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# hardboiled

THE ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN NEWSMAGAZINE!

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# 17.1 hardboiled

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## ABOUT THIS COVER

identity is an important theme in this issue, as many of our writers explore their own identities and stories. others explore the history of chinatown and our symbols. others still, racism in the media. hardboiled was founded to give voice to the api community, but it continues to be a struggle to be heard and be recognized. that is why we choose to be bold as we shape our own identities, not let others shape it for us.

## editors' note

when i first came to cal a year ago, i knew i wanted to be a part of a magazine, but i didn't know yet i wanted to be a part of this one. i stumbled upon **hardboiled** by accident, but now i cannot imagine the past year without this space or the incredible people i have met through it. **hardboiled** has been my home away from home, and the people in **hardboiled** have taught and inspired me so much. **hardboiled** is truly a space where everyone is accepted as they are and where opinions will always be welcomed and heard - inclusive, nurturing, and crazy fun. from late night rock band to late night hustling to finish a new issue, i have made so many great memories with these beautiful people, and i am so fortunate to call **hardboiled** my family.

being in **hardboiled** has also given me the opportunity to explore not only the many topics **hardboiled** tackles every issue and every week – from stereotypes to api narratives – but my own identity as an asian american. before coming to college, i had very little exposure to asian american history and no space to talk about api issues and stories. despite having grown up in the bay area, i had given incredibly little thought to what being asian american meant to me. i had heard of the model minority myth only in passing, and i had never heard of richard aoki or the third world liberation front. in fact, growing up in a community largely made up of middle-class east asians - many of them children of engineers (silicon valley, after all!) - might even had made it easier for me to internalize many stereotypes and ignore the complexity and diversity that makes up the umbrella term that is "asian american."

**hardboiled** opened my eyes. in many ways, it began my journey to shape my identity, and i have learned so much about api issues and myself. it also introduced me to the api community here at cal, and i am always so blown away by how passionate, genuine, and caring everyone in the community is. **hardboiled** allows me to do so many things i love. every issue, i get to voice my opinion and help bring others' opinions to life, and every week, i'm writing, designing, learning, and challenging myself and the way i see the world.

**hardboiled**'s motto is 'always in bold' and that is exactly what it inspires me to be. from **hardboiled**, i can always expect passion and bold, critical thought - and it pushes me to be the same. i hope this issue does the same for you and inspires you to be and think **bold**. most of all, i hope you enjoy this issue as much as we enjoyed making it.

katherine wang  
layout editor

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

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I am not a morning person. One Friday morning this past August will be remembered as one of the most dreadful moments of my young life. My father woke me up at 8 am with the news that police officers were waiting for me downstairs. I think both he and I were thinking the same thing: "What crimes did you commit last night?" I definitely could not remember anything because my brain usually starts running around noon. When the questions came pouring in, however, things began to piece together.

"Yes, I have had suicidal thoughts over the past few days."

"Yes, I have intentions of hurting myself, and I am afraid I will lose control."

For my safety, the four officers standing in our living room decided it was best to take me to a psychiatric ward for further evaluation. I had to relay the information to my father in Cantonese because he does not understand English. It was difficult without knowing how to say mental health terms in that language. Then the cops handcuffed me. At first, Dad looked flustered. He scolded me for not keeping these issues within the family circle and for not listening to him enough. Everything felt awful at that moment. The four officers then took me outside to their patrol car where four other officers were waiting for me. My father asked if I was cold or hungry. I told him I was fine and that I was sure there would be food wherever I was going. Both were lies.

"Dad, they're taking me to the hospital because they know I want to hurt myself."

I do not think there is one factor that causes someone to have depression, but rather a combination of family background and life experiences. I suppose I just hit the jackpot. My parents both lived rough and unfulfilling lives in Canton, around southern China. My father barely got any schooling and mainly worked on the farm. He often mentions having to watch over cows for some reason. He often will make assumptions about the world that are completely untrue but help him make sense of things. He never got the chance to be a scholar. My mother was assigned to be a factory manager despite having school grades that showed her

potential for much more. She was forced to sacrifice her individual spirit early when her parents ordered her to watch over her two younger brothers when they were at work. She never got the chance to be a kid.

