believed to be the first person outside Asia to witness a live panda. In 1929, Kermit and Theodore Roosevelt Jr., following the huntsman ways of their father, went out on an expedition for the Field Museum of Natural History and became the first foreigners to shoot a panda.

China’s conservation efforts to protect the rare animal in the 1930s restricted the panda’s exposure with much of the world. At the time, the U.S. did not maintain diplomatic relations with China. However, in 1972 President Richard Nixon broke the silence when he made his momentous visit to the People’s Republic to meet with Chairman Mao Zedong. The trip resulted in the most famous contemporary example of panda diplomacy, Chairman Mao’s gift of two



Image: Nixon Presidential Materials, U.S. National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

pandas—Ling Ling and Hsing Hsing—along with the collective goodwill of China. Twenty thousand people came to see the cuddly symbols of China on the first day that they were displayed at the National Zoo in Washington D.C. In the first year alone, Ling-Ling and Hsing-Hsing had 1.1 million visiting admirers.

Since then, China has developed a trusty diplomatic technique, and the world has had a

china’s bear-y popular diplomats



<http://www.mccullagh.org/image/d30-7/panda-1.html>

love affair with the giant black-and-whites. Between 1958 and 1982, China gave 23 pandas to nine different countries. Shortly after the U.S. received its wildly successful souvenir, British Prime Minister Edward Heath made a trip to China in hopes of bringing back a pair of pandas for Britain’s own. Because of the furry diplomats, China no longer seemed so distant from the Western world.

A photograph taken this January of then-U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Robert B. Zoellick with a panda cub in Chengdu, China, is certainly worth a thousand words. An expert in foreign policy, Zoellick was assigned to manage Sino-American relations. The photo sheds light on the current status of US-China relations. Zoellick’s friendliness with Jing Jing symbolizes the warmth and openness between the two countries. Such a visual display of openness helps to allay public concerns of tension (economic, political, or otherwise) between the world powers.

The most illuminating example of the panda’s potent, symbolic power might be when a country actually refused China’s gift. Panda diplomacy caused a stir between mainland China and independent Taiwan. China offered two pandas to Taiwan in 2005., yet Taiwan’s Prime Minister Frank Hsieh was reluctant to accept the gift because he was unsure of China’s intentions. Though the majority of Taiwan’s public would have loved to house the creatures, Hsieh felt that he would have to acknowledge the mainland’s “one China” position, thus weakening Taiwan’s independence. The matter became so muddled that it was not until March of 2006 that Taiwan finally rejected the offer.

Though loved worldwide, the panda remains on the endangered species list. Factors for their low numbers include loss of habitat during China’s population boom and their short breeding windows. Because panda skins were considered renowned signs of goodwill, some poaching did occur. However, Chinese law back in 1987 made panda poaching punishable by death. This law remained until 1997, when China reduced the punishment to a maximum 20 years imprisonment. Zoos and conservation sites from San Diego to Berlin to Tokyo have worked to increase reproduction among pandas in captivity, resorting to panda matchmaking, in vitro fertilization, and even educational panda porn for the pandas’ viewing. Efforts have been successful, considering the 25 panda births this year in China, a record high.

Today, pandas saturate pop culture. Strip plazas and shopping malls seem barren without the Panda Express bear hovering over your orange flavored chicken. The stylized panda of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) exemplifies the goals of the organization: protecting the endangered natural world. Anyone with an Internet connection can spend all day eyeballing captive pandas in four major US zoos over Panda Cam, or watch the 15-second long “Panda Sneeze” video on YouTube, which has already been viewed over one million times. Panda characters also appear in the Tekken video game series and South Park. If you thought pandas had already invaded every area of the media, wait until 2008 when Jack Black stars as the Chinese bear in *Kung Fu Panda*, along with Jackie Chan and Lucy Liu. From politician to pop star, the panda’s status as national and cultural icon will hopefully continue, bringing the international community closer together.



WATADA YOU DOING?

by matthew hui

lieutenant watada's stand against the us army

On June 7, First Lieutenant Ehren K. Watada became the first military officer to officially refuse to go to Iraq, claiming that the war in Iraq was "illegal and immoral." His father, Bob Watada, spoke on behalf of his son: "My son has a great deal of courage, and clearly understands what is right, and what is wrong. He is choosing to do the right thing, which is a hard course." There is now a strong movement of support building toward his cause.

In a public statement released on June 7, Lieutenant Watada stated, "I refuse to be silent any longer. I refuse to watch families torn apart, while the President tells us to stay the course. I refuse to be party to an illegal and immoral war against people who did nothing to deserve our aggression. I wanted to be there for my fellow troops. But the best way was not to help drop artillery and cause more death and destruction. It is to help oppose this war and end it so that all soldiers can come home."

Lieutenant Watada also stated that, "It is my conclusion as an officer of the Armed Forces that the war in Iraq is not only morally wrong but a horrible breach of American law. The wholesale slaughter and mistreatment of the Iraqi people with only limited accountability is not only a terrible moral injustice, but a contradiction to the Army's own Law of Land Warfare. My participation would make me party to war crimes." Hence his refusal to participate in the Iraq War had many consequences.

