

# hardboiled

the asian american  
media juggernaut

may 2006



## 9.6

- Has ethnic studies sold its soul?
- Racism in World of Warcraft?
- Cure for the asian glow?



# hb 9.6

## editor's note

### may 2006

#### STORY EDITORS

jeremy chen  
allen hong  
veronica louie  
pauline sze

#### MANAGING EDITOR

dan nguyen

#### LAYOUT EDITORS

shu sha angie guan  
owen leong  
christine yang

#### COPY EDITOR

jason coe

#### COVER ART

christine yang

#### CONTRIBUTING STAFF

jaylum chen  
pearl chen  
annie chung  
xun “wendy” gu  
matthew hui  
joanna kim  
vinh lao  
kevin lee  
liah matsui  
lina peng  
akane suzuuchi  
wendy tai  
adrienna wong  
erin wong  
ray zhou

#### hb meetings

Wednesday 6-7pm  
243 Dwinelle

hardboiled@berkeley.edu

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“Discrimination isn’t a problem in America anymore.”

I’m sure you’ve heard that one a few times, and while it may be true in a certain sense, especially in regards to civil rights, you can rest assured that being different in America still has its pitfalls. Even when among peers at our esteemed university, I am sometimes surprised by the subtle remarks classmates will make that betray discriminatory attitudes. Just last week in an English seminar, we were discussing Monica Ali’s novel about Bangladeshi immigrants living in London, *Brick Lane*, and a discussion group came to the conclusion that the main male protagonist Chanu, my personal favorite character, was “worthless” because of his inability to succeed professionally in London. I was shocked, as were a few of my other classmates and the professor. Unsurprisingly, this group was comprised of white people, who despite their varied and educated backgrounds seemed unable to grasp that Chanu’s fictional failures were meant to represent the vicissitudes of being an immigrant trying to “make it” in a foreign land. In their eyes, Chanu’s stubborn refusal to assimilate was his ultimate sin. Chanu’s story is much more common than the often publicized immigrant “rags to riches” success stories. It is the story of my own father, who is very well-educated, was captain of the wrestling team in high school in New Jersey, was the senior class president, but was never able to succeed financially and was eventually reduced to being a bus driver for the MTA. Furthermore, we’ve all heard the stories of individuals that were doctors or lawyers in their homelands but moved to the United States only to become cab drivers or bus boys. It’s not easy to succeed in America, which is something that we, as individuals lucky enough to be receiving a world class education, should remember.

I will never forget what a professor once said to me, “Those that are in power never take the time to look at a system of oppression,” which is why it’s a rarity to meet a white Ethnic Studies major or a male Women’s Studies major. Discrimination and racism work in varied ways, whether we acknowledge it or not. For example, the term “illegal immigrant” is in of itself pejorative and unfair. Unless you are of American Indian descent, your ancestors once immigrated to the United States in hopes for a better life for themselves and their children. The Italians, Irish, Polish, Germans and Eastern Europeans that immigrated here en masse did not have green cards either. In all likelihood, your ancestors were once illegal immigrants, refugees or oppressed in their native lands. Wanting a better life with more opportunity does not make someone a criminal. If it were possible for these people to get documentation to come to the United States, they would have. All over the world, only the rich, well-connected and the very lucky are able to come here “legally.” For the rest, the impoverished, the oppressed, victims of war and power politics, the US is a paradise that they will risk their lives, and their family members’ lives, for the chance to live here and work menial jobs for unjustly low wages. Illegal is hardly the adjective to describe these people. They are definitely not “worthless.”

Take the time to observe this system, of which you are an integral part. What is the cost of your success? If you’re at the top, who’s at the bottom? Don’t wait until the system hurts you to start changing it. Oh, and much love to next year’s staff.

**jason coe**  
hb copy editor

It’s funny how we sometimes believe that we can just pack everything up in a cardboard box. I’ve been putting together all the stuff that’s been piling up in my room so that I can hand it over to next year’s core. Handouts, notebooks, articles, hit lists... everything’s there, but it doesn’t seem to add up to what I’ve taken away from these last three years.

I can’t help thinking about the hard work and dedication that’s held this publication together during the rough times: the workshop planning that went into each of our meetings, the production nights and late night editing sessions for each issue, and the ability of some people to finish a story or layout that they started even though they knew they had so many other things to worry about.

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I guess you could say I was one of those people who never had any intention of getting into sociopolitical issues and community work. Taking classes here at Berkeley, meeting other **hb** troopers, and putting on events for the community gave me a clearer vision of the pressing issues I’ve known for much of my life, but was never able to articulate. One thing that I feel more certain about than anything else is that college should be much more than some sort of meaningless vocational training exercise. Higher education really is a privilege, and too often we get wrapped up in our own lives to see what’s going on around us.

For me, it’s hard to ignore the issues that affect immigrant communities. I know that my dad began his life in this country by working at an ice cream shop in Sausalito and for years was only able to eat chicken wings in his unfurnished SF apartment. It wasn’t an easy life, to be sure, but it was a choice my family made willingly. We ended up in this country because my grandfather was so insistent about this place called America. My parents could have just said “yes” early on and not had to worry about being refugees anymore, but instead they passed up offers from other countries and waited for several more months in the camps to receive a response from United States.

But I’ve also realized that the America that my folks dreamed about isn’t the same as the one I wake up to every day. In the news, I read about people being denied housing because they have an accent or recent immigrants working long hours in sweatshops to make clothes for UC employees. Our country is growing hostile, arrogant, myopic. The door just isn’t open anymore. The fierce debate that has erupted in Congress shows that the immigration issue can’t be suppressed any longer. The truth that few people seem to notice, however, is that 1 million of the 12 million immigrants are people like our parents—Asian. The immigration debate hits pretty close to home, and I’m at a loss for words when I hear about the indefinite internment of nearly 40,000 undocumented Chinese immigrants in Halliburton-owned detention facilities in America. The US government denied these people citizenship and is seeking to deport them, but the Chinese government refuses to allow their reentry. The detainees have no country that they can call their own.

I know that as college students, we often have exams, papers, projects, or even certain people that we’re thinking about, but to simply cast these issues aside would add to the problem, even if we have good intentions. It almost feels like there is a personal need to strive and bring this country closer to the dream shared by my parents and so many immigrants like them.

I want to wish the best of luck to our new editors and staff. Keep up the good fight and continue being a critical voice for our community

**allen hong**  
hb story editor

“If not you, then who will?”

You know what old, white, rich people often ask themselves, “Is this all there is to life?” Too many of us here at Berkeley are too busy thinking of ways to get paid. Though not all of us here are so similarly inclined to such monetary obsessions, I am often frustrated to observe the complacency of so many students who say, “I got bills to pay.” Albeit, there are different circumstances that surround us all, but at what point do we realize that all the bills have been paid, and we are the old, rich, white (or wannabe white) people who have spent our entire lives making money? I recently went to hear former-CBS anchorman Dan Rather speak. He is a rich, old, white man. However there is one fundamental difference that lets him keep it real. He knows the answer to my initial question. Whether we are struggling university students, benefactors of white privilege, local heroes, rich kids, politicians, overworked garment workers, high-power lawyers, victims, doctors, or corporate bigwigs, we all need to care about something greater than ourselves and honor our responsibility to public service.

The world makes us who we are. Whether good or bad, we all owe the world at least an honest effort to make it better than before we were born into it. There is nothing worse than wasted opportunity.

Many of us at Berkeley already do, and for that, I am immensely proud, but we still have a long way to go. I want to sincerely thank you for your readership, and I also want to thank this year’s group of writers and editors for your dedication and endearing camaraderie. To the future of **hardboiled** thank you for taking over the wheel on this big unwieldy bus.

**jeremy chen**  
hb story editor

It always amazes me how fast ‘todays’ become ‘yesterdays.’ Yesterday, I gleefully walked into my first co-ed dormitory and discovered matching co-ed bathrooms (oh, my). Yesterday, I took my first Ethnic Studies course, had all those epiphanies about my identity, and declared it the best damned department in Berkeley (possibly, the world!). Yesterday, being one unit short, I decided to take the **hb** de-Cal (inarguably, one of my better moves in college). It took all those yesterdays to help me become the more self- and socially- aware person writing to you today. But I didn’t always feel so optimistic or empowered; it took whole lot of stepping out of myself, my shell, my comfort zones, and getting involved.

While those first few steps may have been tentative, I have learned that we need not tread so softly or apprehensively because we, all of us, are HIGHLY capable of doing well and affecting change. But, sometimes, we have to just jump right in—into an activity, an organization, a cause—to find that out. In that sense, perhaps Nike’s “Just Do It,” despite having the uncanny ability to elicit giggles from dirty-minded high school and college students alike, is not such a bad motto to live by...in moderation.

But, hell, you all have already established that you have the guts to step out of yourselves in coming to this smoke-shop-central we fondly call CAL, where the People’s Park seems to extend into the entire Southside and where visitors bring cameras expecting nude protests. So, just do it. Again. Take one more gutsy leap—into a political campaign, into a community service organization, into **hb**. It might end up being one of your inarguably better moves in college.

Thank you to everyone on staff for making my leap such a warm and wonderful experience and thank you for all your hard work. I’ve got nothing but love for all of you!

**angie guan**  
hb layout editor

"First they came for the Jews  
and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew.  
Then they came for the Communists  
and I did not speak out because I was not a Communist.  
Then they came for the trade unionists  
and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist.  
Then they came for me  
and there was no one left to speak out for me."

--Pastor Niemoller, Berlin, 1939

# SPEAKING OUT: IMMIGRATION REFORM

by jason coe



In late March millions rallied all around the United States hoping to influence upcoming immigration legislation currently stalemated in the Senate dealing with undocumented immigrants. Schools across America were shutdown as students staged massive walkouts on a scale and intensity that hasn't been seen since the Vietnam War. Immigration is one of the most topical issues facing the US, as there are 11-12 million undocumented immigrants living here today. This population has a significant impact on the American economy. Undocumented immigrants subsidize Social Security by as much as \$7 billion a year, as reported in *The New York Times*. In "The New Americans: Economic, Demographic, and Fiscal Effects of Immigration," authors James Smith and Barry Edmonston estimate that the positive impact of undocumented immigrants on the domestic economy is between \$1-12 billion. However, what many do not realize is that a million of these immigrants working menial jobs for below minimum wage are Asian American.

