

hardboiled

THE ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN NEWSMAGAZINE!

November 2009



featuring...

The Nebulous Masses/ Are
you Sleeping? / Nichei Bei Times

13.2

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ABOUT THIS COVER
“Candlelight Vigil”
A commemoration
for victims of natural
disasters in Asia
with the intention of
bringing awareness
about the disasters,
and uniting the
communities that
were affected.

editor's notes

I was over confident, prideful, and annoying. I sauntered into that room as if I owned the place. Six years of design experience under my belt, pssssh. I could totally take on this puny little magazine with its tacky layouts that had no clue about margins, white space, or typography. To that magazine, I must've been some sort of savior.

How quickly my ego deflated in that room, and how much more quickly a hunger developed. A hunger to find out more – about the snarky editors who seemed to know everything, about the magazine (tacky as it was), about this Asian American history I had no clue existed, and most of all, about myself.

Throughout most of my life, I tried to push the boundaries of what it mean to be an Asian American girl, struggling to defy what I knew others expected of me. I was loud. I was assertive. I was challenging. But I was so foolish.

Not to say I am not totally oblivious now. But entering hardboiled my freshmen year, I was struck with the reality of how invisible my history, and subsequently, my identity was. I was dumbfounded, and for once, silent. I soaked in every lesson like thirsty soil.

hardboiled tends to do that to people. Like a slap in the face, with a follow-up “What now?!” this magazine truly pushed me to look at this world with a critical eye. Things that were invisible before are now annoyingly obvious to me, like the systematic racism that continually categorizes Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners or even the deeply rooted racism within my own mind. Each year I learned more and was a little bit more changed.

That kind of mindset genuinely shaped the framework through which I lived out my college life. It was through learning to see the

unseen that I was able to really notice my parents and their stories. It was through being able to think critically that I was able to see through my own delusions of who I thought I was. And it was through always questioning what was given to me was that I was able to, remarkably, discover God and all the ways He has been in my life.

It's been a crazy road from when I was an overzealous freshman to now, an anxious senior humbled by the realities of a life outside of college. But one thing that I can say I learned at the (near) end of it all is that we all need to look at this world with a stern and fixated glare and ask, “Is there more to this?” Not just over whether or not there was truly something sinister behind a new policy change implemented by Congress, or whether someone was actually motivated by racism in a violent crime against an Asian American, but also, who am I and what am I doing here?

Some final thoughts. Do not live a complacent life, going with the flow of the majority. Be a lover of truth. Ask questions, all the time, and remember: you don't know everything.

Every new day I'm burdened by a world that is so broken by ignorance, hate, and self-delusion. But every day I am really restored with hope that these things will not have the final say.

So I just wanted to end with... Thanks hardboiled, for being that tiny little lighthouse off in the distance exposing reality for what it is and leading me in the right direction. I hope that you, the reader, can experience the same too.

always in bold,
Elaine Chen
Production Editor

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

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in this issue...

- 03 The Nebulous Masses: Cal's Invisible APIs by denise wong
- 04 Are you Sleeping? by la salle duong, kevin macdonald, tawny tsang
- 05 MBA: Migrating Back to Asia by michell ho
- 06 Got Change? by carmen ye
“Are you a FOB?” by sunny kim
- 07 You say “hello,” I say “goodbye” ... to Cantonese by casey tran
- 08 The Asian Suicide Phenomenon by alex wong
- 09 It's a bird! It's a plane! It's an Asian! by justin ko
- 10 My Milk Toof by rachel le
NOODLES by tawny tsang
- 11 Inglorious Samurai by eileen tse
- 12 The Sun Will Not Set on Nichei Bei by sherry gong
Traditions in Movement by kim filipinas

The Nebulous Masses:

by denise wong

Cal's Invisible APIs

The ongoing debates regarding the UC budget crisis have proven a difficult space to initiate a discussion about how budget cuts will affect underserved sectors of the API community. Given the relative nascence of open discussion surrounding this topic, it is understandable that the information is somewhat obscure. Nonetheless, recent developments threaten to further aggravate the financial situation for a nearly invisible population — undocumented API AB540 students, who constitute 40 to 44 percent of all undocumented AB540 students, and are the second-largest undocumented group in the UC system.

So little discussion has materialized regarding API AB540 students, a label often erroneously used interchangeably with *undocumented* API AB540 students. AB540 is a state law that grants all students, regardless of documentation status, the ability to pay in-state tuition if they graduated from a California high school and were enrolled for at least three years. According to the Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California (APALC), undocumented beneficiaries must apply for legal citizenship once they attain eligibility. In spite of these benefits, undocumented students are ineligible for work-study, state grants, or other forms of federal or taxpayer-funded financial aid.

The statute was disputed last year in the California Supreme Court case *Martinez v. Regents of the University of California*, which claimed that the law conflicted with a federal law that prohibits these benefits, unless they also extend to non-resident U.S. citizens. While AB540 has since remained in effect, the Court is currently considering the outcome of this case, which could significantly hamper the attainment of higher education for undocumented students.

According to Marwin Yeung, Political Awareness Coordinator for REACH!, Berkeley's API recruitment and retention center, UC Berkeley holds the second largest undocumented youth population in all UC campuses. Though resident students now face tuition exceeding \$10,000, it is currently unknown how much non-resident tuition will increase. The proposed fee hikes do not apply to out-of-state or international students. However, undocumented AB540 students already typically struggle with tuition and experience subsequent problems with academic retention. A potential repeal of the AB540 law would disastrously exacerbate the situation that these students presently face.

"Mark Yudof and the UC Regents can cover up all they want, consoling the public that the University of California system will still strive to waive tuition fees for those with low-income backgrounds (\$70,000 or less)," said Mia Jamili, Advocacy Coordinator for Pilipino Academic Student Services (PASS) and one of the Lead Interns for the Multicultural Immigrant Student Program (MISP). "But the truth of the matter is that the students who never were able to receive any federal aid and any grants/ scholarships that initially require a Social Security Number on their applications will remain in the struggle and be left behind."

Given this information, it is troubling that only limited discussion on this issue has transpired, and so little of it has concentrated on the experiences of API AB540 students. Aside from the relatively small amount of campus dialogue regarding this population, very few print articles cover the experiences of these students. Dialogue regarding this issue is imperative, as it not only creates a space to implement relevant services for a vastly underserved student population, but also addresses many little-discussed immigration-related issues that plague the API community.

Student organizers on campus attribute the invisibility of API AB540 students to forces both internal and external to the community. Culturally, API communities tend to view immigration extremely sensitively, and do not discuss their immigration statuses even when asking for help.

According to Yeung, however, the media has also significantly framed much of the immigration debate around racializing the Latino community and maintaining the popular notion of APIs as a "model minority" group.

"It's not like an immigrant issue anymore [to the public], but I think [the media's] trying to make it specifically a Latino issue," Yeung said. "It reinforces the idea that Asians do not have immigration issues. Or if they do, they can just grab themselves by the bootstraps, get themselves up."

The facts illustrate that this could not be more untrue. The dearth of services that serve the API community's immigration needs stems at least partially from the lack of API presence in the immigration debates. According to an October 2008 article by AsianWeek, undocumented Asian students do not even have much information on the college process; such services are often only available in English or Spanish, and are thus inaccessible to non-English or Spanish proficient APIs.

The silenced dialogue on API undocumented students also curtails discussion about immigration issues unique or specifically pertinent to APIs. This obscures the community's particular immigration needs, such as improved legal services to resolve problems with immigration or documentation status. According to an amicus brief recently put out by APALC, API students often immigrate legally at a young age, but lose their legal status over time. Among the included testimonials are the stories of a girl who arrived in the U.S. legally as an infant, but was unsuccessful at attaining permanent residency because of her family attorney's mismanagement of their residency petition, and another family's inability to attain permanent residency because their employer cheated them out of two thousand dollars to process a visa application. Another testimonial details the story of an Indonesian boy who attempted to apply for political asylum but was denied because

he did not file his application within one year of arriving in the United States; he is able to legally work and live in the country, but cannot apply for permanent residence.

Such narratives not only counter dominant perceptions of illegal immigrants, but also emphasize the need for expanded and improved legal counsel for API immigration needs.

"I think not many people know that AB540 students come from the API community, which makes it even more difficult to find resources," Yeung said. "Let's say you're an AB540 student and you're API. It might be kind of difficult to approach a Latino organization that focuses on AB540 students, because there might be different experiences that their AB540 students may have."

Similarly, the breakdown of the populations impacted most by AB540 defies an inimical, pervasive notion within the API community that East Asian communities, typically understood to comprise the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean American communities, are somehow better off or less affected by API issues. The largest group of affected AB540 APIs is Korean American, comprising 60 percent of API undocumented undergraduates within the UC system. Moreover, 14 percent are Chinese American, 10 percent are Filipino American, 7 percent are South Asian, 7 percent are Southeast Asian, and 1 percent are Pacific Islander.

"I think often East Asians are perceived as this 'more privileged' group. I think this is a prime example of how Asian Americans are still struggling, more specifically, East Asians," Yeung added. "I think it's important to be conscious of how each community is being affected."

It is thus problematic to dismiss East Asian populations as more "privileged" when one of the most pressing and concealed API issues is one that largely affects their community.

While AB540 students currently face an institutional barrier that seriously threatens their progression through higher education, it is at least optimistic that student organizers have opened up the discussion through focusing on the budget cuts. According to Jamili, affected students and their allies have been taking action through campus support networks, legislation, and education and the dissemination of proper information. However, the experiences of API AB540 students cannot be neglected as epiphenomenal to any greater issue. Immigration is most definitely a problem that impacts APIs, and must be central to the discussion of holistically advancing the API community and ameliorating their struggles.

"We must keep in mind that fears hinder substantial voices as other voices instill fear," Jamili said. "What we have encountered and accomplished so far is only the beginning."

Undocumented API AB540 students constitute 40-44% of undocumented AB540 students, the second-largest group in the UC system.

Such narratives not only counter dominant perceptions of illegal immigrants, but also emphasize the need for expanded and improved legal counsel for API immigration needs.