On July 5th, after making his refusal to deploy to Iraq, Lieutenant Watada was charged with violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) Article 87, missing movement by design. The charge carries prison time of two years. After speaking out against the war, he was charged with three additional violations of Article 133, conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, as well as two violations of Article 88, speaking contemptuously against officials.

The debate of the court martial lies in whether an officer in the United States Army has the right to speak against orders that he believes are immoral and illegal. In an amicus curiae brief filed in Lieutenant Watada's Article 32 hearing, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) writes, "If the charges leveled in this case are allowed to proceed, it would mean that service members are completely barred from voicing their honest opinions on political subjects of significant public concern. Silencing speech like Lieutenant Watada's violates the Constitution while it also harms the military and the public at large." The ACLU brief concludes that the military must take steps to protect statements like Lieutenant Watada's, and that the government must demonstrate extraordinary justification before it can override free-speech protections within the

military justice system.

Not everyone supports Lt. Watada's stand against the war. No fewer than nine Japanese American veteran groups have publicly criticized Watada's decision to disobey orders. Robert Wada, who is president of the Japanese American Korean War Veterans, said Watada's actions disrespect a legacy of military service by Japanese American soldiers. Wada continues on saying "We went to Korea, and we didn't know what the hell we were there for...but nobody refused to go." Other Japanese American groups that are opposing Watada's decision include:

Japanese American Korean War Veterans, Americans of Japanese Ancestry WWII Memorial Alliance, five Veterans of Foreign Wars post and American Legion Post and Nisei Veterans Coordinating Council of Southern California.

This has not been the first war protest by an armed officer. In 2004, Petty Officer Pablo Paredes refused to board an Iraq bound ship in San Diego Harbor, claiming he was a conscientious objector. At his court-martial, Paredes testified that he was convinced that the Iraq War was illegal. National Lawyers Guild president-elect Marjorie Cohn filed a brief to support his claim. The military judge, Lieut. Cmdr. Robert Klant, accepted Paredes's war-crimes

defense and refused to send him to jail. The government prosecutor's case was so weak that Cohn, in a report published on Truthout.org, noted that Klant declared ironically, "I believe the government has just successfully proved that any seaman recruit has reasonable cause to believe that the wars in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq were illegal." The precedent set by this case becomes very important as Lieutenant Watada begins his own battle. For now, Lieutenant Watada is in a holding pattern, waiting for the military to begin a court-martial. Friends and family of Lieutenant Watada are planning a series of events and demonstrations leading up to the Lieutenant's prosecution. Although the court-martial will take place in December, supporters of the cause have already planned demonstrations and campaigns around the country. If Lt. Watada is convicted for all six of the charges set against him, he will face over seven years in prison.

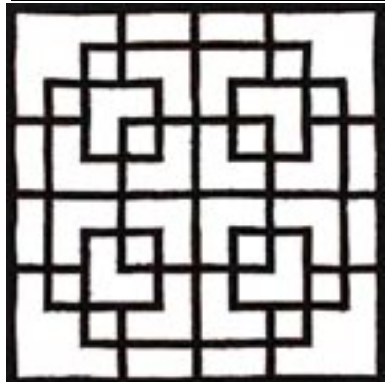
But there is something inherently more forceful than the years of prison time or the potential excoriation he faces from his own military that prompts Lt. Watada's decision: "As you are looking your children in the eye in the future, or when you are at the end of your life, you want to look back on your life and know that at a very important moment, when you had the opportunity to make the right decision, you did so, even knowing there were negative consequences."

get involved

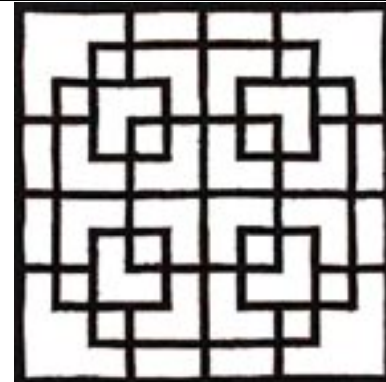
If you would like to get involved in this movement you can help raise awareness in your community about the case by writing to your local paper, donating to the political and legal defense fund, or participating in one of the various demonstrations being held around the nation. More information can be found at <http://thankyoult.org>.

Ways you can help Lt. Watada

- 1 Sign the petition online www.ThankYouLt.org
- 2 Educate yourself and your friends about Lt. Watada's stand and why the war is illegal. Encourage your group to support this effort. Hold a vigil. March in streets. Host a house party.
- 3 Write a letter in support of Lt. Watada to your local editor, and respond to any attack on his courageous stand.