Many Asian Americans do not consider immigration reform to be an issue that affects them. But history shows that this is not the case. In fact, it wasn't until 1943 that the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed. Before then, it didn't matter how long Asians waited in line at the American embassy for a visa, they weren't getting in, despite the fact that they were imported by the tens of thousands the

century before to build the railroads that allowed the United States to fully expand from "sea to shining sea." How's that for gratitude? Today, millions of immigrants from impoverished nations around the world are experiencing the very same discrimination, including Asian Americans, which is why there was a large Asian and Pacific Islander contingent at rallies all over the bay area.

History's cyclical nature is not the only reason Asian Americans should be

very concerned with current immigration legislation being pushed separately in the US House of Representatives and Senate. In mid-March, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff announced that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) would be opening internment centers to house tens of thousands of undocumented Chinese immigrants that are awaiting deportation to the People's Republic of China (PRC). However, the PRC has refused to accept the estimated 39,000 Chinese who have been denied immigration into the US, as reported by the *Associated Press*. The word "detention centers" should trigger great fear in the hearts of Asian Americans everywhere, as it was only recently that Japanese Americans were housed in internment centers, many of them US citizens, during World War II for fear of espionage, while German and Italian Americans walked free. Furthermore, these detention centers will be built and administered by Kellogg Brown & Root, a subsidiary of Haliburton, Vice-President Cheney's favorite contractor. Worst of all, these immigrants, who are not criminals, will be interned indefinitely in diplomatic limbo. They are without home. The Chinese government will not accept them and so they are doomed to imprisonment. Entire families will be interned, including children that may have been born in the US and thus US citizens.

Ever since 9/11, immigration reform has become a substantial issue in regards to homeland security, and its effects have been tangibly felt by the Asian American community. Cambodian and Vietnamese Americans that were forced to immigrate to the US when they were young children because of the Vietnam War and US military incursions into Cambodian territory are being deported daily. After serving long prison sentences, these political refugees are undergoing double jeopardy and being sent back to native countries that they have never lived in before. Their families, communities, friends and lives are in America. This is the reality of immigration legislation; it affects us all.

Frankly, America is a land of immigrants. Even President Bush's ancestors left their native lands on a packed ship headed to the "New World," hoping for a better life for themselves and their descendants. In March, millions of Americans protested and rallied against legislation attempting to criminalize American's most hallowed tradition. Never forget that it was on your behalf as well.

## Dust of Life Interview With Director Le-Van Kiet

by jason coe

March 30th marked the premiere of director Le-Van Kiet's film about the conflicted and sometimes violent lives of Vietnamese American youth living in Orange County during the early 90s, *Dust of Life*. **hardboiled** was privileged enough to catch up with this first time director and get his insight on this provocative and fresh film.

**Can you explain the title and how it applies to Vietnamese American youth?**

Dust Of Life, "Bui Doi" in Vietnamese, refers to street kids in Vietnam who had to fight and beg for food. During the Vietnam War it was often associated with AmerAsian Kids who were born from American G.I.'s, since the majority of them were on the streets. For me, the phrase defines a lost generation with a struggle for identity and the stigma of being hopeless and unwanted -- displaced. I feel this summarizes the psychology of Vietnamese American Youths who have a hard time with assimilation here in America.

**Your film opens with a shot of the "boat people" that were refugees after the Vietnam war, what is the significance of this history, its relation to your film and how does it resonate in the Vietnamese American community today?**

The opening documentary footage of Boat People is to establish the idea that these kids come from a very violent and painful past. Some had experience it first hand, while others are constantly reminded of it through their parents. It's really to remind the audience of where these kids are coming from. The Vietnamese Community is still at various stages of healing and understanding. It will take a long time. However, there is significant progress and part of this progress is the Community being open about their pain; actually seeing it on a big screen is part of the Healing process.

**What is the story behind the production of your film?**

When I was in Film School at UCLA, I knew I wanted to tell this

story, not only for myself, but for the community. I intended for the story to be more accessible for a wide audience. Something like this had never been done, so I felt it necessary to be as real and honest as possible. To achieve this I went to my own experiences growing up in Orange County in the late 80's and early 90's, which is the time setting of the film. I also talked with many gang members and former gang members, visited some in jail, and talked with their friends and family. Having said that, I don't think this is entirely my story but a collection of a group of people's experiences done through a narrative. **Your film definitely did not pull any punches when it came to showing all sides of the parent/guardian and child conflict. There's a whole lot of blame to go around. Can you talk more about this?**

The parent/guardian and child conflict is as real as it can get. I didn't intend it to lay blame or point fingers, but rather expose the inner struggle of an immigrant family trying to live a full American life. "No one is to blame but then everyone is to blame".... In a sense, the struggles they went through helped them to understand one another; through pain there is understanding and the will to survive.

**Many of your actors are first timers, can you talk about this? Was it beneficial for the film and its realism?**

Yes, it was a conscious decision on our part to cast non-actors. We did take a risk because some of these kids had never been exposed to a film set. But I think the risk

was worth it because the authenticity that showed on screen was wonderful. Since we were shooting a rough, documentary-like style film, we needed this authenticity to come across. **Your film is rather violent and shows a very unglamorous side of being Vietnamese American in Orange County, have you had any negative backlash from the Vietnamese American community?**

Surprisingly, no. It was something that was always on my mind when writing the script. However, I didn't find myself compromising because, in a sense, it wasn't me writing the script, it was the voice of the characters who were dictating the story. I couldn't find myself to cater a story to everyone's approval. I knew this would be a difficult subject to explore but what kept me confident was the fact that the story was real and not a fabrication. I think the Community knows how real the violence is; because they had experience it themselves.

**And lastly, when can we expect to see your film at festivals or theaters?**

We are working hard to get this the proper distribution it deserves.

We feel the film has a wider audience appeal and hope that distributors will take it to a proper theatrical release sometime soon.

For more information, upcoming release dates and to see the theatrical trailer, check out the website at [www.dustoflifemovie.com](http://www.dustoflifemovie.com). Look for this hard-hitting film at the festival circuit this summer.





# The Shrinking Pains of **ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES**

by pauline sze and jeremy chen

On a whim, Brian Lau, a second year intended Legal Studies major, decided to take Asian American Studies 20A, the staple introduction class to Asian American history during the fall semester of his freshman year. At that point, he only toyed with the idea of pursuing Asian American Studies as a minor. However, after taking Asian American Studies 141: Law in the Asian American Community, with instructor Tom Fleming, his views on the importance of the program dramatically changed. He soon after decided to delve deeper into the program to work towards a degree in Asian American Studies as well. Lau states, "I think a lot of good work is done that often goes neglected," without an Asian American Studies program.

According to data published by the Office of Student Research, "Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander" students make up 42.8% of the undergraduate population as of fall 2005. On the other hand, the Asian American Studies program only has fifteen seniors graduating at the end of this semester. Most disconcerting is the fact that while the Asian American student population has grown over the past decade, the interest in Asian American Studies seems to be staggering behind.

What can account for this seeming lack of interest in the program? On April 15, 2006, at the "16th Annual API Issues Conference" held at Dwinelle Hall, a panel of speakers that consisted of Professor Ling-chi Wang, Asian American Studies alumnus Mary Lai, and Asian American Studies seniors Jeremy Chen and Diana Quach, attempted to tackle the issues challenging the Asian American Studies program.

While the creation of Asian American Studies has its roots in the Third World Liberation Front (twLF) strikes of 1969 at UC Berkeley and San Francisco State University, Berkeley may no longer have the best program. Professor Wang pointed to UC Santa Barbara, UC Irvine and UCLA as leading examples of universities that have seen a growth in their programs, which are relatively new in establishment compared to UC Berkeley. For example, at UCLA, the Asian American Studies department has nearly doubled in the last five years.

One of the major issues that the program is facing at UC Berkeley is the shortage of faculty. Professor Wang is one of only four original professors remaining from the 1969 era when Asian American Studies was first established—and he'll be retiring at the end of this semester. There is currently no search committee working to fill his vacancy, nor has Professor Ronald Takaki's vacancy been filled, even though he retired over two years ago. Professor Wang also stated that other professors will most likely be retiring within the next few years as well. With professor numbers slowly diminishing and no set track on when these vacancies will be filled, the fate of Asian American Studies remains uncertain.

As the number of faculty begins to dwindle, student numbers are also steadily dropping. "We can't say that every Asian American student has taken an Asian American Studies class anymore," Professor Wang expressed. The sad reality is that if enrollment numbers continue to stagger, Asian American Studies could potentially be cut.

In a separate interview, Professor Harvey Dong, who was also a part of the twLF student strikes of 1969 echoed his sentiments, "The founders have always worried about the future of the program, and now the future is here. If people don't care, Asian American Studies will go away."

Posed at the panel were some possible explanations as to why there is such low enrollment in Asian American Studies courses. One such explanation was that students might not see the need for such courses because Asian Americans are the largest racial group on campus. Another reason may be that students are simply unaware that these classes exist.

Marketing was one of the key strategies discussed to raise awareness about the program and what it has to offer. Mary Lai discussed the need to clearly articulate the benefits of an Asian American Studies degree to students, since some believe that the major, unlike other fields of study, leads to an ambiguous future with no clear-cut career. "Through Asian American Studies, you have gone through a process where you learn to think and read and write critically," Professor Wang noted, all of which are essential skills in the workforce.