Their decision to marry and come to the U.S. was hugely a business agreement. Part of the agreement was to have one child only; my father's previous marriage had him raising two kids on his own, and he did not have the strength for two more. I am not a child of love, and I wonder how many Asian Americans my age share that trait. When I was born, we moved into a house in the San Francisco Bayview District, which was riddled with crime but had some of the most affordable housing in the city. The neighborhood was often desolate and gloomy, not to mention dangerous, so I did not leave home much. It was well complemented by my mom and dad's parenting styles: cold, strict, hapless, stifling, and at best, inadequate. I learned to cultivate a strong hostility for the world around me and kept to my inner thoughts, which explains why I often appear aloof.

"You should never have been allowed to raise children, mom."

Two of the police officers drove me to SF General Hospital at around 8:30 am. The social worker that greeted me was named Susan. She told me to hand over any electronics and personal belongings, and the cops searched my pockets once more for any dangerous items. They pulled out a few Werther's Original candy wrappers, and I almost wondered if smuggling in delicious caramel hard candies was a crime. I eventually got to talk with a counselor named Brendan a bit past noon, so basically I was awake. I told him that I had been meeting with friends the day before and sharing my feelings with them, and that my mood had improved greatly since Wednesday, which is when I had my mental collapse. We felt confident I could leave by the end of the day.

According to National Asian Women's Health Organization, Asian Americans typically have the lowest utilization rates for mental health services among all racial groups. This fact rang true from my observation in the rest area, where I noticed mainly white men and women occupying the makeshift beds. The NAWHO study argues that Asian Americans often suffer from the misperception that we are a "model," healthy minority.

This stereotype presents a false picture of mental and physical health for everyone, which hinders the pursuit of education, prevention, and treatment efforts for depression in our community. Hijioka and Wong of the Asian American Psychological Association find that Asian Americans aged 18-34 have the highest rates of suicidal thoughts, intentions, and attempts compared to other age groups. It is also the second leading cause of death for those in said age group. This is indeed an issue that needs to be addressed more aggressively.

In order to raise Asian American participation rates in mental health services, The Office of Minority and National Affairs (from the American Psychiatric Association) stresses the importance of improving language accessibility for people with a weak grasp of English, better establishing the connection between poor mental health and chronic disease, and increasing the presence of Asian Americans in psychological research. I listed my half-sister, Angie, as my family contact, and I got a chance to speak with her at around 4pm. "If you ever have any trouble dealing with mom and dad, just let me know, and I'll see what I can do to help them understand what you're going through."

I was discharged at around 6 pm after signing a few papers. I waited along Potrero Street where I had requested my mom to pick me up. The drive home featured a lot of her long-winding lectures on how I needed to just stop thinking negative thoughts and to stay positive, as well as how suffering is inevitable and universal. Way to cheer me up, Sherry. I remember my dad smiling when he saw that I was home at last. I had no idea what to expect from my parents, but I have received mostly compassion and support for my illness since the incident. I am currently looking for a Chinese-speaking doctor that can clarify the issues I am going through with my mom and dad, but the search has not been successful. In the meantime, unfortunately, they act like the incident had never happened. I am very disappointed that they have opted to continue in silence, but I remain persistent that finding a doctor will help open communications. I am actually glad I was taken to a psych ward. It helped my family get a clearer perspective on how much I suffer due to depressive symptoms. It also allowed me to open up about my depression with relatives beyond my parents, which is a monumental step towards removing the shame I feel from hiding these feelings.

[http://www.mi9.com/lomography-psychiatric-hospital\\_76026.html](http://www.mi9.com/lomography-psychiatric-hospital_76026.html)



# A FOREIGNER AT HOME

## *My struggle with my Asian American identity*

by **sabrina jueseekul**

I was born into this country as a foreigner.

Although I was born with US citizenship, I was born into a country that constantly sees people like me as strangers. And by people like me, I mean Asian Americans.