FLOWER DRUM SONG REVIVED



by bonnie ho

It seems improbable that a work well-applauded by the American public as a New York Times bestseller and a Broadway musical would ever be altered. Within the nearly fifty years since *Flower Drum Song's* origin as C.Y. Lee's 1957 novel, its all-Asian cast Broadway counterpart has been revamped time and again, with each new production claiming to better represent Asian Americans than the last.

The Chinese Historical Society of America opened an exhibit and hosted a number of events centered on *Flower Drum Song* this past August. Set in San Francisco Chinatown's very own Grant Avenue, the story about a Chinese American family in the 1950s marks a point on the Chinese American timeline to be remembered for instigating major controversy.

The Chinese American public held mixed reactions as they watched or read the work -- it became a symbol for themselves. With the little room Asians had and still have in the American public view, any representation written or acted by an individualized artist burns like wildfire, with the potential to be interpreted as encompassing all Asians and Asian Americans.

For David H. Hwang, the playwright who revised the musical in 2001, watching the 1961 film was a relief for him growing up. It was an exception to the popular culture fed to him in youth, one portraying Asians with impossible moralities of good or evil. Rodgers and Hammerstein had taken a considerable risk for showing Asians from a new vantage point -- filling major roles, singing, dancing and joking about stereotypes, like the expectation that any Chinese-looking person should speak Chinese.

Should one just laugh, as a critic for an Asian publication suggested? An early reviewer from the *New York Times* mistakenly assumed the character of an immigrant and the actor playing her were the same person. (Lee had drawn this character in his novel as fiery and spunky, but Rodgers and Hammerstein gave her a screen role with exaggerated, English pronunciation and facial expressions, shaping a naïve character.) Because a reviewer conveniently blended acting and reality, the Asian characters in the play indeed came to represent Asian people.

Criticism has been directed at the author of the novel himself. C.Y. Lee was born in China, studied in the United States at Yale, and wrote his novel as a starving artist in Chinatown. His immigrant status, as a Chinese who became American, had the compilers of *AIIEEEEE! An Anthology of Asian American Writings* (1974) arguing that he could not possibly share their Chinese American struggle of identity and assimilation.

Lee crafted a young drifting protagonist, Wang Ta, searching for true love and unable to find fulfilling work in a tough job market. Eventually Ta decides to pursue medical school, and his wealthy father covers the cost of tuition. To say Lee's novel shows Chinese Americans living so leisurely would discredit other complexities in the novel. But *Flower Drum Song*, as made especially apparent in the 1961 film production, portrays a world of middle-class, or even upper-class, privilege -- in stark contrast with the bitter reality faced by many Chinese Americans.

The novel was written in 1957, a time when racial quotas restricted Asian immigration, (the 1882 laws were repealed from 1965-1968), and when naturalization for people of Asian descent was becoming slightly more possible. After WWII, Chinese Americans were just beginning to be treated better as the lesser of the Asian evils.

Professor Elaine H. Kim of Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley writes that Lee paints a "euphemistic and exotic portrait" of Chinatown, a deceiving contrast to Louis

Chu's 1940s New York Chinatown bachelor community, in his work *Eat A Bowl of Tea* (1961).¹

Kim writes that the Chinese American community in Chu's work is "not of glittering shops filled with art objects and exotic menu items, but of dingy basement rooms inhabited by aging Chinese men who have spent their lives in laundry and restaurant labor. Their contacts with American society are limited by police and immigration officials and brief encounters with prostitutes. Their lives have been sustained by fantasies about China and by the profound warmth of their friendships with one another."

In her book *The Melancholy of Race*, UC Berkeley Professor of English Anne Cheng brings up a disturbing point: Is not Chinatown "already a construction of American Orientalism in both its most abjecting and most idealizing forms?" Chinatown was originally dressed Victorian style until the earthquake of 1906 after which buildings were rebuilt with ornate temple like décor, lacking religious utility, but exuding tourist appeal. Already then, Chinatown artificially presented herself as "Chinese" to the American public, appeasing Americans who rejected and ostracized the residents as Chinese Americans.

The line of cultural authenticity is blurry for *Flower Drum Song's* Chinatown community. Cheng refers to the scenes in the Rodgers and Hammerstein 1961 film, produced by non-Asians, when Asian actors made fun of stereotypes of Asians, essentially themselves.