While marketing may be a plausible solution to attract students, other changes need to be made to the program. The Asian American Studies curriculum was developed well over 30 years ago in the 1970s. With that, the Asian American community itself has changed and thus, the curriculum is in need of an update to reflect those changes. Professor Dong suggested



Left to right: Professor Ling-Chi Wang, Mary Lai, Jeremy Chen, and Diana Quach

that, "There needs to be a broader range of courses offered because there is a need for more variety. The (Asian American Studies) 190 courses were a way to address the issue of variety by developing cooperatively with other departments such as the sciences. Professor Ling-chi Wang offered a 190 course that discussed the growing role of Asian Americans in the sciences."

Yet, a new curriculum cannot be adequately established without strong communication between students and faculty. Professor Dong goes on to say that, "Professors try the best that they can, but they need more help. Students always have to work with the professors."

Members of the audience called for a unique space where students and faculty can come together to discuss the needs of Ethnic Studies and its programs. Ethnic Studies is currently located on the fifth floor of Barrows Hall, a building of separate offices and long hallways that is hardly conducive to community building. While the Multicultural Student Center, promised at the end of the 1999 Ethnic Studies Strike by former Chancellor Robert Berdahl, was supposed to provide the needed space, it has only been half-heartedly established. It is currently housed at Heller Lounge, which most students still refer to it as "Heller Lounge", failing to recognize it as the Multicultural Student Center.

The irony of the situation is that UC Berkeley was the founding site for Asian American Studies, but it has not seen the same growth as other universities, such as Pitzer College of the Claremont Colleges, UC Davis, UCLA, and UC San Diego, which all have their own Center for Asian Pacific American Studies.

While the faculty has had its fair share of challenges, students on campus need to be called out on their lack of support for the program. Asian American Studies programs continue to grow at other campuses, but the numbers are stagnating at Berkeley. As the faculty continues to shrink, students are not taking up the banner to fight for the program that students owe so much to.

The struggle to establish Asian American Studies occurred over 40 years ago, and students have overlooked the blood and sweat that went into creating it. The struggle to maintain Asian American Studies never ends, yet it seems that students on campus have grown complacent in their comfort of the knowledge that over 40 percent of the campus is Asian American. Students have taken the program for granted far too long, and now it is time to give back to the program that has given so much to students and the community. While the old guards of Asian American Studies step down for their well-deserved retirement, it is time for the new guards to take on the challenges and struggles that perpetually confront the program.

Yet, while students have a duty to keep the Asian American Studies program alive, they must also hold the University accountable to do its part. As one of the best public universities in the nation and the first to establish the program, the University has a duty to support it. Students can only do so much; they need the support of the faculty, the University, and the community.



# Has Ethnic Studies Sold Its Soul?

by pauline sze and jeremy chen

Born from student struggle and activism at San Francisco State University and UC Berkeley in 1969, the establishment of Ethnic Studies in universities has been far from a traditional one. The third world Liberation Front (twLF) composed of African Americans, Asian Americans, Chicanos, Latinos, and American Indians protested against the racist institution's education system that systematically ignored their histories. Wanting to learn their own history and to forge a new education relevant to people of color, the twLF fought for the establishment of Ethnic Studies. While the most visible activists in the Ethnic Studies movement were students, community activists and groups, such as the Black Panthers, also supported the call for the reform in education.

Yet as Ethnic Studies is slowly spreading throughout the nation's top universities, it is important to look at the status of Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley – one of the universities where it first began. Professor Harvey Dong, a former student activist with the twLF in the 1960s, states that the founding principles of Ethnic Studies have been, "Goals that try to coalesce community and academics. Academics coming out of the program and students usually become part of the mainstream, and within mainstream, they try to push for a new social consciousness."

While the expansion of Ethnic Studies may lead to the conclusion that the major/program itself has become more legitimized, one may ask that in this process of legitimization, has Ethnic Studies lost its soul? Its establishment sought to uproot the racist institutions that taught a one-sided perspective of history and the American experience and ultimately established through activism. Does its growth constitute compliance with the institution that it once went against?

Graduate Student Instructor in the Ethnic Studies Department, Jordan Gonzalez, defends Ethnic Studies, "Deep down, each knows that the program can help us achieve how we understand the world. I don't think it's sold out; it would be hypocritical if I were still here and really believed that. Real simply, the program helps me ask better questions about the world. The program helps me understand the world better. Ethnic Studies is personal, not just intellectual."

However, Ethnic Studies professor Michael Omi, points out that in Ethnic Studies, "We don't have a significant community component to our curriculum. Community studies used to be an integral part of our course offerings that has faded away due to administrative budget cuts and other priorities. But we are trying to address this deficiency and develop classes that will deal with community-based research."

Views on the Ethnic Studies program vary among undergraduates, but one common concern has been around the perceived disconnection of Ethnic Studies scholarship and the community. Jason Ahmadi, a third-year Ethnic Studies major is concerned that, "There is too much importance placed on heavy theorists, and there should be more focus on community involvement. How are theories going to work for the community?"

Another aspect of Ethnic Studies is the position of power that the program has, and the appropriate uses of such power. Clarissa Cabansagan, a fourth-year graduating Ethnic Studies major stated that, "You need the degree to get anywhere in society. You can't get a job without a college degree anymore. So it becomes a question of, 'How do we use the system to change it?' There is an understanding of how you are a part of the system, and there are different levels of change, as academics and communities work hand-in-hand. Also, Ethnic Studies should address issues of how to wield positions of power and privilege as a student and academic when engaging in community work as students of Ethnic Studies. There needs to be a bridge between Ethnic Studies and those in the community."

Gonzalez echoed similar concerns, "Our parents are coming from a generation where you could have a middle

class lifestyle with a high school degree with different jobs or professions; now college is a place of such high pressure. I have friends from college and they say, 'I don't have enough degrees,' as if the degree is the goal and not so much the knowledge or the process of learning. And I think Ethnic Studies especially reflects that change because it has such a grassroots community based origin that the tensions are even more taught, it's an even more glaring tension when Ethnic Studies is forced to grow, change and identify itself in the last 30 years."

Ethnic Studies has its roots in student and community activism. What has happened to these roots? Currently, the Ethnic Studies curriculum offers fewer community-based courses than some students want. However, this is not to say that this is the fault of faculty or students. As Professor Omi states, "Unfortunately there were cutbacks made to the curriculum with respect to community studies. There was a kind of community component that was a prime part of the program, but it was cutback in terms of the budget. It was seen as outside of the scope of the educational mission of what Ethnic Studies was."

Yet, maintaining those community ties are difficult as Gonzalez reflects, "What Ethnic Studies has had to do is prove itself to the academy, but also maintain its ties to communities of non-academic constitutes and that's really hard to do when we don't even have a model to look after. We're identifying it as we figure it out ourselves."

One of the original intents of Ethnic Studies was to expand the program to other fields of study. One way that the department has done so is through UC Berkeley's unique undergraduate American Cultures requirement, which gives students an indirect look into Ethnic Studies-type scholarship. Professor Omi states, "The intent of Ethnic Studies was to have a broad impact and influence on what was taught across campus in different academic disciplines. I think the American Cultures Requirement places emphasis on core Ethnic Studies issues."

However, at the same time the American Cultures requirement may also have the repercussion of displacing the legitimacy of the need for Ethnic Studies if other departments can take on the subject matter. While maintaining respect for his fellow faculty members, Professor Omi stated, "I think it [AC requirement] has provoked a bit of an identity crisis for Ethnic Studies. At other institutions you don't have an American Cultures requirement, so Ethnic Studies becomes the only place where you can get a comparative look at different ethnic and racial groups in the United States or the globe; but now that you have diverse offerings in English and History as well as even in some of the Sciences: the question becomes what is the relationship between the proliferation of American Cultures courses to the Ethnic Studies curriculum? And I think that has not been sufficiently worked out. The proliferation of classes that deal with ethnic and racial themes brings the question of how does that differ from what Ethnic Studies is offering?"

While the American Cultures courses may pose concerns, there is the reality that they are heavily reliant on Ethnic Studies, as the source of the production of knowledge from communities of color. Professor Omi states, "Much of the scholarship that gets used in American Cultures courses are generated from Ethnic Studies scholarship."

The American Cultures requirement has its benefits, but it does not take the extra step to address the issues that affect communities of color. Where academics stop, some feel that

that is the point where Ethnic Studies pick up the baton and keep going. As Jason Ahmadi states, "Academics are important for students learning for changes in social justice. Academics get us deeper in finding deeper institutional problems, but it has no real relevance without the community aspect."

While there is a strong concern for the declining emphasis on community study, there is an important consideration to acknowledge, and that is, Ethnic Studies is not a singular or static field of study. As Professor Maldonado-Torres states, "Ethnic Studies is a very young 'multi-discipline' in the academy with many important contributions so far and has impressive potential. It is also plural as it contains many different visions and projects. In order to assess whether it has 'sold its soul,' it is of course first necessary to determine what is its 'soul' or whether it has one or many; then what are possible limits with its initial articulation; and the reasons for developments in the last three decades. Also for consideration is the impact of ethnic studies yesterday and today in many disciplines, which are gradually addressing questions related to race, ethnicity and related problems—from classical studies to different fields in the natural sciences."

At the start of our work on this article, many professors, graduate students, and some undergraduate students interested in the graduate program, expressed concern that the direction of Ethnic Studies was a sensitive topic. Some declined to comment, while some were unabashedly straightforward. However it is important to realize that, like any field of study, Ethnic Studies is perpetually changing. The unique aspect of Ethnic Studies is that it is open for students to voice concerns about what constitutes a relevant education to them.

At the beginning of this semester, a group of undergraduate



Ethnic Studies students, sparked by Ethnic Studies advisor, Dewey St. Germaine, formed an Ethnic Studies Undergraduate Student Group. Jason Ahmadi, a member of the new group stated that the first incarnation of the group was started about eight years ago, but gradually went out of existence. However, now the group has been reformed out of concern for the Ethnic Studies program. Many professors, such as Professor Ling-chi Wang and Professor Omi have supported its formation and its role in establishing a connection

between faculty and students.