For more information and help services regarding API AB540 students, please email Multicultural Immigrant Student Program at mispstaff@gmail.com

ARE YOU SLEEPING?

by courtney lloyd, kevin macdonald, and tawny tsang



ZZZZZ THE REALITY OF SLEEP DEPRIVATION ZZZZZ

We've all seen it in lecture: the nodding head; the gaping mouth. As the semester progresses, these actions become less associated with sentiments of awe or concordance and more with sleepiness. This really is quite a shame considering our growing student fees. One of the biggest reasons for gaining a higher education degree is to improve our chances of future success. However, the secret to success is not as lucrative as it seems and can take its shape in a much simpler and immediate form – sleep.

Ben Franklin once said, "early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise." While we are all familiar with this proverb, few of us actually take it seriously. Sleep deprivation is a serious issue that affects the health, memory performance, and mood of our age group. According to the National Institute of health, over 40% of Americans are sleep deprived with college students being most sleep deprived among that population. This sleep deprivation is self-induced whether it be due to the pressure from parents, the stress in being in a highly competitive environment, or the difficulties of balancing grades and a social life.

It seems only a bit too obvious – of course sleep matters. Empirical studies have demonstrated that sleep may be a key regulator of mood, metabolism, immunity function, and memory. But why don't we do it?

As college students, our grades and achievements often seem to fluctuate with the different types of moods and situations we find ourselves in. Sometime it is family stress, other times it is arguments with friends, or many times it's the stress from your workload keeping you out of bed at night.

Many are unaware however, just how closely your mood, emotional, performance and ability to read others' emotion are modified when you are under sleep deprivation conditions.

According to UC Berkeley professor Dr. Matthew Walker and colleagues, the prefrontal lobe of your brain is actively inhibited in communicating with your fear center, or amygdala, when sleep deprived. In turn, you are unable to regulate emotionally driven situations the following day, lacking the feedback loop that has been temporarily severed to your prefrontal cortex. You become all emotion and no logic, acting in ways unlike you and possibly damaging to the situation!

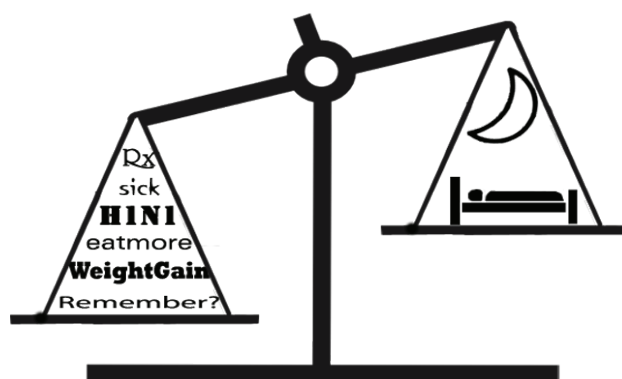
On that note, studies have shown that there are high rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide among Asian American and Pacific Islander youth. Some suggest that the tension between adhering to traditional family values and mainstream culture may cause additional stress and anxiety. On top of that, being at a competitive university certainly adds to the stress load.

While there are many ways to cope with the stress, one of the easiest seems to be eating.

Although many of us seem to be blessed with fast metabolism, getting enough sleep may actually help ward off unwanted winter pounds. Studies have shown that people who typically sleep 5 hours or less are significantly heavier than those who sleep 7-8 hours. People who sleep 4-5 hours a night are 50-73% more likely to be obese than those who sleep 7-9 hours. Even people who slept 6 hours a night (a common practice among college students) are 23% more likely to be obese.

Inadequate amounts of sleep can also lead to an imbalance of hormones which regulate our appetite and

our ability to process glucose. In a study with healthy young males, those who were sleep deprived (receiving only 4 hours of sleep for 2 nights) saw a drop in leptin levels (the hormone which tells us we're full), and a rise in ghrelin levels (the "eat hormone"). Furthermore, they reported a 24% increase in hunger, and it wasn't salad that they were craving. The subjects saw a 32% increase in the intake of carbohydrate rich foods like donuts and pizza. Not only does an increase in ghrelin mean a bigger appetite, it means a decrease in our energy expenditure, which means more weight.



TIPS TO FALL ASLEEP:

1. DON'T READ, WATCH TV, OR WORK IN BED

Associating waking activities with your sleeping space can confuse your body and make it more difficult to use that space for sleeping.

2. SET THE STAGE FOR SLEEP

Make your sleeping space as quiet, dark, and pleasant as possible. Clean sheets, room-darkening drapes, and a pair of earplugs will all help to make the room as sleep-conducive as possible.

3. WAKE UP AND GO TO SLEEP AT THE SAME TIME EVERY DAY

Your body will become conditioned to follow this schedule, meaning that you will become tired and be able to fall asleep at a predictable time every night.

4. KEEP THE TV AND COMPUTER OFF FOR 30 TO 60 MINUTES BEFORE BED

The light from the screens can trick your body into thinking that it's still daylight and not time for sleeping. Read, write in a notebook, or listen to soothing music at a quiet volume just before bed.

adapted from medicinenet.com

Finally, if weight is not an issue, then your health certainly is. Normally, this is how our metabolism works: after we eat, the pancreas releases insulin, which signals our muscle and fat cells to absorb glucose. This process ensures that our blood glucose remains at a normal level. However, when an individual has insulin-resistant metabolism, higher levels of insulin are needed to accomplish adequate glucose absorption. This can lead not only to dangerous drops in blood sugar, but progression toward type-2 diabetes.

Are you wondering what all of this has to do with sleep? In a study where healthy young individuals were sleep deprived (4hrs sleep/night, 5 nights), measurements indicated an alarming 40% decrease in glucose tolerance, rates similar to those who are pre-diabetic. Despite our youth, we can't fight genetic predispositions. According to the National Diabetes Statistics, Asian Americans are one of the most at-risk ethnic groups to develop type-2, or insulin-resistant, diabetes with an incidence rate of 8% for individuals over 20. In addition, for individuals under 20, the incidence rate for developing type-2 diabetes among Asian Americans is over twice that of non-Hispanic Whites (20 per 100,000/year versus 9 per 100,000/year).

Sleep has more to do with health than just regulating metabolism. With the H1N1 craze, a lot of people have become hypersensitive to sanitation and illness prevention. However, the easiest, and surest, way to prevent getting sick is sleeping.

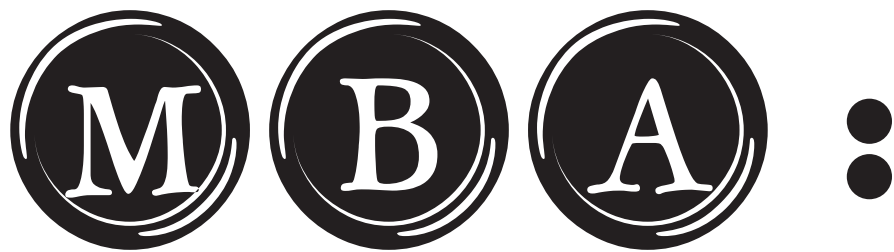
We've often had that groggy feeling of being lethargic and stuffy after pulling an all nighter. This congested feeling is similar to the head cold or other common illnesses. Sleep has very important immune functions. Studies have shown that in just 1 night of 5 hour sleep, our Natural Killer Cell activity drops by 73%. That's something that hand sanitizer or EmergenC can't account for. In addition, chronically sleeping less than 7 hours a night reduces our body's ability to build up immune responses. So even if we get the flu shot and become immunized from H1N1, our body won't be able to build up as strong a defense and may render the shot useless.

Being a high-risk group for several health issues including depression and diabetes, Asian Americans may be more susceptible to the negative consequences of sleep deprivation. In addition, about 21% of Asian Americans lack health insurance compared to the 16% of all Americans, which makes it even more important to stay healthy especially during flu season.

The cost of not sleeping not only affects our minds and bodies, but also our wallets. Imagine how much you could save by not buying energy drinks, coffee, or snacks to keep you from falling asleep at the desk! Like many things, getting more sleep is much easier said than done. However, with winter break rolling around the corner, there is a great opportunity to catch up with some sleep. It'll also be a way to treat yourself to some of the respect your body deserves. With midterms and papers, sleep is often put to the bottom of our priority list. Hopefully from this article, you will have learned that sleep is not dispensable or something that should be taken for granted.

Why not try making sleep part of your New Year's Resolution? There's nothing to lose – only benefits to gain.

With that, sweet dreams.



Migrating Back to Asia



photo courtesy of Comtech Group

Asian American MBAs going back to their roots for job opportunities

by michell ho

My dad has always said that an MBA is the ticket to a job in the finance industry. This may have been true one year ago, but in today's economic crisis, even MBAs from prestigious universities are worrying about finding a job. With last year's collapse of the Lehman Brothers, thousands of financial jobs went down the drain. According to VoaNews.com, by 2010, in New York City 46,000 financial jobs and hundreds of others that depend on Wall Street could be gone.

Because of the uncertain future in the financial job market, many Asian Americans and U.S.-educated Asians are now considering searching for jobs overseas. So where are they headed now? Back to Asia.

To the U.S. economy, this is pretty bad news. But to Asia, it is a potential benefit. In recent MBA career fairs for students across the nation, recruiters from companies in Asia have actually been looking for Asian and Asian American graduates and MBAs educated in U.S. universities to join their firms; it's clear that companies in Asia are interested in recruiting talent from this subset of the population. Meanwhile, as the competition for jobs in the finance market becomes ever more intense, it is an appealing option to Asian Americans with U.S. degrees to work overseas because they can add that extra impressive line to their resumes and cover letters.

You may ask, "Why the outflux of educated Asian Americans to Asia?" A recent study by Duke University revealed that Asians educated in the U.S. believe there is a rising demand for their skills back in their home countries. At the same time, there is also a trend of Asian countries wanting Asian Americans as well as their own citizens – after obtaining a U.S. education – to work in Asia. Therefore, both sides share a mutual desire that Asian Americans and U.S.-educated Asians look to Asia for more job opportunities.