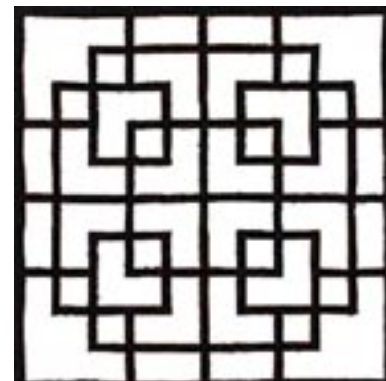
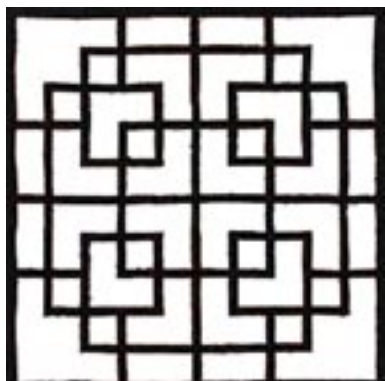
"Where do we as contemporary viewers locate the 'truth,' for example, when we enter *Flower Drum Song* and see 'authentic' Asian actors signing a celebration of their own 'Chop Suey-ness' while denoting the falseness of the stereotypes?" Cheng asks. The characters mocking chop suey racism also admit the scary truth: yes, outsiders oftentimes really see us this way. In the later revisions of *Flower Drum Song*, this musical score fell under continual scrutiny. Trying to make *Flower Drum Song* more realistic, director, Fred Van Patten, cut the song "Chop Suey" from the script during the 80's musical's revival and consulted with the Asian actors. Hwang made the lighthearted musical more somber in 2001.

He and actor David Lamm, cast from the 1980s version, believed that stereotypes can be countered if characters are human enough. Critics and creators alike, who strive for fair Asian American representation, seem to be searching for the humanity in the characters and the community -- evidence of struggle and difficulty beyond assumptions of simplicity.

When asked how he felt the film affected Asian Americans, my elder cousin said, "Anyone who thinks a movie represents real life is stupid." Perhaps so -- Asian Americans, including myself, may not initially read so deeply into the film. But for those who first encounter Chinese Americans through a book, musical, or film, it would be difficult not to jump and cling to certain judgments. Were Asian actors dancing out stereotypes to the puppet strings of, non-Asians, Rodgers and Hammerstein? In the later revisions, Asian American artists struggled with alternate ways of representing Asian American identity. Perhaps the multiple revisions of *Flower Drum Song* were needed, just as multiple representations are needed to describe any race of people.

(Footnotes)

¹ "Asian American Literature and the Importance of Social Context" in the 1985 Association of Departments of English Bulletin



A Rose By Any Other Name Would Smell Much Sweeter

THE JOURNEY OF IVA TOGURI

by jason coe

On September 27, 2006, Japanese American Iva Toguri died at the ripe old age of 90. You may not recognize this much-maligned World War II hero and University of California Los Angeles graduate by her real name. Unfortunately, she may always be known by the name which was falsely attributed to her: "Tokyo Rose."

"Tokyo Rose," was the name given by American GI's in the Pacific Theater of World War II to English-speaking female Japanese radio propagandists. Similar names have been created for other enemy radio personalities such as their German sister "Axis Sally," "Seoul City Sue" from the Korean War, "Hanoi Hannah" of the Vietnam War and more recently "Baghdad Bob." The "Tokyo Rose" would attempt to demoralize American troops by citing the hardships of their service, the impossibility of overcoming the Japanese and telling them that their girlfriends at home had deserted them. Although this name was ascribed to all of these broadcasters, only Toguri was ever brought to trial.

Before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Toguri was in Tokyo visiting relatives. When war was declared, she was stranded and could not return home. Unable to speak Japanese and looking for a means of survival, Toguri took up a job as a typist and English broadcaster at Radio Tokyo. There she inhabited the personality "Orphan Ann" on the radio program "Zero Hour," a propaganda program aimed at demoralizing US troops. For her responsibilities, Toguri mostly played jazz records. Moreover, she would often subversively support US troops by calling the show "another chapter of free propaganda" and cite facetious facts to encourage US soldiers. US Army intelligence has pointed out that "the program had no negative effect on troop morale and that it might even have raised it a bit."

Toguri's patriotism was not limited to these surreptitious radio comments. When pressured by Japanese authorities, Toguri refused to renounce her American citizenship. She risked her life to sneak blankets, medicine and food purchased on the black market to American POWs, while she herself worked two jobs in a foreign country where she could not speak the language.

One would imagine that WWII Hollywood movies would have been made about Toguri, but instead she returned to the US and was tried and convicted as a traitor against her country of birth. The trial itself was quite a spectacle, as many celebrities, such as the influential gossip columnist Walter Winchell, pressed for her prosecution despite the overwhelming lack of evidence found by US counterintelligence. After much deliberation, the jury was undecided. However, Judge Michael Roche, who later admitted his prejudice because his son served in the Pacific, demanded that they

return a verdict. Toguri was eventually sentenced to 10 years and was the seventh person ever to be convicted of treason against the US government.

After six years and two months, Toguri was released for good behavior. Prosecutors then tried to have her deported, but she successfully fought these efforts in court. The prosecution's star witness from the first case was barred from testifying because he made false statements in the first trial, though he was never prosecuted for perjury.

Toguri was finally vindicated and pardoned for these crimes by President Gerald Ford on January 19, 1977, an entire two decades later, making her the only American to ever be pardoned for treason.

Unfortunately for Toguri, she will always be associated with "Tokyo Rose," despite her innocence. Although this unsung hero never received her due, much can be learned from Toguri's story. Injustices comparable to hers continue today. Recently the Senate passed a bill, which is expected to pass in the House as well, barring high-level terror suspects from enacting the habeas corpus right to challenge their detentions in court, while also allowing for interrogation techniques approved at the White House's discretion.