While students are concerned with community studies and activism, it is sometimes overlooked how important the community is to professors as well. For example, Professor Ling-chi Wang is currently working in the Bay Area with community members on health equity issues, and Professor Omi is working with other UC campuses to integrate policy and community studies into the curriculum. While this list is far from a complete listing of all of the community efforts of professors and faculty, the concerns and interests between students and faculty are very similar. The goal now is to see what the next step will be for Ethnic Studies. The connection between faculty and students has been far from strong, and it is important to take advantage of the opportunity of the open invitation from faculty to forge a closer connection. In order for Ethnic Studies to progress, students and faculty cannot simply adhere to the mandates and goals from the days of yore, but to shape Ethnic Studies in a way that encourages production of knowledge from students of color, connection to the community, and to respectfully learn from the diversifying field of Ethnic Studies scholarship.





# taiwanese leader speaks at cal

by wendy gu

Ma Ying-jeou, the Mayor of Taipei and Chairman of the Kuomintang political party, visited UC Berkeley late last month to give a talk entitled, "Taiwan: Advancing Peace and Prosperity." At the highly anticipated event, students and Ma supporters filed into Sibley Auditorium leaving little room for latecomers.

After being introduced, Ma Ying-jeou began his speech by explaining the necessity of international economic ties for Taiwan. The Taiwanese economy, hugely dependent on trade, relies heavily on importing semi-manufactured goods and raw materials and exporting finished products such as electronics, clothing, and plastic items. The small island had a trade surplus of a staggering \$9.2 billion, an excess that Mayor Ma warned would become a trade deficit of more than \$42 million if trade ended between China and Taiwan. He said that Taiwan's economic well-being depended on maintaining good relations with China.

In Ma's summarization of the situation in Taiwan he said, "The political side [of Taiwan] is showing stagnation, but the economic side is booming. This is because of a lack of a common vision for the future, [and] by that I mean that there is not a common vision of peace, prosperity, democracy and equitable distribution of wealth." Ma's refers to his ambitious plan for Taiwan as the Five Do's, which consists of resuming negotiations with China with hopes of reaching a peace accord regarding the military, creating a common market between China and Taiwan, escalating Taiwan's involvement in international affairs and Taiwan's recognition on the international level, and expanding cultural and educational exchanges between China and Taiwan.

Ma sold his Five Do's as a proactive version of Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian's Five No's, which does not call for China and Taiwan to develop closer diplomatic ties. Ma stressed the importance of moving ahead in negotiations with the Chinese mainland in the continued growth of the Taiwanese economy. "We should change course in cross-strait relations," Ma said.

Ma also pointed out that the political status of Taiwan in relation to the People's Republic of China should not be challenged and that the political status quo be maintained. Ma's moderate view on cross-straits relations matches that of his political party and is probably engineered to appeal to most voters when the 2008 presidential elections roll around. Ma described the relationship between Taiwan and Mainland China as tentative at best, where both sides "agree to disagree." In the spirit of the 1992 consensus between the Taiwanese and Chinese governments, both Taiwan and China agree to the idea of "one China", but hold different interpretations of what "one China" is. The nebulous idea of one China is the belief that Taiwan and China have cultural and historical ties that bind the two land masses together despite their current political distance. Furthermore, Ma said, "neither side is allowed to argue against an interpretation of the one China idea. This idea is a masterpiece of ambiguity."

Ma said he hoped for Taiwan's international recognition to increase, but is not willing to achieve this at the cost of sacrificing peace with Mainland China. Currently, Taiwan maintains formal diplomatic ties with 25 countries around the world, compared to 160 countries that maintain ties with China. These 160 countries cannot establish ties with Taiwan without disrupting relations with China. Ma does not want the issue of Taiwan's political status to be something that would change the balance of power between China and the U.S. "As China is seen more and more as a responsible stakeholder in

the world, the role of Taiwan will simply be more important in being a peacemaker than a troublemaker," Ma said. "If Taiwan is a troublemaker, this could take the attention of the U.S. away from more important things, such as antiterrorism and [the issue of] North Korea."

Ma Ying-jeou was noncommittal about the issue of the Taiwanese government's purchase of a package of arms from the U.S. in 2000. This package is believed to be \$18 billion worth of aircraft, submarines and missiles and has not yet been delivered. The Democratic Progressive Party government of Taiwan spent almost three years debating the purchase of arms from the U.S. The budget for this package of arms was reduced to \$10.2 billion after there was uproar among the Taiwanese people concerning the purchase. Ma said he stood behind the Kuomintang view that Taiwan had to maintain adequate defense capabilities which "caters to needs of defense, addresses cross-straits relations, works with the budget, and is supported by the public." Ma added, "I am neither optimistic nor pessimistic, but hope to continue to negotiate with the party caucus and then take the discussion to the opposition party."

Ma Ying-Jeou started his colorful career in Taiwanese politics as an aide to President Chiang Ching-kuo after receiving a law degree from Harvard University in 1981. After serving as secretary-general of the Kuomintang from 1984 to 1988, Ma Ying-Jeou was promoted to the cabinet-level governmental position of Justice Minister by President Lee Tung-Hui in 1993 and relieved of this post in 1996. His dismissal is rumored to be due to too much success in fighting the widespread political corruption in the Kuomintang.

Resuming his career in 1998, Ma Ying-jeou became mayor of Taipei, having won 68 percent of votes in the election and defeating the incumbent mayor and future president Chen Shui-bian. The political spotlight continues to focus squarely on Ma because he is the front-runner to become Kuomintang's 2008 presidential candidate. As a Kuomintang leader and an established politician, Ma is considered a more conservative presidential candidate in comparison to others. Candidates from the Democratic Progressive Party have advocated a more dramatic separation from China and increased military spending.

Ma Ying-jeou's celebrity status in Taiwan was apparent from the warmth of his reception at UC Berkeley. Audience members held signs that showed their support of Ma, camera flashes lit the room continuously and one man asked Ma Ying-jeou for an autograph during the question and answer part of the lecture. After the talk ended, the crowd followed him out to his "Soong Transportation" minibus where he stood waving before he and his entourage drove off.

UC Berkeley graduate student Evan Chang said that it was obvious that Ma's lecture served no other purpose than to prime his image for the 2008 presidential election and garner support of Taiwanese people overseas. "I felt that all of Ma Ying-jeou's answers were very canned and his speech had little substance," Chang said. "He's trying to place himself in the center and appeal to everyone. He's not making any commitments so that he doesn't upset anyone." Chang said that Ma did not explain how he would achieve "peace and prosperity" for Taiwan but only repeated this slogan several times during the lecture.

Despite criticism on the content of the talk, Chang said, "It was pretty cool that someone of that stature politically would come here, and compared to Chen Shui-bian, his English is far superior."

**Ma said he hoped for Taiwan's international recognition to increase, but is not willing to achieve this at the cost of sacrificing peace with Mainland China.**

## Free speech versus respect for religion:

### THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE DANISH CARTOON CONTROVERSY

by anne su

When art engages a discourse, provokes an emotional response, and incites debate from its audience, one might say that it has succeeded in its purpose. But what happens when the statement an artist creates defaces a God, and in turn, a people's beliefs and identity? It seems like everyone has some opinion on the matter of the Danish cartoons that depicted images of the Prophet Muhammad. On April 23<sup>rd</sup> in a broadcast by Al Jazeera, Osama Bin Laden yet again denounced the West and called for the creators of the offensive cartoons to be turned over to Al Qaeda for punishment. The controversial cartoons mocked the Islamic prophet Muhammad. One depicted him wearing a turban made of a bomb; another depicted him crying, "Stop stop we ran out of virgins." The artists responsible most likely did not perceive the international response on all fronts. Nor did they likely foresee a boycott of Danish goods as backlash to the publication of their art in Danish newspapers and Norwegian magazines as economic warfare. Would Flemming Rose, the cultural editor of the controversial newspaper that first printed these pictures, have printed such drawings had he anticipated the complete destruction of the Danish embassy in Syria or deaths of innocent people around the world? What if he had foreseen the 100 deaths in Nigeria, which left "charred, smoldering bodies littered the streets" as recorded by the New York Times, during cartoon-centered riots?

At what point does freedom of expression go too far? These cartoons have been cited as offensive, not only because the images are defamatory in and of themselves, but also because they imply all Muslims are terrorists. Such caricatures rival that of a cartoon of Buddha smoking a joint for "enlightenment" or Jesus downing wine copulating with sheep. They depict something holy, sacred, and, in Islam, forbidden to be drawn. While most religions do not have this kind of restriction, Islam forbids any visual portrayal of the prophet or Allah. The cartoonists' freedom of expression, while it doesn't openly infringe on any rights, represents a type of cultural and religious insensitivity, and may suggest even a lack of respect for freedom of religion.

In the end, American freedom of speech and of press does allow our own newspapers to print these cartoons and shields them from government interference. While freedom of speech allows a wide spectrum of ideas to be expressed and is therefore crucial to a free society, one must still wonder how this recent fiasco affects the image of the West in the eyes of non-Western nations. Is this really the image that the West wants to give to the world while encouraging freedom of speech? Do we really want to give the idea that such freedoms are available so that we can offend and poke fun? Free speech and its reputation should not and cannot be taken as a laughing matter.





# How Far For Good Sex?

by lina peng

After being featured in the HBO series *Sex and the City*, the "Rabbit," a uniquely designed dual (with added "rabbit ears") vibrator soared to a new sales peak. Popular history has it that ancient Japanese law had banned realistic representations of the penis; what resulted, in true Japanese fashion, were pleasure toys in adorable designs of animals and other characters. The infamous Rabbit accompanied by the Beaver, the Butterfly, its aquatic cousin the Koi and others, make up a zoo of bona fide sexual creatures. The latest and hottest attractions come to you from the far side of the Orient.

It does not take extensive research to see that "Asian" packaging has become a favorite marketing tool of the sex industry. The Kama Sutra, believed to have been written around 300 A.D. in Sanskrit by the ancient Indian sage Vatsyayana now adorns every issue of *Cosmopolitan* magazine: "unleash the Kama Sutra seductress inside you!" Kama Sutra inspired products have exploded into a full-blown craze of candles, massage creams, lubricants, books, discussion groups, classes, chocolates, DVDs, CDs... all slapped with the sure seller Kama Sutra label.