Because of this, China, India, and other Asian countries are seeing a huge increase in highly educated MBA returnees. In 2008 alone, China saw an increase of 55 percent in the number of returnees. As a result, many professional firms are speculating that Asian Americans and U.S.-educated Asians have solid paths in the financial world despite the ongoing economic crisis.

However, there is another angle from which we can analyze these facts. With the outflow of talented Asian MBAs from the U.S. today, are we witnessing a modern version of the sojourner mentality of our Asian American predecessors?

"Sojourner mentality" within the context of Asian American history refers to immigrants' belief that their emigration abroad was only temporary – that they would return to their respective homelands in Asia one day. This mentality was, to a certain extent, a psychological motivation for the immigrants to endure their struggles in the United States, as they hoped to return home one day to reunite with their families.

Now it appears as if the sojourner mentality is returning right in front of our eyes, though not quite in exactly the same form.

While the trend of Asian MBAs emigrating to Asia does seem to encompass a sort of "sojourner mentality," there is a difference in the manifestation of that mentality between U.S.-educated Asians from Asia and Asian Americans.

Asian international students educated in the United States are likely to bear a "sojourner mentality" more similar to that of the original immigrants because many explicitly choose to go to school here for a U.S. degree and then leave to find careers back in Asia. However, since many Asian American MBAs were born in America, they are not really

"sojourners" yearning to go back "home," especially those who grew up in the States and went to school here (that is, excluding those who immigrated here at a later age or chose to study abroad).

Yet in a broader sense, these Asian Americans can still be thought of as "sojourners" – on a level that may span several generations in time. Ironically, it seems that history has gone a full circle, beginning with the first Asian immigrants who settled in the U.S. in hopes of climbing up the economic ladder and now ending with highly educated Asian American MBAs moving back to Asia for the same reason which brought their predecessors here.

But despite this difference from international Asian students, the key point is that Asian Americans who grew up in the U.S. are also choosing to go back to Asia. With the concept of sojourner mentality in mind, we can further understand the reasons behind this fact.

The "sojourner mentality" reinforces a common theme between the past and present – the strength of Asian Americans' sense of their respective communities and the connection they often feel with their ethnic background. In the past, this mentality helped form strong networks of ethnic enclaves among America's Asian immigrants. In present times, it is one factor motivating Asian American MBAs to move to Asia. Thus, perhaps this is another reason Asian Americans feel that Asia is a viable option in their job search; after all, we are all connected with Asian blood. And as we see, recruiters from Asia realize this mentality and are thus targeting Asian American MBAs for recruitment.

In any case, some factors definitely make the distinction between Asian American MBAs/U.S.-educated Asian MBAs and non-Asian MBAs within the job market in Asia.

1. Mother tongue

Yes, it is true that English has become the international language of our times, but knowing the native language of that certain Asian country can only help the MBA job candidate. More importantly, not only do they beat the locals by having a degree from an American institution, Asian Americans can also communicate fluently in both English and Asian languages. This is very appealing to employers in general, especially considering the extent to which financial industries are becoming globalized today.

2. Cultural Understanding

Imagine venturing into a foreign land, surrounded by high skyscrapers and people gabbling in an alien language around you. What do you do to fit it, or at the very least, not offend anyone? An advantage Asian Americans have is that they have already been exposed to the culture and are thus more ready to adapt and adjust to the environment in Asia. They are familiar with

cultural nuances, from how to greet someone to knowing what can or cannot be talked about. At the very least, Asian Americans already have enough cultural insight to not make a fool out of themselves – for example, not to place one's chopsticks vertically into a bowl of rice, because this resembles incense sticks used at Asian temples to respect the deceased ones (ultimate table manner failure!).

It is not that non-Asians won't succeed in the Asian market, but it is definitely easier for Asian Americans because oftentimes they have already been exposed to the cultural lifestyles and aspects of their own respective Asian countries, thus, giving them that edge in today's job market. Thus, it's no surprise that so many are returning to their root countries to search for jobs.

As more and more Asian American MBAs realize their potential career paths in Asia, this could be a sign that Asian Americans are now recognizing the advantage of understanding of their heritage with regard to the world of finance. East and South Asia, areas experiencing some of the fastest economic growth in the world, offer very attractive financial and cultural options for recent Asian American graduates looking to expand their job searches. Last but definitely not least, the fact that many Asian Americans are returning to Asia shows that they are choosing to get a little closer back in touch with their roots. Perhaps along their job search they will learn something new about their ancestors, experience new emotional attachments with their cultures, and discover new aspects of their Asian identities that will offer them a better understanding of themselves and their cultural heritages.

photo courtesy of Esquire



got change?

relief efforts and the lack thereof in the wake of natural disasters

by carmen ye

Sit tight. I am going to throw some numbers at you.

4641

1412

3763

What do they have in common? Each number represents how many people died, respectively, in Typhoon Ondoy in the Philippines, a tsunami in Samoa, and Typhoon Morakot in Taiwan, all of which occurred within the past 3 months. The death toll of these three natural disasters is now at 981, not to mention the casualties and massive damages to properties, leaving thousands more homeless and poverty-stricken.

We hear about a hurricane here, a tornado there, every other week. Heck, the number of natural disasters around the world has gone up 400% in the last two decades. Translation: we now experience four times more natural disasters than we did twenty years ago, largely owing to – you guessed it – global warming. As big corporations, big countries, and big egos mess with the very air we breathe, changing weather patterns have led to more frequent and more unpredictable disasters that affect those least responsible for causing them. Outrageous, I know.

I threw those numbers at you as my do-gooder deed of the day, hoping to inspire you to jump out of your seat and exclaim, “Omg! How can I help?” I’m glad you asked.

Following the examples of national relief agencies such as Red Cross and Habitat for Humanity, local organizations dedicated to fighting for Asian American issues have brought together community and compassion to raise awareness and funds. The Bay Area chapter of National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum (NAPAWF) recently held a fundraiser in Oakland, spearheaded by Linda Yang, Julia Rhee, and Jenny Ton. When I asked Yang what motivated her to organize this, she responded, “The question is more

‘Why NOT do it?’ rather than ‘Why do it?’” With such a take-charge attitude, it comes as no surprise that NAPAWF raised over \$3,200 to contribute to Typhoon Ondoy relief efforts. In describing the fundraiser itself, Yang said, “We specifically found beneficiaries who... were under the mainstream radar, who were likely not receiving equitable aid. It didn’t matter your profession or destination in life, for a few hours we all held the collective goal of supporting our brothers and sisters in Samoa and the Pacific Islands.”

Campus organizations have also been involved in doing their part to aid the survivors of recent disasters, adding that unique Berkeley activism. Theatre Rice, a performing arts

we are showing solidarity among the asian community and aiding in preserving a culture that is threatened by natural disaster.

group dedicated to fighting against the misrepresentation of Asian Americans in the media, donates about half of their funds from each show to charity. For their fall mid-semester 2009 showcase, Theatre Rice chose a charity in San Francisco that supported relief for Typhoon Ondoy. Assistant producer Kathleen Mendoza emphasized that Theatre Rice “has two sides: the artistic and the social/cultural.” She added that although the relief effort Typhoon Ondoy may seem like a departure from their mission statement, “it really is not... We are showing solidarity among the Asian community and aiding in preserving a culture that is threatened by natural disaster.” Their next show’s proceeds will “follow in similar steps: the relief for those in Samoa and Tonga.”

But there are communities in the US with family in the areas hit hardest by these disasters, in countries they also call home. The Samoan community in Southern California was devastated when they heard of the earthquake and

tsunami that caught American Samoa unawares. Although they have been trying to reach their family, phone lines have been disconnected due to heavy flooding. What are they doing, when they can’t know if their loved ones are ok? This community has organized around this particular issue by starting up food and clothes drives at local churches as soon as they heard what had happened in Samoa.

There. That was my do-good, feel-good moment, to educate you about catastrophes that may seem very far removed from home, but are actually close to our hearts. Now, what will your good deed of the day be? In a consumer society where we complain about tuition but go shopping every other weekend, it does not seem so hard to give up a little of our spending money. I wrote this to not only educate readers and bring some awareness to this issue but also in the hopes that this article really will inspire you to mobilize around these disasters that have stripped its victims of everything they own.

Small steps you can take to raise funds include penny wars (remember freshmen year in the dorms?), start a “people who donate are sexy” collection jar, or repost this article in popular social networks. Really, I know you spend an inordinate amount of time on Facebook or Twitter every day. Feeling creative? Write your own blog about this! The best way to learn is to teach, so by educating others, we’ll spread our networks a little wider, gather a little more change to aid those floating on rafts in the debris of their homes.

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“Are you a FOB?”

Oh shit. What did I do this time to make someone ask me that question? Did I pronounce a word with a Korean accent? Is it something I wore? Is it just the way I look? Ever since I came to the United States in second grade, this three letter word has haunted me. When I just started learning English in second grade, I heard this word used often by my classmates, and it was not difficult to sense its derogatory connotation. Even now, I feel a high level of discomfort and insecurity when I am labeled with or even associated with the term.

It’s disappointing to me that the usage of the label “FOB” is still considered acceptable, even in a supposedly educated and socially conscious space like Berkeley. Fresh Off the Boat, more commonly abbreviated as FOB, is “a phrase used to describe immigrants that have arrived from a foreign nation and have not yet assimilated to the host nation’s culture, language, and behavior.”¹ Most commonly, the “foreign nation” is a nation from Asia and the “host nation’s culture, language, and behavior” is what is considered mainstream American culture, language, and behavior.

Personally, I am used to hearing

FOB being used to describe international students or recent immigrants from Asia, but rarely have I heard FOB being used to describe an immigrant from a non-Asian country. FOB specifically marginalizes Asian immigrant communities within the larger Asian American population.

The label does not embrace the diversity that immigrants bring, but instead subordinates them because of their failure to become a part of what is considered mainstream American culture. Through this process, things that are associated with being Asian become distasteful symbols of foreign origin, illustrating an anti-Asian sentiment that groups have spent generations combating. My friends make derogatory remarks about my “Fobby” Korean pop song playlist on my iTunes. I hear students snicker when a classmate reads aloud with a “Fobby” accent. On the other hand, I can see the obvious contrast when anything associated with European is attractively exoticized. A British accent is many times described as “hot” or “sexy.” European way of dress is often portrayed as “sophisticated” and “classy.”