Throughout my childhood, I considered myself more American over Asian. I am a second generation Asian American, meaning that my parents immigrated to the United States and I was the first generation to be born here. English was my first language: I ate McDonalds growing up and I watched Saturday morning cartoons.

Despite this, various experiences have allowed me to believe that America is not the melting pot it claims to be. On September 15, 2013, Nina Davuluri became the first Indian American contestant to be crowned Miss America, with the runner-up also of Asian heritage. The backlash proves that bigotry in the United States is still very prevalent. Even in this time and age, many Americans assume that non-white people are foreigners and "don't belong in this country."

My journey of figuring out my identity began years ago when I began attending high school. I was no longer the American I considered myself to be since people would be quick to assume that because of my skin color, I must not be from here. To this day, I constantly get asked, "Where are you from?" and "What are you?" Although I understand the good intentions behind these questions, I'd purposely give the answer they didn't expect:

"I'm from Santa Clara County."  
"No, where are you really from?"  
"Well, I grew up in San Jose and I attended school in Cupertino."  
"No, like what are you?"

Now, how do you personally go about answering that question? What am I? I carry many identities as we all do. I am many things: an American citizen, a woman, the first in my family to attend a 4-year institution...the list could go on. There are much better ways of asking about my ethnic/cultural background instead of dehumanizing me and assuming that America is not my home.

An example of when I was assumed to be a foreigner because of my skin color was during my first year of college. I will always remember the conversation that I had with a fellow student in my Communications class. He had told me that "I spoke English so good" and then proceeded to ask me how long I've been in the States. No, I speak English well, because after all, it's the first language I learned and the only one I can speak fluently. This triggered me because it was assumed that I was a foreigner whose first language wasn't English. Collections of these encounters have made me feel like a foreigner in my own home country.

After taking Asian American Studies classes and learning more about my history, I'm just only beginning to grasp the understanding of being Asian American. Am I more Asian or am I more American? The generational, cultural and language gap between my parents and I made it difficult for me to identify with my Asian heritage, and I'm still not accepted as American despite being raised and born here. It's now that I finally understand that I'm not alone. I'm a part of this growing population of Asian Americans. Our daily experiences and family history bound us together and in the words of a famous Asian American activist, Helen Zia, "Asian Americans need to stop being so fucking polite."

All these years, we've faced discrimination and oppression and we've come a long way since then but it's the time to start speaking up.

## PARTNERSHIP FOR PRE-PROFESSIONAL PILIPINOS

by **isiah regacho**



**GROUP SPOTLIGHT**

Imagine yourself at an interview for a job or an internship. At that moment, there are several questions rushing through your head. Is my resume top-notch? Have I piqued the employer's interest? Have I appeared confident enough? Going through an interview can be excruciating, especially for people with no experience.

Luckily, for those who feel they need help entering the professional world, P4 is there to lend a helping hand.

P4 is a Haas-sponsored group whose aim is the advancement of Pilipinos in the professional world (law, business, etc.), although people of all backgrounds are welcome to join, regardless of race, gender, and so on. The members of P4 are split into two groups: partners (the senior members) and associates (the recruits). Founded back in 2001, the group aids Berkeley students by instilling them with skills needed to enter the professional world, such as how to create the perfect resume, how to ace interviews, and so on. In fact, the group is modeled after law firms and corporations, which is why the members are called associates. However, it is also a community and the members see themselves as a family, helping each other succeed.

Being in P4 has been quite the experience for the newer members. According to 2nd-year Shanelle Nebre, who is in her first semester in P4, she was initially very nervous joining the group since she felt she was disconnected from the Pilipino community and the fact she came into this group as a stranger. She joined since she wanted to be part of a group that not only helped bring her back to her Pilipino roots but also shared her interest in law. In her first days in P4, she found it was all she had hoped it to be, "a perfect amalgamation" of people who celebrated the Pilipino culture and the world of law.