It is unclear how Vatsyayana would have viewed these modern developments. Though it indeed can be interpreted as a celebration of sexual union, the original Kama Sutra is also laden with specific religious rules and prohibitions on who is sexually appropriate for whom. The Kama Sutra (Aphorisms on Love) has 36 chapters divided into seven parts, and devotes only about twenty percent to sexual positions. The rest gives guidance on good citizenship, financial gain, commentary on relationships and marriage and sex as a "divine union". As a historical document it gives insight on ancient Indian social and religious practices. It specifically advises men to avoid women with leprosy, an ill sounding name, women who are disfigured in any way, are of a different caste, and so on. On finding a wife, the Kama Sutra advises that in addition to being wealthy and from a respectable family, "She should be beautiful, of a good disposition, with lucky marks on her body, and with good hair, nails, teeth, ears, eyes and breasts, neither more nor less than they ought to be, and no

one of them entirely wanting, and not troubled with a sickly body." It is no wonder that, on such advice, the Kama Sutra has stood the test of time and thrives on our markets today.

Other Asian inspired novelties include Ben Wa Balls which look like Chinese meditation balls but go inside of you, not inside your hands. They are weighted hollow balls of a variety of sizes that create supposed pleasurable vibrations inside the sacred chamber. They are said to have originated in either ancient Japan or China where women used such balls made out of ivory and rocked back and forth for subtle yet crashing orgasms. There is also, for the gentlemen, the erection ring for a longer erection, which according to [www.mypleasure.com](http://www.mypleasure.com)'s "A Brief History on Sex Toys", was first documented in China and were made using the eyelids of goats with eyelashes intact. The same website also credits Chinese Empress Wu Zetian in the 7<sup>th</sup> century for the introduction of mirrors as sexual accessories.

It isn't just the existence of such gadgets, but the way they are marketed that arouses curiosity. The mysticism and exotic nature of "the Orient" is profitable because the "Western" consumer continues to be captivated. Marcia Jackson, Marketing Director for the adult product company Xandria Collection described the 2002 Holiday catalog, "Often, we offset the Asian product because it attracts attention to the product. The Asian toys sell well and deserve high profile placement." The packaging for the original Beaver vibrator by Xandria depicts a drawing of a geisha, bordered by elaborate floral patterns with an inscription referencing the Japanese ban on genitalia depictions. Using carefully crafted words like "centuries old" and "tradition" it conveys, as *IMdiversity* writer Jillian A. Glaeser puts it, "that this product is more than just a vibrator: it is an *Asian* orgasm waiting to be discovered." It seems when it comes to selling sex, Asian or otherwise, catch phrases, trigger buzzwords and suggestive imagery surpass accurate representation in capturing the heart and flesh of the American public. But when the results are the likes of videos such as "Kama Sutra-The Sensual Art of Lovemaking: Positions of the Tao," perhaps there is something un-sexy about the whole situation.

Whilst this phenomenon can be saluted as the effects of globalization and cross-cultural exchange in America's own bedrooms, one cannot help but wonder if there are any other forces at play. According to Edward Said, scholar and author of "Orientalism," the West sees itself as superior to the "Orient" and thus justified colonization as a progressive, active and masculine West saving a childlike, exotic, backwards Orient. Indeed, literature of the imperialistic eras often invoked images of conquering virgin lands and helpless native peoples rejoicing at the superior Anglo-Saxon presence. It is the perpetuation of a seemingly bygone mentality that fuels international, particularly Asian, sex trafficking industries. According to *The Traffic in Women: Human Realities of the International Sex Trade* by Siriporn Skrobaneck, Nattaya Boonpakdi, and Chutima Janthakeero, most sex tourists come from the United States, Australia, Germany, other European countries, and Japan. Sex tourism thrives, most notoriously in Thailand, by appealing to Western male fantasies of foreign, submissive and exotic women. To a lesser extent, the same fantastical mentality lends to the success behind Asian-inspired sex novelties.

There is no longer a need to take a sex tour for an exotic Asian fantasy. A search in the Craigslist personals reveals 3002 hits for the keyword "Asian." Local requests include "hot white ass for hot Asian" and "Roman God looking for Asian fantasy girl." Surprisingly, the requests are not limited to fulfilling heterosexual white male fantasies; homosexual white men unabashedly and quite graphically state their preference for Asians as well (self-referred by one as "Cockgaysian"). As for local Asian availability there is an entire section devoted to erotic services (991 hits for "Asian") with buzzwords like "Asian beauty," "pleasing" and "exotic Asian China doll". But if one feels queasy about the Internet, classic venues exist as well: open up the personals section of the local *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, sexy exotic women will smile welcomingly at you from the pages; open up a *Cosmopolitan* and the Kama Sutra mantra is there to offer you access to the Asian sexual realm -- how far are you willing to go?

## KHMER 101

by erin wong

It's hard to imagine Berkeley without its abundance of language courses. Language classes instruct others on how to communicate, expand cultural horizons, and foster a sense of community. Mandarin Chinese, French, Spanish, and Italian are all popular mainstays here at UC Berkeley. Unfortunately, not all language classes are as stable. Khmer, the official language of Cambodia, has been offered at Berkeley since 2000. Yet, recent difficulties have left the program at risk of being discontinued in the upcoming Fall semester.

Cal introduced Khmer in 2000, when students requested a class dedicated to the language. From Spring 2003 to Spring 2005, Dr. Thavin Pak taught the Khmer class.

Two related complications impede the course's continuation. The first issue stems from the lack of qualified instructors who have the time to teach a five-day-per-week class. The second issue revolves around the sagging student interest in Khmer. Before the university pursues a new professor, the university wants to be reassured that enough students will enroll in a class to cover the professor's salary.

According to Somneng Chan, a graduating

senior in Ethnic Studies, the interest in Khmer exists on campus. Students enroll in the course for various reasons, such as the desire to communicate with relatives, and the opportunity to learn and bond with other Cambodian students. Though Cambodian American students constitute a proportionately small part of the population at UC Berkeley, the class was "very popular amongst Cambodian students at Cal because we were given the opportunity to learn the language at school," Chan said. "There are not many other institutions that do so."

Not willing to see the Khmer language classes disappear, Chan created a DeCal class for those interested in studying intermediate Khmer. Only one student has taken advantage of her class, yet Chan still believes in the importance of learning Khmer. She attributes more to the study than just the ability to speak another language. "Understanding the language can allow you to understand the culture in a more thorough way, closer to our roots. We can read Cambodian news articles, songs, stories, just about anything that we were not able to do without the knowledge. But most importantly,

learning the language is so important because it allows us to communicate with our parents and elders," Chan said.

Khmer classes also add to the diversity that Berkeley prides itself on. Chan noted that her two years in Khmer made her education at Cal worthwhile because it gave her the chance "to interact with peers that looked like [her]." Through Khmer classes, she also met several non-Cambodian students who shared her passion and interests. The classes not only gave instruction on speaking and understanding the language, but also provided diversity and cultural awareness through understanding the language. "[Students] can learn about the history and roots of those who speak the language," Chan said "Language goes a long way."

Those interested in taking Khmer, or simply wish to maintain the diversity at Cal, please contact Somneng at [somneng@berkeley.edu](mailto:somneng@berkeley.edu) or visit the Berkeley Cambodian Student Association at [www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~cambodia](http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~cambodia) to support the continuation of the class.





# A Wolf IN THE COMMUNITY'S CLOTHING?

by adrienna wong

In the American political system, underrepresented groups like the Asian American community must mobilize to get needs addressed by the government and issues covered by the press. But who should be allowed to be involved in this process of organization and representation? On January 11, 2006, Asian American newsmagazine *AsianWeek* boldly stated that San Francisco politician Chris Daly, supervisor for the South of Market (SOMA) District 6 Area, was not welcome in the affairs of the Asian American community. The issue's front cover consisted of a picture of Supervisor Daly, the words "BUTT OUT" stamped across his face, and a subheading that read, "Sup. Chris Daly takes on San Francisco's APA community." The issue criticized Daly for his role in the freezing of funds to West Bay, a Pilipino community center as well as his support for the Falun Gong group and their efforts to enter this year's Chinese New Year's parade.

On January 17, a group of Asian American activists gathered in front of San Francisco City Hall to, in the words of Pilipino American activist Bill Sorro, "support Supervisor Chris Daly...against the accusations that *AsianWeek* has made that the man is anti-Asian American. We from the Pilipino community take issue with that in the strongest way you possibly can." Other notable figures at the press conference included public defender Jeff Adachi and Supervisor Fiona Ma. When asked about the press conference, Daly downplayed the event. "It seemed much less to do with me than with defending a community's right to speak for itself."

*AsianWeek* reported that Daly had frozen West Bay funds as an assertion of his political power, at the expense of Pilipino Americans who benefited from West Bay's mental health and senior services. In January, *AsianWeek* quoted Rudy Asercion, chairman of a citizens' committee to restore funding to West Bay: "It's a waste and a tragedy that our Pilipino community is not strong enough to get the attention of Chris Daly."

But Daly's head aid, Rachel Redondiez, countered *AsianWeek's* report, stating that a group of Pilipinos alerted Daly's office to the possibility of Medicare fraud at West Bay; citizens and their concern for West Bay had prompted Daly's actions, not political arrogance. In late 2004, the San Francisco Chronicle reported on an FBI investigation of Medicare scams in local clinics. Medical clinics allegedly took advantage of unknowing elderly immigrants by subjecting them to unneeded medical procedures and overcharging them in order to gain extra Medicare funds. West Bay became involved when it was revealed that it had leased space to one of the fraudulent clinics and after one of their own staff members was implicated. In an interview with **hardboiled**, Daly said that he was petitioned from within the community to follow up on West Bay, and that his role in freezing the funds through the San Francisco Board of Supervisors was part of his efforts to "represent his constituency within that community." In part, Daly was responding to the demands of the Community Accountability Committee (CAC), formed out of concern for Medicare fraud. CAC consists of a number of Asian American activists like Roy Recio, Bill Sorro, and Joe Julian, as well as many Pilipino American residents of the SOMA district where West Bay is located.