What I find particularly interesting is that it is most often the Asian students who

commonly use the word to distinguish themselves from the “F O B s .” Perhaps they

subconsciously feel better because they believe that their assimilation puts them in a superior status in comparison to non-assimilated Asian Americans.

This leads to another observation, which is that American culture is commonly equated with white culture. This notion indirectly opposes the idea of multiculturalism. The saying that America is a land of immigrants is cliché but true. Diversity was created through the entrance of immigrants including Asian immigrants, and this forms the culture that United States prides itself in. Although the immigrant population in the U.S. is increasing, many of these immigrants groups are not accepted as “American.” Immigrants are not accepted, but are excluded as foreigners through the usage of words like FOB.

Throughout American history, this same form of exclusion and marginalization has been practiced by the white population against Asian immigrants. Many derogatory terms have been used to label Asians as foreigners. Although this marginalization may seem to be less obvious now, the usage of the word FOB is a way that Asians

“ARE YOU A FOB?”

How use of the word “FOB” marginalizes Asians in the United States
by sunny kim

continue to be marginalized in America, even by other Asians. It is hypocritical to condemn discrimination against Asians but to turn around and use words like FOB, which plays upon the foreign Asian sentiment still prevalent in the U.S.

Some may consider this issue as being blown out of proportion, but I have my own personal experiences of being victimized by this word, and I know I am speaking up not only for myself, but for other people who have been, and are still, offended by this label. So next time, before you use any form of the word FOB flippantly, just stop and think about why you’re using it. Check your intentions and think about the effects of the words you choose to use. After really considering its implications, you’ll find yourself thinking twice before calling someone a FOB and participating in a system that continues to subordinate Asians in America.

1 Goleman, Daniel. Social intelligence: the new science of human relationships (illustrated ed.). Random House, Inc., pp. 305. <http://www.amazon.com/Social-Intelligence-Science-Human-Relationships/dp/0553803522>

The label does not embrace the diversity that immigrants bring, but instead subordinates them because of their failure to become a part of what is considered mainstream American culture.

you say hello, i say goodbye... to CANTONESE?

Is the marginalization of Cantonese by the university a reflection of a larger problem: **the DEATH of the language?**

by casey tran

Hola. 你好. Bonjour. नमस्ते. Guten Tag. こんにちは. Xin chào. Mabuhay. Shalom. Sua s'dei. 안녕하세요. Pause and listen to the many different languages and dialects spoken by students on the UC Berkeley campus. Whether it is Spanish, Mandarin, Hindi, German, Japanese, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Hebrew, Khmer, or Korean, students here are learning to say "hello" in many different languages. From the dead language of Latin to the romantic language of French, the university has a diverse course offering. One language, however, has been left out of the picture: Cantonese.

Cantonese is a dialect that originates from Southern China. It is primarily spoken in the Guangzhou and Macau provinces and Hong Kong. Within the U.S., Cantonese is heavily spoken in the Chinatowns of San Francisco and New York. Both Cantonese and Mandarin share the same written characters; however, the pronunciations for the languages differ to the point where a Cantonese speaker cannot understand Mandarin.

According to Maricela Chan-Liang, one of the Intermediate Cantonese DeCal instructors, most of mainland China speaks Mandarin rather than Cantonese. "Cantonese is more of a dialect within China. A lot of people speak Cantonese in Hong Kong and the south part of China, but then for the rest of China, it's all Mandarin," Chan-Liang said.

The widespread use of Mandarin has spread to other parts of Asia such as Singapore and Malaysia. The Chinese government has declared that Mandarin is the official language of the country despite the many other dialects in the country. As a result, the government has the tendency to overlook the other dialects and instead promote Mandarin. Most of China's media such as CCTV and People's Daily are Mandarin-based.

China's education system also marginalizes the Cantonese language in favor of Mandarin, a fact reaffirmed by Chan-Liang's experience in Hong Kong. When she studied in Hong Kong, she could not write in her native tongue. "Cantonese is not an official language. When you write it down, it's considered slang. Like in Hong Kong, when I studied there, for Chinese essay that you have to write for composition, [you would write down how you would] say it in Mandarin. You cannot write what you actually say in Cantonese as an official, formal language," Chan-Liang said.

How sad is it that the majority of students studying in Hong Kong are taught that their native tongue is slang? How sad is it that these students are taught that the language that their ancestors spoke and passed down through generations is considered illegitimate?

Governments and institutions make languages illegitimate. Languages and dialects that have been spoken by people for centuries don't become illegitimate without institutional policy or violence. Cantonese is an example of a language that has been suppressed by institutional practices. The Chinese government has set up an education system in Hong Kong that teaches its youth that their native tongue is

illegitimate and that Mandarin is the superior language.

This perception of Mandarin as the superior language over Cantonese can be seen in our American schools and universities. A recent New York Times article reported that in the New York Chinese School, the number of Mandarin classes outnumbered Cantonese classes by three to one. A community that was once primarily Cantonese is slowly turning Mandarin. Which leads to the question: is Cantonese a dying language?

The East Asian Languages and Cultures Department at Berkeley offers Mandarin, but not Cantonese. This may be because of the perceived universal advantages of

Mandarin over Cantonese. Chan-Liang speculates that perhaps there is an emphasis placed on Mandarin within the university because it is one of the top three universal languages along with English and Spanish. Students who learn Mandarin can go overseas to China or elsewhere in Asia and communicate

effectively for business other professions. However, who says that students who learn Cantonese can't put those language skills to use? Hong Kong is a major industrial city where Cantonese is mostly spoken. Who says that Cantonese speakers can't do business there?

In the Bay Area, there is a larger population of Cantonese than Mandarin speakers. Go into Chinatown Oakland or San Francisco and it is more likely that you'll hear Cantonese over Mandarin. Who says that students who learn Cantonese can't go into those communities and do non-profit work? Who says that students can't write for those communities? Or open up medical firms that would be geared toward those Cantonese-speaking communities?

Learning Cantonese is just as beneficial as Mandarin. Mandarin may provide more opportunities for students looking to go overseas given the 850 million speakers in the world. However, the 70 million Cantonese speakers in the world should not be overlooked either. Both languages provide local and international opportunities.

At a university that prides itself on diversity and its academics, Berkeley should embrace all the languages and dialects of the world and not shut out certain languages that are perceived to be non-beneficial to the future endeavors of students. Students should be able to learn a language just to learn. The university is here for the student to learn everything and anything. And by learning everything and anything, the student should be able to decide what he or she is passionate about and pursue that subject. By shutting out certain languages, the university is taking away opportunities from the student. It also means a loss of connection to personal

history and culture for many students.

Chan-Liang affirms this sentiment. "It's good that they would know Mandarin, but that means that the younger generations wouldn't know Cantonese, which is bad," Chan-Liang said.

The Chinese government has decided that Cantonese is inferior to Mandarin. It has labeled Cantonese as informal and slang. Since when does Berkeley simply accept a government's decisions without critically thinking about them? What were the Chinese government's motivations in marginalizing Cantonese and its speakers? Is it right to marginalize a language that has been spoken by people for centuries and currently has millions of speakers worldwide?

No, it isn't. It isn't right to marginalize Cantonese given its potential opportunities for students and its rich history. In the past, Berkeley has made controversial and progressive decisions about its academics such as the establishment of the Ethnic Studies program in 1969. The university should continue to challenge the conventions of academics and pioneer new areas to be explored. Why can't we have both Cantonese and Mandarin? Why are we forced to choose only one? Cantonese may be a difficult language to teach given that it is not standardized and does not have its own writing system, but we are Berkeley after all. And at Berkeley, we don't let the difficulty of a challenge stop us from trying to find a solution.

The consistent popularity of the Cantonese DeCal on campus is evidence of students' desire to maintain a connection to their history and culture. It is also evidence of students' continuing interest in the Cantonese language. Cantonese is not obsolete or dying. Given the 70 million speakers worldwide and the large concentration of Cantonese speakers in the Bay Area, it is still thriving, but we need to continue to fight for its inclusion in universities. Not just for the Cantonese language, but also for other languages and cultures that are being marginalized by governments and institutions. Only then can we receive the education that we want and deserve.



photo courtesy of bbschinadaily.com

The colony of Hong Kong is primarily Cantonese speaking.



photo courtesy of uni. of Texas library

Chinese Linguistic Groups

SINO-TIBETAN

Mandarin

1. Northern

2. Eastern

3. Southwestern

Southern

1. Wu

2. Gan

3. Xiang

4. Min

5. Hakka

6. Yue

Tibetan

1. Amdo

2. Kham

3. Dbusang

Kam-Tai

Miao-Yao

INDO-EUROPEAN

Tajik

AUSTRO-ASIATIC

Mon-Khmer

ALTAI

Turkic

1. Kazakh

2. Uyghur

3. Kirghiz

Mongolian

Manchu-Tungus

Korean

Province-level boundary

Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative

0 500 Kilometers

0 500 Miles

There are many different dialects in China.

THE ASIAN SUICIDE PHENOMENON: ADDRESSING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WEIGHT OF THE FAMILIAL MENTALITY

by alex wong

Aokigahara Forest, the 2,400 hectare dense forest at the foot of Mt. Fuji, has become infamous as a favorite suicide spot after mystery writer Seichi Matsumoto described the woodland as ideal for the perfect death. In 1998 alone, the bodies of about 70 people were found in the notorious forest. Today, according to the World Health Organization, Japan's suicide rate is about 51 per 100,000 people. This is more than twice the rate in the United States (22 per 100,000).

This unnaturally high incidence of suicide is occurring not only in Japan but also in many other East Asian communities around the world as well. Why is the incidence of suicide significantly greater among these Asian demographics than the rest of the world?

The answer may lie in family. Family is the double-edged sword of the Far East: It is the secret to discipline, obedience, and hard work while at the same time it represents the manifestation of ancestral pride, strict expectations, and intolerance for deviation from traditional values. Family is equally a space for familiarity and comfort as it is for social conditioning and stress.