As the war on terror continues, the US government continues to violate the rights of many detainees, such as Canadian citizen Maher Arar, who was stopped at a security checkpoint at John F. Kennedy International Airport and arrested because his name was on a CIA watch-list. Arar, who was never formally charged with any crime, was immediately shipped to Amman, Syria, where he endured torture and brutal interrogation for an entire year.

Arar was finally released in October of 2003, when the Canadian government pled for his release. No connections were ever found between Arar and any suspected terrorists or terrorist organizations. Arar is currently suing the US government for illegally detaining and torturing him.

This is not an isolated incident; American Army Chaplain James Yee, a converted Muslim stationed at Guantanamo Bay, was arrested and charged of sedition, aiding the enemy, espionage, as well as non-criminal charges such as adultery. After a year of intense investigation, all charges were dropped for lack of evidence and Chaplain Yee was released. He then retired from the army with an honorable discharge. He has yet to receive an apology.

As American citizens, we would like to think that injustices committed by our own government, such as the illegal internment of Japanese

American citizens during WWII and the false imprisonment of Iva Toguri, are in the past. However, we find that examples of human rights abuses occur even today.

In citing the reasons why terrorists attacked the US on 9/11, President Bush stated that these fundamentalists were "jealous of our freedom." These hallowed freedoms, such as the right of habeas corpus and the right to a fair trial, are fundamental to our national identity. Without these "unalienable rights," there may be nothing left to be jealous over.

Images:

<http://www.fbi.gov/libref/historic/famcases/rose/rose.html>

<http://msnbc.msn.com/id/15035306/?GT1=8506>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tokyo_Rose



CRASHING HOLLYWOOD'S PLANE: Asian American Representation in the Media

by brian lau

Every so often, a film comes along that revolutionizes, not only the way we look at the art of cinema, but how we look at each other. Such films compel us to re-examine the ways we as members of society relate to one another, calling into question everything we know or think we know. *Do the Right Thing* is one such movie. *Crash* is not.

But this article is not about *Do the Right Thing* or *Crash*, and the movie I speak of does not deal with amazing cinematography. No, this movie focuses on how people confront the unimaginable, unthinkable scenarios. Do we let our fears wrap around us, suffocating us until we cannot breathe? Or do we reach out and strangle our fears, possibly throw them out the window of a 747? That is right, the movie I am talking about is none other than *Snakes on a Plane*. The complexity, the insight, the depth. . . ok, who am I kidding, the movie is about some motherf*cking snakes on a motherf*cking plane.

Sam Jackson aside, the movie has been rather groundbreaking in at least two ways. First, *SOAP* is probably the first movie where the online buzz was so great, the director actually went back to add more violence, profanity, and gratuitous nudity (*Fakes on a Plane*, anyone?). Proof that citizen participation can and does make a difference.

Second, and more relevant to this article, *SOAP* features an Asian American hero *who lives to the end of the damn movie!* Black people in horror flicks aside, Asians in action movies have the highest mortality rate in all of cinema, especially if your name is not Jet Li, Jackie Chan, or Keanu Reeves (he still counts, right?). *SOAP* chooses to defy the standard with the Taekwondo Master, who not only karate chops a snake in half, saving a white woman in the process, but also does not get decapitated by a samurai sword/roundhouse kick/gratuitous snake bite to the head. Outside of Samuel Jackson and the titular snakes, I doubt any other character in the movie got as much applause.

Perhaps it is wrong that I am celebrating Taekwondo Master, a character with about five minutes of screen time, so much. But given the lack of Asian American representation in mainstream movies and television, the choices for Asian heroes is rather limited. According to a new study conducted by the Asian American Justice Center (formerly the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium), Asian American characters represent only 2.7% of total primetime regular characters. The study, which analyzed the major network's primetime TV shows in 2005, found only 13 out of 113 primetime programs had at least one APIA actor or actress as a regular character. Furthermore, the quality of those Asian American characters leaves much to be desired: APIA characters routinely get the least amount of screen time, are a quarter as likely as non-APIA characters to have a romantic or familial relationship, and are practically invisible in family sit-coms. This lack of portrayal leads to the conclusion that Asians are asexual, do not represent the "American family," and are, by and large, irrelevant to mainstream American society.

Asians fare just as poorly in the movie theaters than they do on the small screen. Of the top twenty grossing movies of 2006 to date, only four showcased an Asian American in a supporting role. And that is being generous with the definition of "supporting role;" Kumar as Lex Luthor's manservant in *Superman Returns* really shouldn't count.

Even worse is that when those limited opportunities are given, they are for roles that create and perpetuate racist stereotypes about Asians. Racism in Hollywood should come as no surprise to anyone not named George Clooney (out of touch, huh George?), and its grasp has proven unavoidable for Asians. With characters like Fu Manchu and Long Duk Dong (fuck you, John Hughes), it is obvious that the roles Asian actors and actresses have been delegated often lack substance and are not grounded in reality. Asians are defined only in extremes, from extreme eroticism to extreme lack of social skills to Xtreme Fighting.