As the conflict developed, the tug-of-war over who represented the real voice of "the community", "the Asian American community", and the "Pilipino American community" continued. The West Bay situation elicited a variety of responses from the Pilipino community: while some felt sorely the lack of clinical services due to the freezing of assets, others mentioned that clinics had failed to serve the needs of the community in a way that was easily accessible with the residents of the SOMA area. It is worth noting that both could be simultaneously true.

In a response to the January 17th press conference, *AsianWeek* writer Emil Guillermo took

this discussion to a new level of racial agitation, writing a scathing editorial that attacked not only Daly, but also a number of Asian American figures in San Francisco. According to Guillermo, the Asian Americans who supported or agreed with Daly were "power-hungry Pilipino activists who did their best to dump on West Bay" in order to "put themselves in line to be Daly's Asians." "Find yourself a few good Asians," said Guillermo, "and Pilipinos to call 'friends', and you can go far in San Francisco's new ethnic politics." In addition, Guillermo criticized other non-profits that received funding following the withdrawal of funds from West Bay, saying that groups like the Galing Bata After School Program and the United Playaz program of SOMARTS received support because they were "kissing Daly's butt." Guillermo referred to all of Daly's attempts at garnering Asian American and Filipino American support as "strategies out of the colonial/imperialist playbook," casted Daly as a colonial mastermind, and labeled Daly-supporting activists and nonprofits as self-interested puppets -- the Asian American equivalent of calling them Uncle Toms.

As Daly himself said in an interview with **hardboiled**, "diversity [in San Francisco] is greater than race... and diversity exists within particular communities of color," noting that

"It is often unclear whether or not a member of another racial or ethnic group, particularly a dominant group, can actually 'represent' us, whoever 'us' may be."

in his district, issues of tenancy and income unite his constituency across racial lines. The West Bay conflict indeed deals with complicated issues of diversity within the Pilipino community in San Francisco. The Falun Gong controversy continues to split Asians and Asian Americans on either side. Many of the "kiss-ass" groups Guillermo criticized for stripping services from Pilipinos actually end up cycling their newfound funding to provide services to Pilipinos. For example, Galing Bata provides support and services to Pilipino youth in the

area. For Guillermo to make the attacks that he did is to discount the possibility of a diversity of interests and opinions within the Asian American community. Guillermo's scathing remarks, in essence, impose the idea of a monolithic pan-Asian identity, a "You're with us or you're against us," mentality masked in emotionally loaded anti-colonial rhetoric.

The issue of political representation has always been complicated, particularly for minority groups like the Asian American community. It is difficult to assess whether or not a member of another racial or ethnic group, particularly a dominant group, can actually "represent" us, whoever "us" may be. This sentiment is echoed in *AsianWeek's* demand for Daly to "Butt Out" of the APA community. Yet it has also proved equally problematic to assume that an Asian American representative will necessarily pursue our interests -- precisely because factors like class and politics complicate representation based along racial or ethnic lines, making it entirely possible for one segment of the Asian American community to wave the flag of "the APA movement" and benefit greatly at the expense of another and equally vital part of the community. When progressive Asian American activists speak about an increased need for elected officials from our community, we neatly ignore the possibility and the reality of conservative Asian American politicians. For example, in an interview with **hardboiled**, Supervisor Daly claimed that the attacks made against him by *AsianWeek* had more to do with the personal political agenda of its Republican editor, James Fang, and his alliance with "downtown political operatives" and not with issues of race. Both *AsianWeek* and writer Emil Guillermo declined to respond to these allegations.

Ethnic-centered publications like *AsianWeek* as well as our very own **hardboiled** cannot forget that problems of representation are not restricted to politics. Those newspapers and magazines that purport to provide an "Asian American voice" to the dialogue must respect diversity within a larger collective, in order to see clearly where collective interests actually lie and where personal interests do not.



# MOMOCA, Berkeley Fashion

by liah matsui



More than just a Harajuku girl's fashion pit stop (think Gwen Stefani and her Japanese cheerleaders), Momoca is the outlet for its owner and fashion designer Tomoko Tsuchiya's creative and expressive clothing. Since its establishment in 2000, Momoca has been Berkeley's own little getaway to the crazy, unique and fun world of Japanese fashion. Located on Dwight Way, it is a small hole in the wall boutique store similar to those found in New York and Japan. Its small size not only distinguishes it from many other clothing stores around Telegraph Ave but also creates a sense of intimacy between the customer, the designer and her fantastic clothing. But the best thing about Momoca is the inspiration and story behind its clothing. The clothing does not follow any sort of fashion trend but creates its own statement. They are Tsuchiya's personal creations and symbolize her love and passion for fashion. Her clothing is influenced by her own style in which she fuses chic with sass. Her collection consists of unique tops, skirts and dresses along with accessories ranging from retro inspired earrings to her stylish trademark hats. These handmade pieces showcase her ability to sew different fabrics together and transform them into products of her imagination. She infuses different colors and textures creating Tim Burtonesque clothing but without the scary. Here's an inside look into the insanely imaginative and trend-setting mind of Momoca's mastermind Tomoko Tsuchiya.

**HB: How long have you been in the fashion business? Has this always been a dream of yours?**

TT: I've been in the business for 6 years. Since I was six years old, it was my dream to become a designer. I sewed clothes for Barbie dolls and in Japan, I went to fashion school in high school and knew how to sew well. When I came to the United States in 1996, I never dreamt of having a store. It just happened fortunately.

**HB: And we're glad you're here! How has your experience in Berkeley been so far? What has the response been to your clothing?**

TT: It's been great. There are so many opportunities here. Having Momoca here is a great opportunity for people in the Bay to visit Berkeley and recognize its hidden beauty. It gives people a reason to come here. My friends are so amazed when they see how popular Momoca is.

**HB: Can you describe your typical customer? Is Momoca specifically targeted to a certain audience?**

TT: I usually have a lot of students and post-school/working customers.

Although I have a lot of Asian customers, I usually get a lot of other ethnicities as well. Momoca is for everyone who just wants to express himself or herself.

**HB: How would you characterize your clothing?**

TT: I can describe my clothing as enjoyable, something different, definitely confident and not for everyday wear. It's really there to help you express yourself and most of the clothes are one of a kind. Some people have desires to wear something but have doubts that they can pull off something that's out of their comfort level and that puts them in a shell. They should be able to enjoy what's beautiful and I believe clothes can help and make that an everyday feeling. I hope my clothes can do that for my customers.

**HB: That is really amazing. So where do you get your inspiration for your fashion designs and clothing? What other designers do you respect or think highly of?**

TT: I get my inspiration from everything I feel, see and just take it in myself. The pieces that I make are things that I personally want to wear or need to have for a special occasion. My mind is not simple and I don't want to make something simple that you can buy anywhere. I want to make something that you can't find in other shops. I really like FRABOIS. They are Japanese designers and their pieces are so creative, fun to look at and you can tell that they enjoy making clothes by looking at their collections.

**HB: How does it feel to see people wearing your clothes?**

TT: I am so happy when I see someone wearing my clothes. I can see them wearing it from far away and it's fun to look at people wearing them and it makes me want to do more.

**HB: How do you feel about the trend of Asian fashion in America today? Do you think there is a thing such as Asian American fashion today?**

TT: Instead of speaking about American fashion, I can speak about the Japanese fashion today. All the trends used to come from Europe but now I see that they're starting to come from Asia. It used to be Europe, US and Asian ten years ago. Now it's Asia to Europe and US. I can see that the Japanese people are more aware of fashion and of clothes.

**HB: How do you feel about the Harajuku girl fashion trend? Do you think it misrepresents Japanese fashion or culture?**

TT: I'm happy when I see the Harajuku girls. They are such a big attraction for kids and tourists. If you look at the book *Fruits* by Shoichi Aoki, you can see the teenagers express themselves through their weekend clothes. Japanese society pushes too much especially with school uniforms and I think the Harajuku style is a way for students to express themselves. Actually a couple of months ago when Gwen Stefani gave a concert in Oakland, two of her Japanese backup dancers shopped at Momoca.

**HB: Do you have anything else you'd like to add?**

TT: Don't be afraid of what you wear. Getting over your comfort level takes practice and people have to make mistakes to learn and it's the same in fashion. But most importantly, just express yourself. You don't have to wear designer clothing or things that are expensive but just clothes that make you happy and show who you are.



# Race and Economics in

# World of Warcraft:

by jaylum chen

## A New Dimension

As the virtual worlds in our online computer games become increasingly sophisticated, they are also more closely simulating the actual world we live in. With some games involving millions of players from around the world, who spend considerable time and money on building their secondary lives, it should be of no surprise that real-world issues follow us into our games. One of these games is *World of Warcraft* (WoW), in which instances of discrimination against Chinese players have been getting noticed in both the gaming and mainstream media, as well as blogging circles. It might seem strange that a game could inspire comments like, "Fuck them right in their squinty oriental eyes, those panda fuckers." As it often is with race-related issues in the real world, there are underlying economic and social forces behind these racist remarks.

It is difficult to understand what is happening without a bit of background on games like *World of Warcraft*, one of many commonly known as "Massively Multiplayer Online

Role Playing Games" (MMORPGs). Players create their own in-game character and then go on quests, fight monsters, and build up their wealth and power. Many players take these games very seriously: one survey showed that 20% of MMORPG players regarded their game as their "real" place of residence. To give an idea of the size and scope of these virtual worlds, in 2002 economist Edward Castronova estimated that the economy of the MMORPG *Everquest* had a per capita GDP of \$2,266 (China's per capita GDP in 2005 was \$1,703). In addition, MMORPG economies behave similarly to real-world economies. They have goods and services, currencies, and are subject to economic forces.