Within the family, taboo topics such as suicide consequently garner a sense of shame, stigma and isolation. Through the vehicle of strict, harsh, or nagging parents, the guilty conscience of not living up to parental expectations is only the tip of the iceberg that is a much greater psychological behemoth. In many traditional Asian cultures, social-cultural dogmas embody a tacit understanding of individual respect and failure as a reflection of the family unit; these unforgiving mentalities are prone to overwhelming the life of an overstressed, depressed individual who may be considering suicide.

While these cultural beliefs and worldviews have been sustained through generations, how do these forces continue to shape the lives of Asians today?

In Japan, economic downturns have been a catalyst instigating a surge in suicides amongst working men and women. It is no accident that the highest spikes in suicide occur in March, the end of the fiscal year. Signs from the recently launched government campaign informing the public about depression and suicide are beginning to pop up in train cars and stations.¹ The reason is because the railway system has been the most popular venue for the growing number of suicides – usually claiming victims on their way to or from work. When financial markers validate family honor and individual worth, how could one possibly save face in the instance of economic tumult?

In China, it is the rural landscape that has

sustained the worst of what could be considered a national suicide epidemic. The turbulent political and economic landscape, combined with the rapid mutation of what was once a longstanding ancient culture, has resulted in a population of rural peasants and farmers struggling to find a new niche. China is the only country where suicides among women outnumber men. The rural female population, which has endured physical, verbal abuse since the beginning of time, has begun to take their own lives at an alarming rate. The violence towards women in this society is a brutal reflection of long-standing family hierarchies, gender oppression and a refusal to deviate from old traditional values even in the face of an increasingly modern and secular society.

It may seem impossible to attempt to translate such statistics to Asians Americans living in the U.S.; however, similar family tensions often plague Asian Americans in the U.S. According to a new study by UC Davis, Asian Americans whose families experience a high degree of interpersonal conflict have a three-fold greater risk of attempting suicide when compared with Asian Americans overall.²

Currently, the most problematic issue relating to family dynamics among Asian Americans is the relationship between Asian American children and their parents. In America, Asian American children often feel the pressure from their parents when it comes to success in the classroom. When they deviate from the expected career paths of doctor, lawyer or engineer, they are often met with both disapproval and disappointment from their families. Family tensions such as this are possibly a major factor behind suicides among Asian Americans.

Asian Americans, however, are not only affected by tense family relations; they must endure additional challenges unique to the Asian American experience. These include culture shock and both intentional and unintentional structural violence, which are the leading factors contributing toward high incidence and low treatment rates for suicide, depression and mental illness among Asian immigrants and Asian Americans in the U.S.

One example of unintentional structural violence stems from recurring problems with language barriers. A recent Surgeon General's Report found that nearly one out of two Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) will have difficulty accessing mental health treatment because of language barriers. Studies in the past suggest that language-based discrimination heavily influences patterns of mental health service use among

Chinese Americans. At the same time, these language barriers also work to isolate immigrants from participating in mainstream American society – a marginalization that often leads to depression.

Another example of structural violence includes the unequal access to healthcare faced by Asian American immigrants. About 21 percent of AAPIs live without health insurance, compared to 16 percent of all Americans. It has also been suggested that AAPI's lower Medicaid participation rates are linked to widespread but mistaken concerns among immigrants that applying for Medicaid jeopardizes possibility for citizenship. Moreover, illegal immigrants are specifically targeted by state procedures which make it extremely difficult for them to access healthcare, in order to discourage illegal immigration.

The combination of these two barriers to healthcare has resulted in AAPIs' extremely low utilization of healthcare services relative to other U.S. populations. For example, in the CAPES study (Chinese American Psychiatric Epidemiological Study), only 17 percent of those experiencing psychological problems sought mental healthcare.³

Shame and stigma are the underlying factors that deter open dialogue and socially acceptable confrontation of depression and mental illness in many Asian and Asian American families. As a result, society too often turns a cold shoulder to those in need of support. In America, when this is compounded with the institutional failings that specifically handicap Asian Americans, it is no surprise that the suicide rates among AAPIs are increasing.

But where shall we start? The daunting task of breaking down cultural mindsets? Or should we turn to the power of the state bureaucracy to fumble the issue? The solution may not be a simple one. Let me propose a new initiative, one of awareness and without excuse – I challenge you to not only address the pressures in your own life, both due to familial relations and not, but to extend a new and genuine, conscious compassion towards those who float in and out of your life as an Asian American. Maybe then we can properly address this issue of cultural difference and indifference here in America, as well as back home in the East.

¹ The Japanese government launched a \$220M campaign to cut the number of suicides by more than 20 percent by 2016.

² <<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/08/080817223446.htm>>

³ <<http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/crfact2.asp>>

*don't push me cause I'm close to the edge
i'm trying not to lose my head
it's like a jungle, sometimes it makes me wonder
how i keep from going under..*

-"THE MESSAGE" BY GRANDMASTER FLASH (1982)

Aokigahara Forest has become an infamous spot for suicide in Japan

www.flickr.com

It's a bird! It's a plane!

It's an Asian!

by justin ko



Stop.

Even if you've never watched a single episode of the TV series "Heroes," you're likely to remember the face of Masi Oka, the Japanese-American actor who plays the superhuman time traveler Hiro Nakamura. The fact that Oka, an Asian American actor, has a prominent role in a prime time NBC drama may have grabbed the public's attention and curiosity. However, it's more likely that his character's amusing, constipated facial expression – which he scrunches into every time he uses his powers – is the lasting image that stops time for the majority of the small screen audience.

As recent as five years ago, if you were asked to make a list of Asian American actors and actresses in prime time television, your face would probably scrunch up too. That's because major roles, beyond the usual fare of karate masters and math geeks, were simply not written up or available for the Asian demographic. When compared to the rapid evolution of Asian Americans in American society, this dearth of diversity seems like time travel into a clichéd and stereotypical past of an immigrant peoples who have clearly changed a great deal over the years.

But there's a noticeable transformation, a la Optimus Prime, going on in that department. Tune in on any popular show, and you'll see that Asian Americans are making deep strides in the industry. A galvanized crop of actors and actresses with serious talent are coming to the rescue of audiences across the nation. Television shows, ranging from "Glee" to "Lost," are finally responding to the burgeoning proliferation of Asian American talent, and new, endearing roles for Asians are springing up all across the networks. Heroes and heroines of all variants are gradually acquiring a yellow pigment. Naturally, this isn't limited to the Yellow Power Ranger.

As with all superheroes, unfortunately, this Asian American wave has to go through a phase of scrutiny and analysis from the general public before being truly accepted. Do these actors and actresses represent a real change that is here to stay, or are they merely a fleeting interest of the TV-watching public? Do they even represent a change at all? Or do they subtly serve to reinforce the stereotypes that have continually plagued the Asian American demographic? It may be useful to cut beneath the surface and analyze the subliminal messages that are conveyed

to the audience by these new characters.

"Glee" is a good place to start. With its first episode airing this September, this musical comedy-drama is steadily increasing in popularity, though its critical reception has been mixed. Exhibit A is the character of Tina Cohen-Chang, played by Jenna Ushkowitz, an actress and singer originally from Seoul, Korea. The show's producers clearly intend to portray Tina as being a "goth," as can be seen through her dark makeup and attire. Additionally, Tina is a shy character, exemplified by her stuttering speech. The fact that she has a speech impediment is a trait that I would like to analyze. What are the implications of having the primary Asian American on the show struggle to communicate her thoughts?

The average viewer may have the misconception that Asian-Americans, while talented, are innately mute, bound and gagged by the strict social constructs of our heritage. In other words, Tina's stuttering may function as an extension of the difficulty that some Asian Americans have explaining their thoughts to their peers, parents, or even themselves. This difficulty, which conflicts somewhat with her portrayal as an abrasive and outspoken "goth," might arise from a language barrier for some Asians, but for most it probably stems from cultural norms that value the greater good of the community over the expression of individual interests. In this way, Tina Cohen-Chang's desire to sing may represent the desire for Asian Americans to make themselves heard in other ways, through a musical instrument, a sport, proficiency in a certain academic field, or a hobby.

However, the common view is still that we are a shy people who cannot or will not explicitly communicate what is on our minds, for the purposes of subservience and conformity. The fact that Tina does not stutter when she sings reinforces this perception of artistic Asians in general. Asian-Americans as a whole clearly excel in creative and artistic pursuits, and have much to say and

contribute to the American artistic community, whether as a demographic they are accurately represented in the media or not.

Tina's character, as one of the most skilled singers in the group, affirms this undeniable fact, but in a way that may still work to subliminally criticize Asian-Americans who seek success in the arts. This is because her stuttering implies that such individuals will still find it difficult to overcome the Asian-American "gag complex" that impedes speech and self-expression. In doing so, it suggests that self-censorship is the issue, and that Asians simply choose not to speak up since it is not considered an important or useful endeavour.

The character's tendency to conform can also be seen in the episode "Preggers," when Tina is awarded the solo song "Tonight" for the musical "West Side Story" from the Glee Club. The character Rachel Berry, an assertive and ambitious Jewish singer, wants the solo instead; Tina is willing to switch parts to appease her, but the director of the Glee Club does not

allow this switch. Rachel decides to quit as a result. This storyline asserts the view that Asian Americans are willing to give way and sacrifice potential fame and recognition if they feel that doing so will satisfy a dominant friend or a peer, who in many cases is Caucasian.

This episode may serve as an allegory to the state of Asian-Americans in film and television as a whole, supporting the idea that we are fundamentally at fault for our lack of representation in these mediums due to our lack of assertiveness and self-confidence. Whether this is true or not is itself a matter of debate, but I would argue that "Glee" sends a clear message; if the solo part goes to an Asian American, we are more than happy to give it up for the sake of a rival.

Another television show that hit the small screen this September was the ABC science fiction drama "Flashforward." This series features Berkeley's own John Cho, of "Harold and Kumar" fame, who graduated

with an English degree from Cal before establishing a career as an actor. Cho plays an FBI special agent, Demetri Noh, who must race against time to unravel the mystery of the flash forward prophecies before they ultimately kill him.