As the youngest of the seven Pilipino-orgs on campus, P4 is also the smallest. According to the P4 Executive Director, 3rd-year Keizzel Camacho, this is actually an advantage. The small numbers allows the group to be more close-knit and allows

the partners to give more attention to associates and make them feel more comfortable in the group. In fact, the reason why she chose to join P4 back in her freshman year was how open it was and how the group took the time to know her. In addition, P4 is more interested in retention; the group would rather have a small group of people willing to come back next semester than a large group where many of the members would drop out.

P4 as a group take their time to help out in the Berkeley and Pilipino communities. According to one of the Directors of Internal Affairs, 3rd-year Richard Tallungan, P4 regularly contributes to charities and one charity that the group participates in each year is a golf tournament, where the money made would go to a charity. This year, the golf tournament will be aiding "Books for the Barrios", which packages books and supplies to low-income areas of the Philippines. Richard says that his goal is to become a resource, someone people can turn to for mentorship and guidance.

Despite the group's mission being the advancement of Pilipinos in the professional world, the group is generally open to the public. Diversity is key and the group is filled with people who have majors not affiliated with law or business and people who are not Pilipino. For P4's Director of External Affairs, 3rd-year Brandon Wong (who is half-white, half-Chinese), despite recognizing that non-Pilipinos would naturally feel disincentivized from joining, he says that ultimately it does not matter what ethnicity you are since the group is so welcoming. Anyone who is interested in the professional world can join P4 and P4 is there to lend a helping hand, no matter who you are.

P4 is a professional group first. During meetings, the members take their work seriously. However, outside the group, they are your average, everyday college students; Shanelle dedicates her time to volunteer work, Keizzel is a member of Cal Hawaii, Richard works for Cal Performances, and Brandon classifies himself as a "political junkie", regularly following current events. The partners and associates regularly hang out with each other, as both friends and associates. While professionalism does come first, in the end, the group is a family, open to all.

For those of you who are interested in joining or you want to know more about P4, follow the group on Facebook (look up "Partnership for Pre-Professional Pilipinos"), Twitter (@thep4life), Wordpress (calp4.wordpress.com), or Tumblr (thep4life.tumblr.com).



## What makes something **Asian American?**

### *A reflection on how the things in my life crafted and reinforced my Asian American identity*

by **steven cong**

That feeling of not belonging in either America or artists became the standard by which I judged if a work identity. Similarly, even though anime and Jay Chou aren't Asia is familiar to many Asian Pacific Islanders (APIs). To of art is Asian American. Consequently, the newest counteract it, some might grasp for things to claim as API, album or song by Mariah Carey or Macklemore would produced by APIs, these cultural symbols of Asia emphasize like boba and karaoke bars. These examples are symbols the distinctly "Asian" part of my Asian American identity for those white peers in high school. In effect, they say, "I am not be Asian American by those standards I created. For the longest time, this is how I viewed my sense of myself fully part of you, but the other side of me is legit, too." growing up. It's an identity that refuses to fit neatly into the Asian American self. Soon enough, symbols like the Far East Movement, boba, and YouTube cover songs wove The role they play in reinforcing the fact that my ethnic identity is hybridized means the latest Mariah Carey song or album could actually be an Asian American cultural symbol.

When I saw an Asian American cultural space growing around me through YouTube cover songs and people like Yul Kwon (the winner of Survivor when teams were split by race), I set its foundation as the starting point for the cultural expression of my Asian American identity.

However, that cultural expression started from the moment I set foot in America. It was evident when I told my parents Kelly Clarkson sound just as good as Liu Huan and when I told my peers that Wang Lee Hom would look better in a boy band than Justin Timberlake. Which is true. Also, my cultural symbols aren't just limited to boba or AIM usernames with AzN in them. Wang Lee Hom and Kelly Clarkson count, too, because of the context in which they appear and how they further articulate my hybridized API identity. Knowing this gave a more accurate picture of what being API meant for me and a more nuanced perspective of what that identity means on a cultural level.