*World of Warcraft* is currently the largest MMORPG on the market. It boasts a population of over 5 million, with about 2.5 million players in North America and 1.5 million in China. And while it is quite lucrative for its creators, WoW players have also found opportunities to make significant amounts of real money.

WoW's in-game currency, gold, is traded on eBay for about \$7-10 per 100 gold. Advanced Economic Research Systems, a company that tracks eBay sales, reported that over \$2 million was spent on WoW gold during a four-month period in 2005. The number-one seller of WoW gold in January 2005 earned over \$44,000.

With the average monthly income in China under \$100 a month, Chinese players have been quick to notice the opportunities in WoW. Nearly all of the biggest sellers of WoW gold are Chinese. This fact has not gone unnoticed by the rest of the WoW community, who blame Chinese players for "damaging" the economy. Chinese players are often stereotyped as "gold farmers," who play solely to amass gold to sell later. Players commonly refer to Chinese players as "rang rangs," a phrase which means "go away" in Mandarin. The use of "rang rang" actually originated in earlier MMORPGs, though it is unknown whether it was used by Chinese players telling others to leave the areas where they were collecting gold, or vice-versa.

To explain it in simple economic terms: gold farmers introduce a significant amount of gold to the economy. This increase in money supply leads to inflation. Everyone has more money to spend, but the quantity of goods available remains the same. Prices of goods increase to compensate. Since such a large part of WoW involves collecting items to improve in-game characters, players generally dislike gold farmers. Players feel forced to spend more time earning gold to pay for items that used to be cheaper. Some players even feel pressured to buy gold on eBay just to keep up with everyone else.

Essentially, what happens in WoW is similar to outsourcing. Think of the time spent collecting gold in the game as a job. It is usually necessary for players to earn gold to

advance or improve their characters, but many players find this far less enjoyable than other aspects of the game. Many players find it unpleasant enough that they are willing to basically pay another person to collect gold for them. There is obviously a demand for someone to do the job, and Chinese players are doing it at a price lower than what would be acceptable to Americans (or players from other countries with higher costs of living). A message board poster made a rather interesting comment that demonstrates this parallel between the WoW economy and the international economy: "Fucking rang rangs made my shoes, my shirt, a lot of the shit in my house, the desk phone I'm looking at, and a lot of the office supplies I'm using. [That] doesn't mean I want them in my WoW group."

Gold farming in WoW has also resulted in another familiar feature of outsourcing: sweatshops. Various employers in China have massive workrooms filled with teenagers and young adult males hunched over keyboards for at least 12 hours a day. Ge Jin, a PhD student at UCSD, is the creator of a video documentary on these sweatshops. In an interview he describes the unusual environment in gold farming sweatshops, at once exploitative yet strangely positive. *"I do see suffering and exploitation too, but in that place suffering is mixed with play and exploitation is embodied in a gang-like brotherhood and hierarchy. When I talked with the farmers, they rarely complained about their working condition, they only complained about their life in the game world."* (A preview of this documentary is available through a quick Internet search.)

To sum up the situation: through market forces, certain players are making it tougher for others to compete in the economy. A large majority of these players are all from the same country, with a different culture and language than the "host" country. The scenario is remarkably similar to what happens rather often in the real world, one that has certainly caused more than its fair share of racial tensions. Whether these tensions are manifested as strongly in WoW is still up for debate.

The issue of racism and discrimination in *World of Warcraft* is one that is hotly debated by players. A message board thread discussing the issue on the now-defunct website "Tales of Warcraft" drew thousands of replies from Chinese players who had experienced in-game discrimination or racist remarks. The discrimination in WoW happens because the game places a great deal of importance on forming groups with other players. Players generally advance quicker when grouped with others. The best rewards in the game are only attainable by groups. However, it is not uncommon to find groups who try to weed out Chinese players, identifying them either by their in-game names or their poor English abilities. Chinese players complain that they are discriminated against because of the "gold farmer" stereotype. On the other hand, some players argue that this practice is not racially-motivated. After all, the performance of a group is affected by the ability of the members to communicate and it can be difficult to run a group when one of the members barely speaks English.

Perhaps of more pressing concern is the presence of racist attitudes and remarks. Blizzard Entertainment, the creator of *World of Warcraft*, has a rather strict no tolerance policy, and players making racist comments are often banned from the game. Because of this, public channels of communication within the game are kept rather inoffensive. However, private communication can be rather different. One example of private communication is the "guild" system. WoW players can form guilds, which are basically very large groups with private chat channels. Anecdotal evidence, based on message board posts, seems to suggest that it is not entirely uncommon for players to engage in hateful speech when they can get away with it. Some players have reported being made uncomfortable by racist comments in their guild chat. The examples in this article were easily found through a quick search of a popular guild's message board. Again, how widespread these attitudes are is the subject of constant debate by WoW players.

Whether "real" racism is as a widespread problem going beyond a few individuals in WoW remains a question. While it is clear that many players hold negative attitudes towards Chinese players, it appears that only a small minority of players sink to making hateful or racist remarks. One thing is certain though: computer games have evolved rather remarkably. Far from being "just" entertainment, they provide a rather unusual lens through which to examine ourselves.



MMORPG sweatshops

rang rang

weed out Chinese players

gold farmers





# Lijie: Roam

by pauline size

The first time I heard Lijie was on Lower Sproul on my way home after class. It was noon on a Friday, and I stopped dead in my tracks. *Where was that voice coming from?* And there, straight ahead, was Lijie (pronounced like *Lee-jay*) on the keyboard, singing. Entranced by such a mesmerizing voice, I immediately bought her debut CD, *Roam*, after only hearing her for a minute. Regrets? Absolutely none.

Describing herself as an ice-cream lover and confessing to burping into the microphone, Lijie took some time to talk to **hardboiled** after her show at the Naia Lounge on the UC Berkeley campus on Wednesday, March 22, 2006.

**I read something on your website about your name being Linda. Where did Lijie come from?**

Linda's the American name I was given when I moved to the US. You know it's kinda common. I was born with the name "Lijie" in China and moved to the US at the age of five and a half and given the name "Linda." I've lived on the West Coast pretty much my whole life. A little bit in California, two years in Oregon and then migrated to Washington, [sarcastically stated] because my parents loved the rain and started going further and further north.

**Different music outlets have categorized your music in different genres. On iTunes, it's folk. I've also seen rock, pop, and light rock so far. What genre do you think your music falls into?**

Acoustic pop rock. I think that anyone that plays the guitar and sings solo automatically gets the folk stigma like Bob Dylan, Joan Báez. Even Sarah McLachlan, when she first started off, was really folky, and now she has a techno album out.

**You wrote in your biography that you "utilized your college degree" by moving to LA to wait on tables for two years. What was that like, and what kind of response did you get from your parents?**

I told my Dad on his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday that after I graduated from college, I think this was my junior or senior year, I was going to move to L.A. and become a musician -- I walked home that night. But they're awesome about it now. They're very supportive. I think there's just this one moment that changes everything, and my Dad and I had that.

**Was this what you expected, growing up did you think you'd become a musician?**

I grew up wanting to be everything that my parents wanted me to be. Not to come down hard on my parents -- I have a great family. They're amazing and everything, but it's one of those things. You can only do so much for someone else and then you've got to make yourself happy at some point. I could become a doctor maybe, actually, probably not. I didn't do really well in Biology. It's one of those things where you can try to be a good daughter but I'm not a doctor.

**When did you shift from living a "stereotypical Asian American life" to living your own life?**

In college. That was my changing point. I've made a lot of mistakes in my life, because I wasn't following my heart, I was following what other people expected of me.

**Was there a moment in college where you realized, "I can't become a doctor, I've got to do my own thing."**

There were so many moments. I majored in Business at Santa Clara University and interning at a finance job wasn't working

for me. There were some classes where I was always late, and others, which I would try and avoid. My heart was not in it.

**Have you had any regrets at all about becoming a musician or not becoming what your parents initially wanted you to be?**  
No, not at all.

**What kind of advice do you have for those that want to break**



Lijie performing at the Naia Lounge

**out of this mold and do their own thing?**

My advice is to read *The Alchemist*; it's amazing. When I was living in L.A. it was really hard for the first few months. I didn't really have any friends. I was waiting tables, when I met my girlfriend Cindy, who is now one of my dearest friends, and she knew I was having a really hard time, and she said, "Lijie, read this book." She told me to read *The Alchemist* and how it would change my life, and it did. If I had the book on me, I would give it to you. I don't want to say too much about this book because everyone walks away from a different message. But I know that *The Alchemist* helped me realize that the journey is the gift, and to always believe.

**What are some of the inspirations for your songs?**

My family and relationships.

**"L.A." is an especially interesting song; would you mind explaining it, especially the lyrics, "Hey little girl/did your Daddy do you wrong/is that why you always write sad songs?"**

"L.A." is a very personal song for me. Without giving away all my life secrets, it's one of those songs about not adapting to change and making life harder than it really has to be. Not to justify my crazy family, but I don't think any family is perfect and my family definitely has its fair share of problems... but I know my parents love me and love our family. Well, John Mayer went the other way, "Fathers be good to your daughters," so I'm seeing it from the daughter's perspective.

**How long did it take you to record your album, *Roam*?**

The album took two years to write and record. I was writing until the last minute, literally.

**What was it like recording your album? Were there any particular moments that you want to share?**

I'm getting old; I can't remember anything anymore. It was an amazing experience; I got to meet amazing musicians and people like Eric, so talented and a multi-instrumentalist. There were times

where we'd stay up until 4 or 5 in the morning talking about music or relationships. I'd burp into the microphone sometimes, little things like that. There was one memory that was really sad. I wrote "Brilliant Always" for a friend of mine and when I was recording it that day it just made me think of him and I cried. But other than that, it was a lot of fun, a lot of hard work. I know, I don't tell the best stories. I swear it's because I don't have any short-term memory or any long-term memory, apparently.

**How do you feel being labeled as an Asian American artist?**

Honestly, I don't think about that part of it too much. I am Asian American and I always will be, and I just want to write good music. I really want to believe that people don't care about that. I'm proud of who I am and being who I am. At the end of the day, I love what I do.