This character possesses many positive traits which break down biases regarding Asian Americans. Demetri Noh is engaged to Zoey Andata, an African American portrayed by actress Gabrielle Union. The image of the Asian American male as being effeminate and meek, wholly undesirable to women of other races, is clearly refuted. Demetri Noh is an FBI agent, the real-life equivalent of a superhero. Gabrielle Union, a high profile black actress who is rumored to be dating NBA star Dwayne Wade, is a sex symbol, and the fact that she is Cho's fiancée in the show opposes the view that Asian males cannot possibly be attractive beyond "yellow fever." This interracial relationship also refutes the notion that Asian Americans only pair up with other Asians.

There are lingering aspects of subordination that affect Cho's character, however. Despite the fact that Noh is partners with Mark Benford, another FBI agent, it is Benford who is credited as being the main character of the show, though Noh and Benford work together to solve the crisis. Benford receives more exposure and backstory, while Noh is a sidekick.

But the fact remains that Cho is arguably the second most prominent actor on the show, which is a dramatic improvement over previous shows. He is often at the heart of the action, but not in a way that is clichéd, such as the nerdy techie or the kung fu specialist; he is a special agent, and is realistically trained as such. John Cho manages to transcend his typecast label as an Asian American actor in ways that the geeky Masi Oka could not. Though both are essentially "superheroes," Cho could be replaced by an actor of any race. In this way I applaud the show's creators – as well as the creators of all television shows that portray Asian Americans in an unbiased light – and cheer on John Cho as he fights for his life with Gabrielle Union by his side.

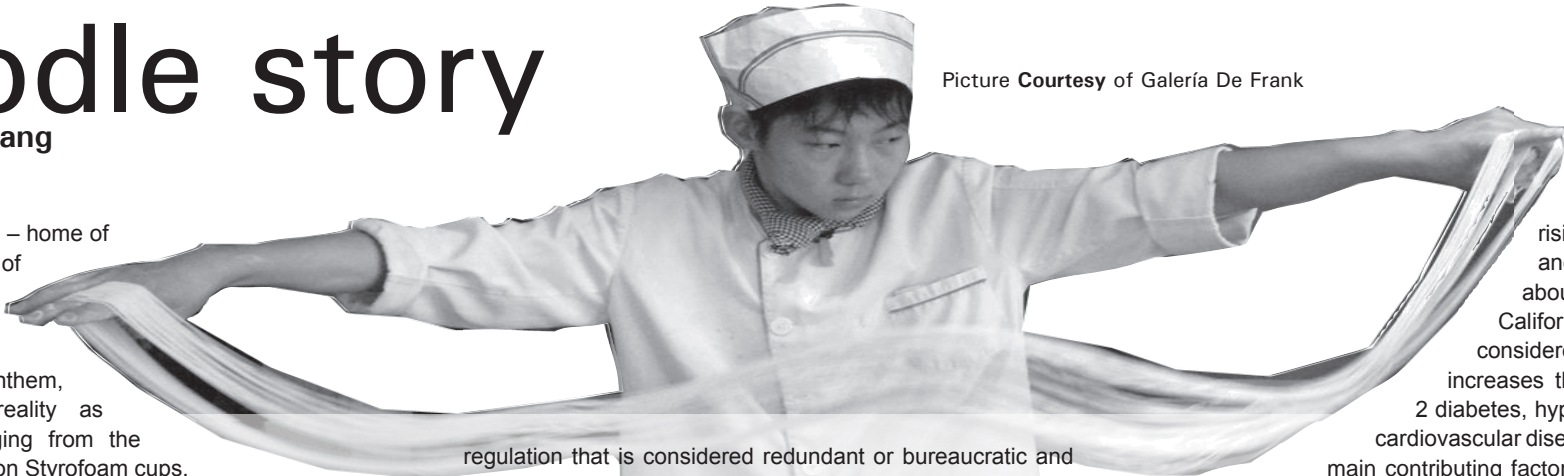
You could even say that, as opposed to stopping time, Cho is a flash of the future.

"Asian-Americans as a whole clearly excel in creative and artistic pursuits, and have much to say and contribute to the American artistic community..."

noodle story

by tawny tsang

Picture Courtesy of Galería De Frank



America – home of the brave, land of the free. While these concepts are embedded in our national anthem, they exist in reality as oxymorons. Judging from the cautionary notes on Styrofoam cups, America likes to play it safe. And anyone who has taken an economics course knows that there is no such thing as free lunch. Perhaps it’s more congruent to say that the American people are brave and free, especially in regards to California’s state health officials and Asian American business owners. Brave to create a law over the refrigeration of Asian noodles and free to react accordingly to it.

According to the Los Angeles Times, there is a new federal law that requires manufacturers to refrigerate fresh rice noodles, which clashes against the tradition of storing them at room temperature. This attracted the attention of California Senator Leland Yee (D-San Francisco) when a San Francisco noodle factory was recently cited by health officials for violating a law that mandates food be stored at either under 41o Fahrenheit or above 140o where microbial growth is stunted.

Not only have jobs been lost over this issue, sparks have been flying. State health officials say that the refrigeration of food is a public health measure whereas Asian American business owners say that the law is a violation of traditional practices. And so, Yee and a group of noodle manufacturers are joining forces in hopes of changing the law.

From an outsider’s perspective, both parties have legit arguments. Not too long ago, there was a salmonella outbreak in tomato crops and E. coli outbreak in spinach. Taking precautionary measures to prevent detrimental health consequences is reasonable.

However, this noodle law can be seen as “red tapism” and just represents another aspect of how un-free and inflexible America really is. Red tape refers to excessive

regulation that is considered redundant or bureaucratic and hinders action. As there have not been any reported illnesses from consuming fresh noodles stored at room temperature, it seems unnecessary to suddenly bring up regulations on how they’re manufactured. This law also seems to veer away from the original intent to screen potentially harmful food preparation practices.

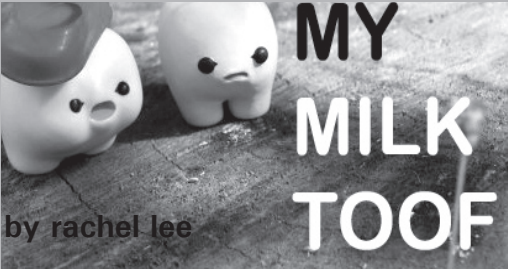
On the other hand, the Asian American business owners also have a point. Food is an accessible way to teach others about a particular group’s culture and tradition. How else to represent Southeast Asian cuisine than through noodles? Noodle factory owner Tom Thong says that rice noodles have been prepared at room temperature and eaten for thousands of years. Once refrigerated, the noodles become ruined – hard and brittle. They’re like baguettes or fresh bread – you just don’t put them in the fridge.

Thong claims that health inspectors “don’t understand our culture.” This is a bold statement because the reverse could also be true – he may not understand that refrigerating foods is part of the “American culture.” Moreover, in Australia, eggs are found on shelves in aisles; in Greece, milk is also found on the shelf; in many countries, fruit and vegetables are left out of refrigerators. Likewise, many Asian confections are also meant to be stored at room temperature like mocha (sticky rice balls) and moon cakes (made out of lotus paste). The rest of the world is not reaming with gastrointestinal issues. They just have a concept of freshness that we lack.

Nowhere else is the obesity epidemic or diabetes rate as high as in America. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. obesity rate has been

rising annually and currently, about 30 percent of Californian adults are considered obese. This increases the risk of type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease. One of the main contributing factors to this is the use of high fructose corn syrup in foods. High-fructose corn syrup is not only a cheap sweetener but also a preservative found in nearly all the packaged foods lining the shelves of American supermarkets. Rather than eating fresh foods due to potential microbial growth, Americans prefer eating synthetic foods that are supposedly safe to eat even after a year of being produced. Instead of blindly setting regulations on the refrigeration of food, the California Department of Public Health should embrace cultural practices like making fresh noodles and storing them as is. It should be time that health officials open their eyes to their culture of hypersensitivity to sanity and health.

Refrigeration is a recent phenomenon. For thousands of years, mankind has been consuming food between the 410 and 141o range. And we are still alive and well. Cultural practices still persist despite the development of new technologies because they are efficient and safe. Asian American or not, we have all fallen victim to American cultural practices of eating and preparing foods out of boxes rather than whole foods. If health is the main concern over this noodle refrigeration law, then the California Department of Public Health is missing the point. The use of preservatives and promotion of refrigeration is more harmful than room temperature noodles. The hyper-sensitivity to food safety created practices cancel out ideals of freshness and perpetuate unhealthful food choices. Rather than tangling themselves in this noodle issue, I think it’s time for health officials to realize that in living in the land of the free and home of the brave, they need to try new things and not be afraid to admit their mistakes.



A fantasy world where your teef have a mind of their own

then. She doesn’t know too much English, so sometimes she doesn’t understand the descriptive lines under the pictures. So she’ll call and ask me to explain. It’s nice because even though we’re not the same age group we can talk about this together. Sometimes I’ll ask her for feedback – sometimes you just need the advice and opinion of someone who’s not an artist but just an average reader.

hb: What is a milk toof?

Inhae: I came from Korea when I was 16 years old, and I am 32 years old now, so I’ve lived an equal amount in both countries. Now, I am an outsider from Korea but am not fully American either so I have somewhat of an odd identity. I still have to ask some questions that others take for granted. For example, I had to ask, “Why do they call it a ‘cup of joe’?” You can say there were lots of Wikipedia searches. That’s why when I first heard the term “milk tooth,” I got my inspiration for this blog. While I was Wikipedia-searching for “milk tooth,” I learned that when a baby tooth is reflected by light it’s the color of milk. Then I decided to think about more “baby terms,” – basically, the way babies would say certain words. That’s why ickle is “ickle”; I imagined the way babies say “little.” And Lardee is named Lardee because he looks like a piece of lard, doesn’t he? I guess not being fluent in either Korean or English made me inquisitive.

hb: Where do you get your inspiration for your characters, ickle and Lardee?