Nowhere in the Hollywood formula is there room for the three-dimensional portrayals and those films that include Asian characters do so mostly for marketing purposes. The result? Actors and actresses take stereotyped roles, images of Asians as unrealistic people show up on our screens, and *Van Wilder 2: Rise of the Taj* gets made.

It is not too hard to see, then, why it is that in order to make a living in the business, Asian actors and actresses have to "sell out" and take roles that are not all too flattering, to themselves or to their communities. Some get stuck in these ruts, to the point where you start to recognize certain actors whenever *CSI* or *Law and Order* do their annual Chinatown-Asian gangster episodes. Others are fortunate enough to expand as actors. Take Lucy Liu, who successfully played off her role as a bitchy Dragon Lady in *Ally McBeal* into a lead role as a bitchy Yakuza boss in *Kill Bill*. I hear she is starring in a movie called *Charlie Chan*, and simply cannot wait to see the depth she infuses into what must be a complex, stereotype-shattering role.

The reality is Asian Americans have become so peripheral to the mainstream that when a movie comes along that shows us in actual roles, we cannot help but feel proud and shout at the silver screen. And that is what has happened with *SOAP*. True, the movie has cheap jokes about Thai hookers and features a wannabe-Scarface Asian gangster (who also knows martial arts, like the rest of us). Heck, Taekwondo Master only has one line of dialogue in the entire movie. But I would take those depictions over Korean human traffickers and Thai slaves in *Crash* any day of the week.

But perhaps such a trade-off is not necessary. These days, independent filmmaking has subverted Hollywood's basic notions of success, and films made on low budgets with word-of-mouth publicity are turning larger and larger profits. More importantly, these films present aspiring Asian American filmmakers and actors with the chance to add some much needed contributions to the short list of movies with realistic portrayals of us. Movies like *The Motel* and *The Namesake* (third Kal Penn reference so far), as well as documentaries like *The Slanted Screen*, have illuminated not only the complexity, but also the heterogeneity within the Asian American experience.

Such films have not gone without their share of controversy, however, and even movies made by Asian Americans face intense scrutiny by Asian Americans. Audiences debate over whether a filmmaker's greater responsibility is to his/her artistic vision or to the advancement of the community, whether the film's representations portray an ethnic group accurately or not. Such debates lead one to wonder if it is even possible to make a truly "Asian American movie," one that encompasses the depth of the community. One of the pioneer films in Asian American cinema (as well as one of the most successful), *The Joy Luck Club* was seen by some to degrade Asian males, depicting them as heartless husbands who treat their wives like property to be owned and tossed. Similar arguments can be heard over the release of the new movie *Red Doors*, which, like *The Joy Luck Club*, has received praise from the critics and accusations over the lack of male portrayal. These movies also raise good questions about celebrating Asian American movies for the sake of race, not

quality. *Better Luck Tomorrow*, where substance is blurred by style's flashy camera effects and slow-mo violence, is a great example.

To some extent, these debates celebrate the fact that there is diversity within the Asian American community, and that it is not as homogeneous as some people would think. While this may not be news to everyone, it does provide great opportunity for dialogue about what being Asian American means, if anything at all. These questions certainly do not get raised with movies like *The Fast and the Furious: Import Models on Wheels*.

Ultimately, though, to affect any sort of change in the practices of mainstream media, we have to think bigger. We would have to mobilize ourselves and others who bemoan every piece of trash portrayal Hollywood throws at us. I am talking *Soul Plane*-quality trash. Imagine if all the hype, all the buzz, all the influence *SOAP* fans had over that movie was used towards pressing for real changes in modern media. Imagine if we were to issue in a new age of democratic filmmaking with our demands for increased quantity and quality of representation. Imagine a movie where the Asian hero actually gets the white girl in the end.

Doubtful. But still, if we ever decide to battle the box office, I will be first in line. I have even gone ahead and created our slogan: We want more motherf*cking Asians in our motherf*cking movies!



new line cinema www.snakesonaplane.com

EAST MEETS WEST

by steve kim

Asian films inspire Hollywood remakes

There's a trend going on in mainstream Hollywood: big budget studios are competing with each other to make the most original remake. In fact, some of these movies that fall victim to remake are popular and classic East Asian films. This might sound encouraging. After all, if Hollywood is willing to remake Asian movies, wouldn't they also use Asian American actors? But, as the infatuation with remakes continues, Hollywood is

Protector, and *House of Flying Daggers*. However, these mainstream imported movies contain striking similarities. For instance, these movies are mostly period Kung-Fu pieces, reinforcing old stereotypes of East Asians as Kung-Fu masters. Although American viewers might not even consider the stereotypes and may just be awed by the stunning visuals, the poetry in motion and the spellbinding choreography, the patterns that exist in these films cannot be ignored.