**There aren't any mainstream Asian American artists out there, why do you think that is?**

In the movies, it's been a progression, from Bruce Lee to Jet Li and finally, Lucy Liu and Ang Lee who won the Academy Award. I think it takes time. Even if it's not me, someone will break into the mainstream, I hope, I really hope.

**Do you think that because there aren't too many mainstream Asian American artists out there, it helps your career by becoming an "anomaly?"**

I think it depends on where you are. Actually, I think it's really about the music. I've met quite a few Asian American musicians and they're very talented. It all comes down to the music.

**You said you've met a few Asian American musicians, what do you think makes you stand out or what makes you different from other artists, Asian American or not, that you think will enable you to succeed in this tough industry?**

Ok, you caught me. It's not necessarily that I've met a lot of Asian American artists; but I've come across a few by looking on Myspace -- does that count as meeting? There are a growing number of Asian American musicians, and it's really about luck and working hard. All I have control of, and usually not much of, is my life. And focusing on writing good music.

**What are your future plans?**

My parents want me to go to Asia for a couple of weeks to see if they like the music too. It's not that I don't want to make a living, I want to play music but this (America) is home to me. I love San Francisco, the Bay Area, and California. For some reason, America is the hardest country in which to break into the music industry. Even the Beatles and Coldplay wanted to cross over here. And I like that challenge. But if the shows don't pan through in China, that's fine, I have relatives to visit. Ultimately, I would like to tour internationally, meet Oprah, and learn kung fu.

**Any final thoughts or comments?**

The Green Tea gelato is good, highly recommended, even when it's melting.

For more information about Lijie, please visit her website at: [www.lijiemusic.com](http://www.lijiemusic.com)

Recommended Tracks off of *Roam*:

- "L.A."
- "Bar Song" -- A humorous, honest and catchy tune that you must listen to for yourself.
- "Love Me If You Can"
- "Blue" -- Lijie's personal favorite off of the album because, "Heart break always feels the same regardless of age."

by vinh dao

## CURE FOR THE ASIAN GLOW?

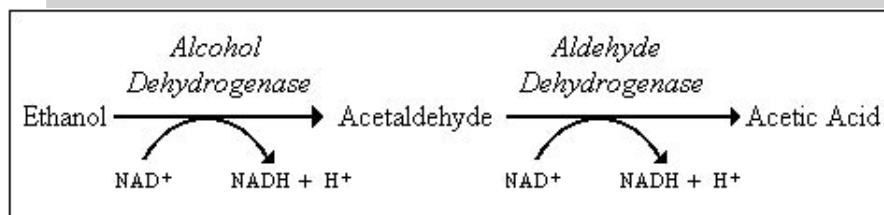


Let's say that you're at a popular local club on a Friday night and you make your way up to the bar to get some drinks.

As the bartender nods his head to inform you that he's ready to take your order, you yell out, "A shot of Patron," hoping that the blaring music doesn't drown out your order. After you've downed your shot and taken the edge off a little bit by sucking on a piece of lemon, you decide another round can't hurt. "Bombay Sapphire and tonic," you shout to the burly bartender across the counter. Now that you have some poison in your body and feel a little buzzed it's definitely time to start shaking your booty on the dance floor. As you maneuver your way to the floor, you start to feel unusually hot, so you decide to take your coat off. You happen to notice your heart is racing, as if you've just ran a mile. You brush this off as a sign of nervousness or excitement but your entire body feels out of sync: your breathing is quick and your skin begins to tingle, like a bunch of little ants are crawling all over. A faint wave of nausea makes you weak in the knees. Your head begins to swim in the bright lights and blaring sound. A good friend quickly brings you back to Earth with a hand on your shoulder: "Wow, your face is really red, kind of like a cherry!" "Uh oh," you think to yourself. "I've got the Asian Glow!"

The Asian Glow, aka the Asian Flush, is a plight that has been haunting Asians for as long as alcohol has been consumed. Most notably characterized by bright redness in the face, Asian glow has been known to induce various symptoms among individuals; some may develop a slight flushness in the cheeks, while others may experience a rapid heart and respiratory rate, dizziness, nausea, itching or even rashes all over the body. Those who have never experienced the Asian Glow may ask, "What's the big deal about turning a little red?" Ask anyone who has ever gotten a full-blown case of the glow and they will tell you that it is not just a simple case of blushing, but an extremely embarrassing experience where your entire body seems to radiate red. Why do up to half of all Asians experience the glow? It seems that Mother Nature and evolution may have played a clever trick on us; scientists have hypothesized that the Glow may actually be some sort of safety mechanism to cause an individual to feel too sick before he/she actually becomes drunk. This hypothesis helps explain the relatively fewer alcoholic incidents among those of Asian descent.

There is a common misperception that the Asian Glow is an allergic response to alcohol, but it is actually a direct result of an enzyme deficiency. This is why anti-histamines like Claritin, Allegra, Benadryl would have little effect on reducing the glow because the symptoms aren't usually due to an allergic reaction. Enzymes are usually proteins that speed up biochemical reactions in our bodies. The following is a diagram that shows the relatively simple biochemical pathway that our body utilizes to break down alcohol (ethanol). Once ethanol has entered the bloodstream, it travels to the liver where it is converted to a compound called acetaldehyde by the enzyme alcohol dehydrogenase (ALDH). The acetaldehyde is subsequently converted to acetic acid with the aid of ALDH. Acetic acid is an organic compound best known for giving vinegar its pungent taste and smell. Those who exhibit the Asian Glow are likely to carry a defective gene for aldehyde dehydrogenase, thereby producing an enzyme that is about 150-fold less active than the normal form. The inability to process ethanol into acetic acid results in a buildup of the



acetaldehyde intermediate, which is responsible for many of the symptoms of the glow. In fact, acetaldehyde is potentially carcinogenic and neurotoxic.

So now that you know why the Asian Glow happens, your next question is how can we treat it? Sadly there is no known cure for the glow, but there is a myriad of anecdotal, theoretical, and questionable remedies that may help to lessen or eliminate the symptoms altogether. Theoretically, the closest thing to a permanent cure would involve gene therapy, where an artificially produced human virus with a normal copy of the ALDH gene would be injected into a person, thereby supplementing the defective gene.

By far, the most popular means of combating the Asian Glow are H2-blockers like Tagamet, Pepcid, and Zantac. Originally used to treat indigestion and heartburn, these drugs have now been widely adopted as a way to reduce the symptoms of the Asian

# my GLOW IS BRIGHTER THAN YOURS

Glow when taken 30-60 minutes before consuming any alcohol. To treat heartburn, they work by preventing cells in your stomach from secreting acid; how that contributes to preventing the symptoms of Asian Glow is still a mystery. What chicken noodle soup is to colds, H2-blockers are to the Glow: seemingly effective but scientifically unproven. There are a number of people who thrive on the uncertainty of an Asian Glow cure. Many spread anecdotes of the effectiveness of H2-blockers almost like they would urban myths. There does not seem to be one strict regimen that works for everyone. Accounts of success with a certain blocker vary from individual to individual; one may swear by a blocker's complete effectiveness, another might claim limited success, and another might experience no effect at all. Brand and strength of dose only add to the confusion. For example, Pepcid AC comes in three flavors: original, maximum strength or Pepcid complete. There may also be a downside to taking these types of drugs; many report that they get drunk faster or wake up with larger hangovers the next day. Here are some accounts from web blogs that seem to characterize this "hand waving" when it comes to using H2-blockers as a treatment:

"Zantac works wonders, doesn't eliminate redness completely, but reduces it to a pink glow; but the best part is that I have virtually no hangover the next day (even when white friends who have had the same cocktails/shots are complaining of major hangover)."

"I tried the Tagamet and Pepcid AC combination. After a couple of drinks (1 beer, 1 strong gin and tonic) I'd say that the results don't seem significantly different than taking Pepcid AC alone. Didn't experience the full-on redness, but certainly did see a pink glow. The rapid heartbeat was not present and didn't experience any dizziness. Face felt a little warm, but not the pulsating heat like before."

Similarly, people have reported the use of antacids like Tums, Rolaids, and Maalox as an effective treatment for the Asian Glow. Unlike H2-blockers, antacids work to reduce the acid in your stomach by neutralizing it. While some report similar effectiveness with antacids, H2-blockers are still by far the most popular treatment.

A paper put out by Bruce Ames, a respected researcher in the field of Molecular and Cell Biology here at UC Berkeley, proposes a theoretical approach to directly target the source of the problem itself. The defective ALDH enzyme turns out to be less efficient at binding a cofactor (NAD) that is needed for its enzymatic activity. The paper suggests that by taking mega-doses of Niacin (Vitamin B-3), which is a component of the NAD cofactor, your body's ALDH will digest alcohol more effectively. No actual experiments have been done to prove that this will work, but it certainly is possible. So how much of Niacin is recommended that we take to overcome this enzyme deficiency? The tolerable upper-dose level of Niacin that is known not to cause any adverse effects is 35mg, while the proposed mega-dose is a whopping 2000mg, more than 50 times of what is medically deemed safe. Another potential alternative includes an all-natural dietary supplement called RU-21 which hit the US market in 2003. RU-21 allegedly reduces the negative effects of alcohol by helping the body to efficiently break down the alcohol and eliminate any toxic by-products. Unfortunately, the product does not claim to also reduce redness or other symptoms associated with the glow.

While the curability of Asian Glow remains a mystery, there certainly seems to be ways of counteracting it, at least temporarily. My best advice is to go out there and try different regimens before settling on one that works well for you. Asian Glow may not be all tingling skin and faint waves of nausea. Dr. Kenny Liu, a blogger who clarifies some of the scientific jargon behind the Asian Glow, notes a possible silver lining:

"A lot of genetic mutations continue to exist because they confer some sort of benefit (like sickle cell anemia and malaria). What if this genetic mutation is why Asians excel in mathematics? Would you give up your math skills just so you didn't blush?"