Inhae: ickle and Lardee are based on my two nieces. Because my nieces Jamie and Chloe know they’re the inspiration behind my characters, sometimes they ask to be placed and featured in certain ways. It’s really cute. ickle is based on Jamie, the older one who’s 10 now. That’s why he was my first character. He’s the responsible older one; my sister actually battled with cancer which in turn made Jamie really independent, especially since he has a sister who’s seven years younger. Chloe, my younger niece, was my inspiration

for Lardee. Lardee’s main facial expression is actually exactly what one of Chloe’s facial expressions looks like.

hb: What is your audience demographic like, and does that influence your storyline at all?

Inhae: My Facebook fan page actually conveniently breaks down the demographics by country. My top three countries are the U.S., Singapore, and then the Philippines. After that it’s the UK, Sweden, and Norway. Somehow this [website] has gotten the spotlight; pop art is well known in Japan but not so much from Koreans or Americans. In terms of age, the age range goes from 18 to 25, and around 75% of fans are female. I actually have a lot of mom fans. Lots of moms send me fan mail of pictures their kids have drawn of ickle and Lardee, and it’s really sweet. Some moms tell me about how they read my blog with their kids as their bed time story. They tell me they can’t wait for the book to come out so they can go to the bedroom with a book instead of a laptop.

hb:What does the future of My Milk Toof look like?

Inhae: There are lots of opportunities coming up; I’m trying to be patient about it. There’s a Russian/Japanese/Korean company that makes stop motion movies that I’m in contact with. It’s a very interesting prospect, the idea of making this into a stop motion film. But I don’t want to drop the quality of my stories or the models so I’m taking my time. I never wanted to think of this blog as something that would make lots and lots of profit at the cost of the quality of the work. I was inspired by Bill Watterson, the creator of Calvin & Hobbes; he never capitalized on his characters or his story by making dolls because he believed that once you put them on a mock-up it’s not quite the same anymore. But at the same time, it’s hard not to think about because that is how you make the most profit. So now I’m trying to take my time and not sign any contracts too hastily. I would like to see a stop motion movie come out of this though.

INGLORIOUS SAMURAI

Does San Francisco's Asian Art Museum have an image problem?

by eileen tse

"What awaits you are the hidden treasures from the sacred realm of the elite artistic warrior masters known as the Samurai": such romanticized language is typical for a museum brochure looking to entice the masses to flood the gates. It is so prevalent in our culture that its implementation isn't questioned or really even acknowledged for that matter. Just because it is so commonplace, though, does that mean there is no room for change?

A group of anonymous socially conscious artists concerned about the recently closed "Lords of the Samurai" exhibit (June 12th-September 20th) at the AAMSF didn't think so. The group launched an artistic intervention project in late August calling attention to the museum's perpetuation of the Oriental myth surrounding an over-glorified samurai class and the absence of a more progressive perspective on this iconic symbol of Japan that would actually broadens viewers' understanding of the samurai rather than stagnate it.

As a form of institutional critique, this anonymous group of artists decided to wield the power of parody to make their point and construct their art. The group created "asiansart.org," which masquerades as an "alternative" vision of the AAMSF's official website, asianart.org, highlighting very different aspects of samurai culture.

The "Lords of the Samurai" exhibit boasted an impressive collection of artifacts from the Hosokawa clan, a prominent daimyo family with a 600 year lineage of political influence. The collection itself is meant to garner an appreciation for the antiqued past of Japan, and is not the target of criticism.

There is no doubt that samurai have impacted Japan's modern culture and the world's perception of the Japanese as a headstrong, yet honorable peoples. However, were the samurai really as upstanding as centuries of historical propaganda suggest?

While the museum promotes the samurai's interest in cultivated arts and spirituality, "asiansart.org" draws attention to the aestheticization of violence, shudo (pederasty), and the ramifications of glorifying the myth of bushido (warrior code of conduct) in modern history. While the shudo aspect is really

only reviled in a modern context as homosexuality wasn't so frowned upon in history, the systematized adaptation of bushido and "honor unto death" into Japanese society carry a modern legacy of militaristic nationalism.

Taking a cue from the AAMSF's promotional image featuring a suit of samurai armor which not so coincidentally seems to be a motif of Darth Vader, the group photoshopped the poster to include Mickey Mouse ears, a human nose, and an ominous image of a mushroom cloud to reinforce the ideals that the group believes the AAMSF is perpetuating with its samurai exhibit. The group went on to spread their own version of the museum's promotional flyer around the San Francisco metropolitan area as a means of providing the public with a starkly different perspective of the samurai class.

The imagery and information provided by the asiansart.org group are purposefully meant to chafe viewers with their harsh radicalism and pointed focus on the so-called "negative" aspects of samurai culture. They have to no surprise turned off a lot of people who believe that the group's effort in effect actually paints an exaggerated and insulting picture of the Japanese people as a blood-thirsty and brainwashed population, while tarnishing the legacy of samurai families.

I could go into further discussions of the specific arguments brought up, but asiansart.org is so meticulously executed to be simultaneously succinct, poignant, and informationally enlightening that it's worth a personal visit. The website cites extensively the work of credentialed historians, statistics, news articles, and such, providing links to authoritative sources and the opportunity for more focused information gathering.

It is also incredibly open to being challenged, and the dialogue generated by this art campaign is actually much more interesting than the content of the website itself, and further broadens one's understanding of samurai culture and its discrepancies. Garnering attention from AAMSF, the blogosphere, and academics alike, one cannot say that the asiansart.org project is a half-baked endeavor, as the site is

supported by scholarly ethos and a thorough, well-articulated understanding of the subject.

The AAMSF has a track record for controversy; its Tibetan exhibit was tainted by the conditions imposed by Chinese government, and its exhibit of a Japanese scroll depicting the conquest of Korea's Silla Dynasty in the 6th century was protested against by Korean-Americans for propagating a distorted, one-sided view of history. In the case of this recent samurai exhibition, though, the protest is not necessarily over the politics surrounding the art, but rather over what the museum exhibit itself seems to propagate. The anonymous group is concerned with the treatment of the history of the samurai, which is why they have concentrated their efforts on this elaborate public art project.

Despite the assaultive execution style of asiansart.org, the concerns behind the website are not unfounded. The Western conception of traditional Japan primarily consists of two figures: the samurai and the geisha, which are also coincidentally two of the most popular exhibits for the AAMSF. This is obviously a very short sighted summation of Japan, and these two characters are often misrepresented to promote an Orientalist vision of sex and violence.

Orientalism, although not as overtly racist as cultivated in the 20th century, still prevails in modern Western society. For the Average Joe on the street, though, I find that there is nothing wrong with embracing the novelty and curiosity of other cultures. However, what are the broader implications of perpetuating this sort of cultural narrative in a scholarly space like a museum?

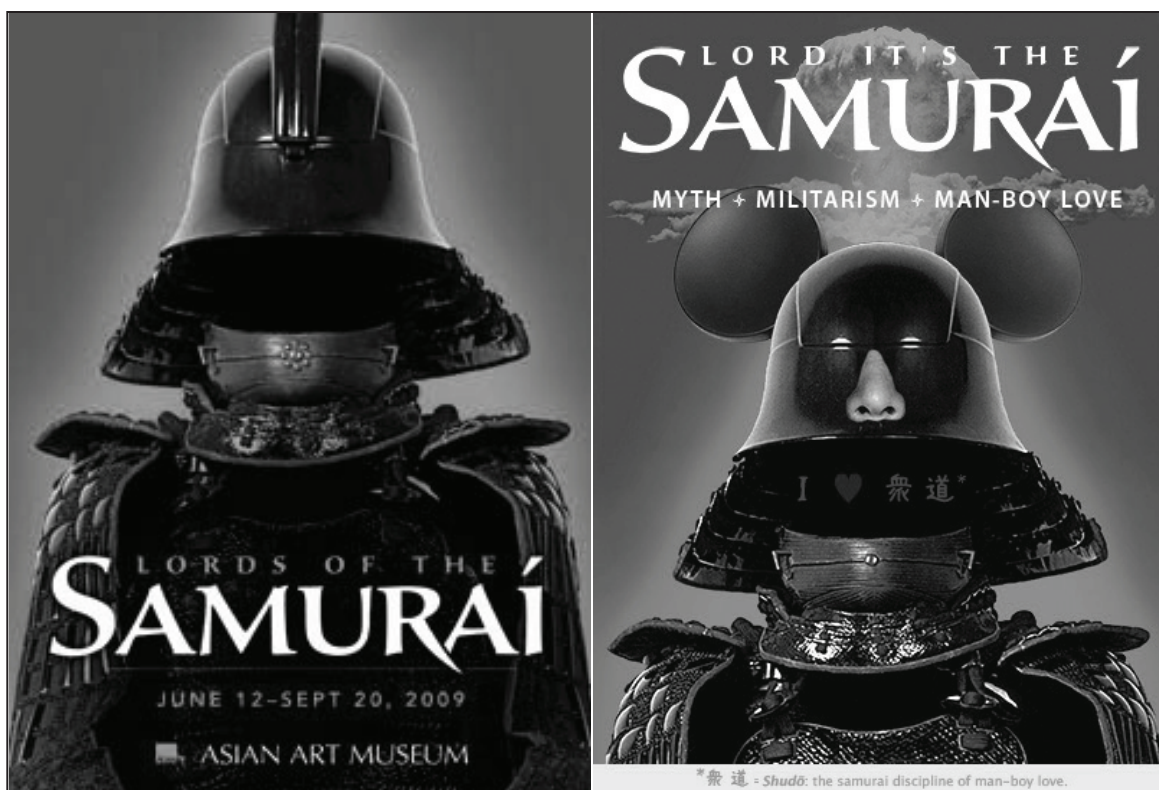
Museums are an entrusted public institution. The ultimate responsibility of museums is not just to display and care for artifacts, but to set the tone for a more four-dimensional (historical, social, political, and cultural) understanding of the subject at hand. Especially with Asia, much can be lost in translation or misinterpreted due to the contrast of philosophical and cultural foundations between the "East" and the "West." It's easy to relegate Asian culture to simple tropes.