Moreover, a film that portrays modern-day, complex Asian characters in dramatic situations who do not "know Kung-Fu," e.g. *Infernal Affairs*, must be remade into a movie centering upon Irish Americans in New England. This begs the question: would it be too much for Hollywood to reconcile this double standard? Would it be such a burden to allow an English-speaking Asian actor to share some screen time with someone as legendary as Jack Nicholson in a movie directed by someone as revered as Martin Scorsese, an Asian who is not flying around in ancient Asian garb halting spears and swords thrown at them?

There may be answers to these questions, but first one must consider specific examples. If a movie fan is asked to name some Asian movie stars, one of the first names to be said is always Jackie Chan. Chan starred in his first movie in 1962, and his career has spanned almost five decades. Outside of a couple films such as *Around the World in 80 Days* or *Cannonball Run 2*, he usually plays a cop or federal agent hybrid of Bruce Lee and Charlie Chaplin. While Hollywood continues to make Chan the sole East Asian A-list movie star, he has been effectively type-cast.

Another crossover Asian star that epitomizes Hollywood's double standard is Ziyi Zhang, who is already a bona fide movie star in her home country of China and all over East Asia. Since her American debut in *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*, Zhang has been considered a rising star in Hollywood.

However, the fact that she is presenting awards at the Oscars and MTV Movie Awards does not hide the types of roles that she plays in Hollywood. Thus far, she has starred in only two major movies in Hollywood, *Rush Hour 2* and *Memoirs of a Geisha*. By looking at the similarities and the pattern of these two film roles, it is not hard to figure out what kind of roles Hollywood expects of her. In the sequel to *Rush Hour*, she played a tough Chinese gangster who did not speak English and, of course, was a pro in martial arts. In her leading role in *Memoirs of a Geisha* she played, you guessed it, a geisha -- the exotic East Asian ideal for those infected with yellow fever. Even though *Memoirs* was a great role for Zhang, it seems that the only starring roles Asians can find in Hollywood require them to hearken back to familiar stereotypes.

This unfortunate trend is not entirely

culturally motivated, as economics plays a major part in decisions made by big budget studios. An East Asian director whose non-Kung-Fu films have been released in the United States is Wong Kar Wai. His films, *2046* and *In the Mood for Love* are art-house classics. But in terms of box office dollars, it's safe to say that these two critically-acclaimed films failed to open the eyes of American audiences. Although both films were in limited release in the US, *2046* garnered a paltry \$261,481 and *In the Mood for Love* topped out at a mere \$113,280, according to *Internet Movie Database*. Now when you juxtapose these two films to the highly successful *Hero* of 2004, there is no comparison when it comes to dollars and cents. According to *boxofficemojo.com*, Zhang Yimou's *Hero* raked in \$123,684,413 in foreign revenues alone. This large amount of money easily outpaces the foreign revenue of all of Wang Kar Wai's imported films. So what do the numbers say about Western audiences' tastes for Asian films? Frankly, American audiences really dig movies that show Asians portraying elements of the imagined "orient" -- they love the idea that Asia is this exotic land of spectacular landscapes and martial arts warriors.

Hollywood is not wholly to blame when it comes to which Asian films are remade, which films do well, and why films that should do well, don't. After all, one cannot blame ingenious Asian filmmakers for portraying beautiful stories, even if they are period pieces that involve martial arts. However, Hollywood has incredible influence in the lives of moviegoers around the globe, and considering the double standard that goes into remaking Asian films couldn't hurt.