The asiansart.org website employs sensationalist iconography point blank in its parody to illustrate the AAMSF's own usage of such imagery, no matter how subtle it may be. Even if museums are presumably "not doing anything wrong," they need to be held accountable for the message they send to their audiences and really reflect on whether they are educating the public or just feeding them prepackaged stereotypes.

When so much effort is put into an exhibit, conscious choices are made to emphasize and omit certain bits of information. The choice of the AAMSF to utilize the stereotypical image of the samurai in its marketing efforts is an intentional one meant to attract as many visitors as possible, and of course, to please their generous patrons who provided them with the opportunity to showcase this collection by not detracting from their own cultivated image. The fact that the AAMSF is a widely known and respected non-profit institution for Asian art, however, would make it appropriate for the museum to explore less abridged and commercialized education.

Similarly, the asiansart.org group makes the choice to highlight the most disparaging aspects of samurai culture, as an outrageous statement against the oversimplification of samurai culture that prevails not only at the museum but outside it in society as well. The group does not offer any solutions; it did its job, though, of bringing awareness to this issue of Orientalism in modern public scholarship and sparking dialogue.

It's up to society to stretch its capacity to take the good, the bad, the pretty, and the ugly of all cultures; only then can we achieve true appreciation and true apprehension.



www.shalomimages.com

www.asiansart.org

A comparison of AAMSF's samurai promotional poster (L) to asiansart.org's version (R). asiansart.org's poster criticizes AAMSF's misrepresentation and controversial glorification of Japanese samurai culture.

The Sun Will Not Set on Nichi Bei

Nichi Bei Times ceases publication but not without a successor

by sherry gong

“The Nichi Bei Times is the glue that holds the community together.”

- Kenji Taguma, previously the English editor of Nichi Bei Times and currently the president of Nichi Bei Foundation

Nichi Bei Times, a bilingual English and Japanese newspaper, published its final edition on September 10, 2009. This news may come as no surprise given the recession and general decline of print media. But Nichi Bei Times was a publication created by, read by, and (mostly) funded by the people, unlike larger forms of media.

To bring the Japanese community together after internment, Nichi Bei Times was created on May 18, 1946. It started out as a daily bilingual newspaper but in 2006 it began publishing a Japanese-only newspaper three times a week along with a weekly English newspaper. The transition occurred because of a continuous decrease in the number of subscribers and advertising revenue, trends that continued until its recent closure.

For all the years Nichi Bei Times was in print, it was instrumental in bringing Japanese Americans together. It provided an avenue for Japanese Americans to voice their issues and opinions when they were marginalized by the dominant voice in the media. Nichi Bei Times is most noted for rallying the Japanese American community to demand redress for internment. It also acquired redress for families of miners and railroad workers who were fired after Pearl Harbor and not accounted for in the government's 1998 redress act. But Nichi Bei Times did not only report on the Japanese American community. Its staff reported the struggles of American Muslims during post-Sept. 11, alluding to Japanese internment during World War II. They also reported on the issue of same-sex marriage in support of it, with former anti-miscegenation laws in mind.

While this chapter of Nichi Bei is closing, another one is being written. Former Nichi Bei Times English editor Kenji Taguma, along with other community leaders and Nichi Bei Times contributors and staff, have founded the Nichi Bei Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to publishing Nichi Bei Weekly. Nichi Bei Weekly will be producing an English weekly newspaper, but due to the decrease in Japanese immigration, it is unlikely that there will be a Japanese or bilingual version of the newspaper.

To appeal to young people, Taguma would like to continue the efforts to modernize Nichi Bei Times, which have included extended coverage of video games, anime, manga, food, as well as issues focusing on people of mixed-race ancestry and environmental topics. Does including this type of content make Nichi Bei Weekly less empowering than its predecessor? While some of these topics may be less about social justice, they are about community and provide other avenues for Japanese Americans (and non-Japanese Americans) to relate to each other.

Hopefully, Nichi Bei Weekly will continue the tradition of branching out to other communities and topics, which will further increase the scope of Nichi Bei Weekly and assist in changing people's misconceptions about ethnic press. It is easy for people to think that ethnic press is targeted towards one group of people, and miss that it is also intended to educate the general public on how that community feels about certain issues.

A publication that more accurately reflects the complexity of issues will allow people to understand different points of view and get a better idea of the bigger picture. Ethnic press is meant to create the understanding that each person has a different history, which affects how he or she views the world as well as how he or she is affected by it. If Taguma pursues the goal of branching out with Nichi Bei Weekly, this effect will become more apparent.

Because of the abrupt closing of Nichi Bei Times, the foundation is currently waiting for 501(c)3 status as a nonprofit



The last issue of Nichi Bei Times. What will become of Nichi Bei?

<http://nichibeitimes.com/>

and consequently has not been able to apply for grants from large foundations. This means it is currently relying on individual donations, which will be retroactively repaid if the IRS gives the Nichi Bei Foundation the 510(c)3 status. After its

status is approved, it will supposedly rely on funding from foundations, community fundraisers, and advertising, which should make it more financially stable than its predecessor.

The switch from for-profit to nonprofit will likely be a beneficial change for the publication. The Nichi Bei Foundation will not have to worry as much about making enough money to stay afloat. Nichi Bei Times was never about making money anyway, and this makes it easier for the staff to focus on what both Nichi Bei publications were and are intended for: creating and preserving a sense of community.

The publication was set to begin printing on September 17, though it is unclear whether it was printed. This is the first time any ethnic press has tried converting to a nonprofit model. If this model succeeds, it will set an example for the ethnic press that serve other communities. If this is something that you would like to support, send in donations to Nichi Bei's website: nichibeifoundation.org. And if ethnic press is something you are interested in, keep a close watch on the Nichi Bei Foundation as a possibly viable model for the future of ethnic press.

Traditions in Movement

India's classical music and dance remain relevant abroad

by kim filipinas

Traditions start with people, bring people together, and hold people together. India's classical arts, rarefied they may be, are no different. When considering Indian classical music or dance, it's not just the virtuosity of the performer or composition that matters, but also the people and communities that have arisen about them.

Srinivas Reddy played in rock bands before practicing classical Indian music. Twelve years ago after moving to the Bay Area, Reddy began to learn the sitar, and has been playing professionally since then. Reddy learned the sitar the "Indian way" — one-on-one with his teacher, a method which allows for a very rich, personal experience.

The sitar's form is analogous to a guitar. Both are stringed instruments, but the sitar is much larger and more complex due to its second bridge for "sympathetic" strings. These are not plucked by the musician, but vibrate with the playing of the instrument, producing sonorous and complex music.

I was fortunate enough to hear Reddy play the aalap (opening section) of the sri raga in a UC Berkeley lecture hall. A raga can be simplistically defined as a musical mode, specifying tone, rhythm, and melody within a piece. Ragas are associated with specific moods, deities, seasons, or even a time of day: the sri raga is associated with the setting sun. The aalap can be broken up into three parts: a freeform beginning, a section that builds up the rhythm of the piece, and a climax. Reddy explained that the aalap is completely improvised — although not without guidelines governed by the raga. An entire raga from beginning to end may be up to 85% improvised.

Traditional classical Indian music is chamber music. Ragas are conventionally performed by as few as two to five people,

with a main vocalist or instrumentalist, accompanied by a drummer and a person who controls the melody. The experience benefits from such intimacy, although modern performances have been given in big halls with microphones. In any case, listening to classical Indian music certainly provides a striking contrast to the homogenized pop music played on the radio today.

Third-year Soham Chaudhari learned to dance Bhartantya in a similarly personal setting as that under which Reddy learned the sitar. Bhartantya is one of eight classical dances in India, consisting primarily of footwork and hand gestures. The dance scene was so small when Chaudhari began in her hometown of Las Vegas that lessons were conducted at her teacher's home, although the instructor has since upgraded to a studio. The intimacy that characterizes her experience echoes Reddy's. The scenes for these classical traditions may be small, but there is something to be said about the type of education a person receives in a personal setting, which provides fertile ground for the growth of interpersonal relationships.

For Chaudhari, Indian dance has provided an alternative method to learning about Indian culture, one that isn't predicated on reading and writing. In Bhartantya, a religious and cultural history is conveyed through hand gestures and expressions. Chaudhari learned a lot about Indian epic stories, which explain why her family practices the rituals that they do. Moreover, learning classical Indian dance has enriched her dancing in other sectors. "Learning the more traditional way adds refinement," Chaudhari says, to more modern forms of dance that she is interested in. Certainly classical Indian traditions are not the only way to learn and articulate Indian culture, or even the most

popular. Rajiv Khanna, co-president of the Indian Student Association, explains that those who gravitate toward classical forms typically have had that exposure at an early age. To be sure, professionals of classical Indian music are more likely to be Indian, indicating a degree of insularity in the tradition. But Khanna also stresses the importance of traditional Indian holidays like Holi that hold universal appeal. Holi is the spring Festival of Colors, and participants throw colored water or powder on one another. Events like these are a chance to reach out and educate the non-Indian community about traditional Indian culture.

Reddy will teach a History of Indian Music class during summer 2010 at UC Berkeley, and his goal is to teach and maintain the classical tradition of music. Although not averse to modern fusion movements, he feels wary "when classical music [artists] feel that they have to make their music fusion-like to make it acceptable to Western audiences." Why compromise such a rich musical heritage to insecurity? To contrast, Reddy's experiences in concert have been the opposite — the audiences are of a mixed demographic, with perhaps less than half Indians, and they are always accepting and enthusiastic.

It is impossible to keep classical traditions from mutating — but that isn't the bottom line. Their transmission is a practice rather than an end-point. We can look to the ragas of Indian classical music as an example. Ragas are traditionally left unwritten, so there is no way of knowing whether the music played today is the same as what was played hundreds of years ago. But, that doesn't mean that contemporary musicians don't continue to play in the same vein as did those of the past. Indian classical music still has the power to move audiences, in India and abroad.

Srinivas Reddy is a professional concert sitarist and practices the Hindustani style of music.

<http://srinivasreddy.org/>