www.thedeparted.com

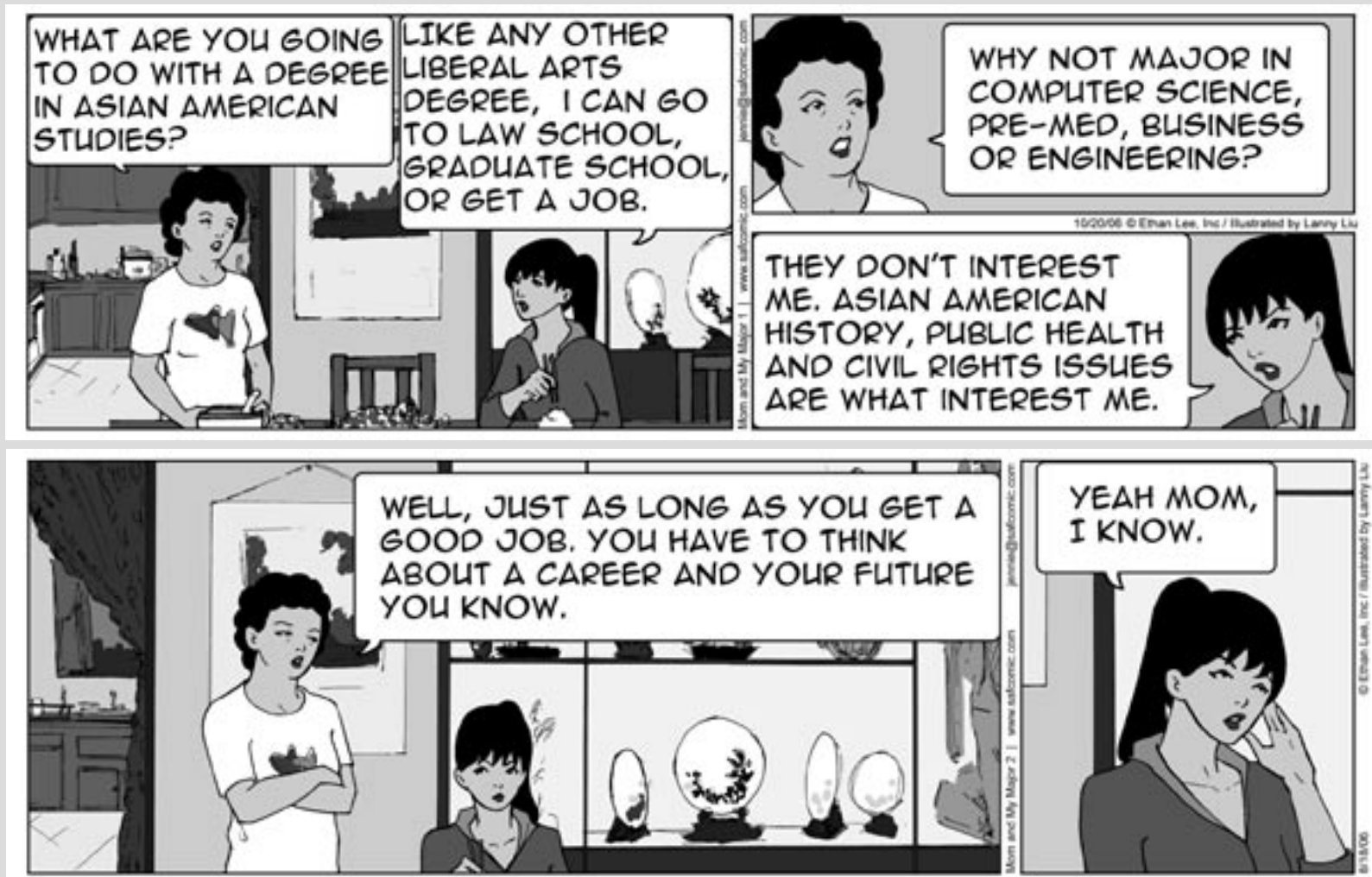
clearly attaching a double standard: movies from Europe, such as *Amelie* and *Run Lola Run*, do not need to be remade with Hollywood stars. Whereas film gems such as *Shall We Dance* and *The Grudge*, both from Japan, are ultimately remade with an American cast. Take the highly anticipated, soon-to-be released film *The Departed* directed by Martin Scorsese and starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Matt Damon, Jack Nicholson, and Mark Wahlberg, which centers around a conflict between the Boston police force and an Irish American gang. A gangster, played by Matt Damon, infiltrates the police force while a young police officer, Leonardo DiCaprio, infiltrates the gang. The setting for this remake of Hong Kong's *Infernal Affairs* is South Boston, and while the story is basically the same from as the original, the cultural backgrounds of the characters suggest a different ethos. In the remake, the conflict is between the Irish mafia and white cops of the Boston Police department. The theme and background of characters suggest a white ethnic environment, totally ignoring the national origin of this gripping story.

Granted, there have been popular Asian films from China, Japan, Korea, and even Thailand that have been distributed in wide-release straight to American audiences. Films like *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*, *Hero*, *Fearless*, *The*



www.thezreview.co.uk/posters/g/grudgethe.htm

Mom and My Major



by ethan lee

check out more of his work at <http://safcomic.com/comics.html>

The National Asian American Student Conference

NAASCON 2006: *Building Bridges, Connecting Movements*

When: November 3-5, 2006

Where: Northwestern University

- ** meet API student activists from all over the nation!
- ** network with national community-based organizations!
- ** learn more about API issues and engage in dialogue!
- ** be a part of a NATIONAL movement!

Registration is OPEN!

\$40 before October 15 \$50 after October 15

[Groups of 10 or more: \$5 off per person!]

www.naascon2006.com

Questions/Comments: Trinhy84@gmail.com

Note from comic artist Ethan Lee:

Hi,

I am a graduate student at SFSU. I am recruiting people to interview for my Master's thesis. The topic is interracial relationships in Asian America. I want to interview Asian Americans who meet the following criteria:

1. Previously or currently interracial dating or married
2. Mono-racial Asian Americans
3. 18-45 years old
4. Heterosexual
5. English speaking

The interview takes 60-120 minutes and is confidential. I will type the responses into my laptop. I can meet you anywhere in the bay area. I can reimburse transportation and parking costs.

Please pass this along to anyone you think might be interested.

Email me if you are interested in participating or have any questions. typer1998@yahoo.com