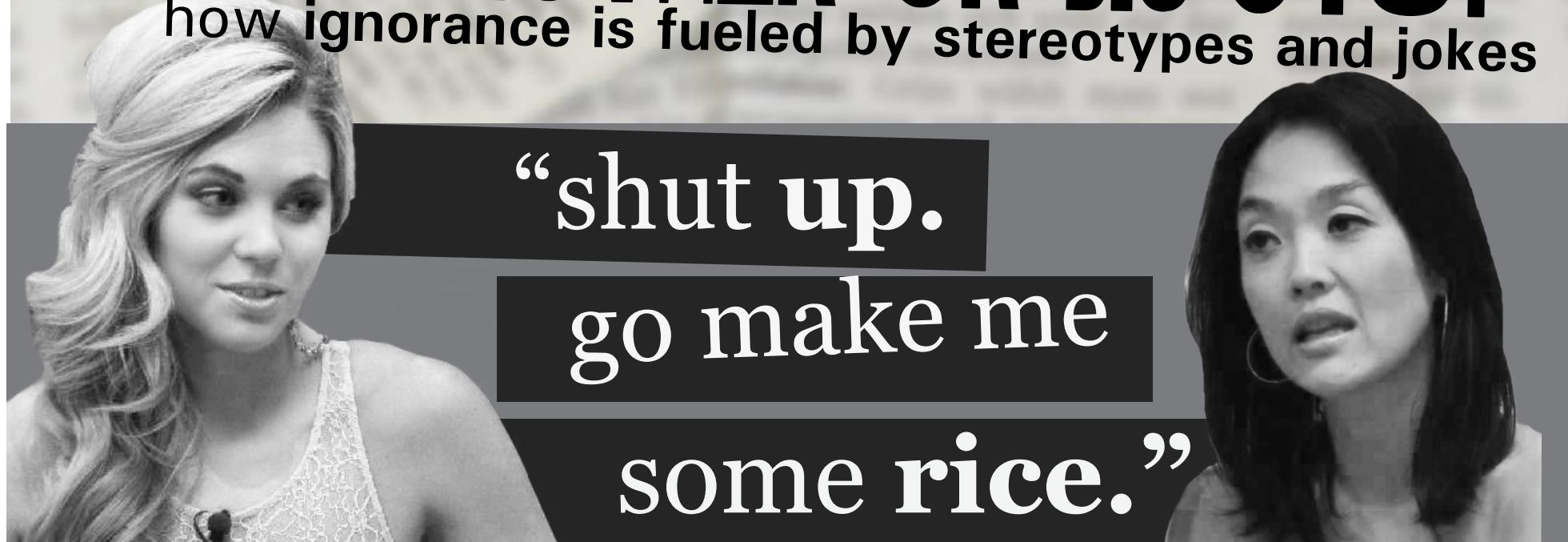
It all goes back to that feeling of not belonging in either America or Asia. For me, counteracting that isolation meant establishing the fact that I am Asian American, and that my identity is hybrid. In the context of my home, things as culturally API against things that are not. Whenever Clara C, a famous API YouTube musician, any piece of American media I referenced, regardless of came out with a new album or song, I would immediately identify it as API. Subconsciously, it meant Asian American to symbolize the "American" part of my Asian American even when an Asian American space did not yet exist.

# BIG BROTHER OR BIG OTS?

how ignorance is fueled by stereotypes and jokes

by mitchell lui

“shut up.  
go make me  
some rice.”



Reality TV is often considered the unwanted child of the television industry, and for years I've tried to convince people that not all reality shows deify toddlers in tiaras or silicone-enhanced Cro-Magnons. However, with this summer's installment of Big Brother, it is quite hard to defend such programming. In a nutshell, Big Brother is a reality competition show that pits 16 Americans from across the country against each other for a \$500,000 grand prize. While competing for power in the game and attempting to evade eviction, these houseguests are sequestered in a house without contact with the outside world for three months, with no idea how they are being perceived. In a context like this, it is expected that not everyone will get along, but this year's contestants took things to a whole new level. Several of the houseguests have uttered racial epithets and homophobic slurs, igniting a media firestorm that brought the controversy to national attention and triggered a discussion on the tolerance of prejudice.

When Aaryn was finally evicted in late August, she was roasted by Chen and was held accountable for her behavior. Initially, she tried to deny ever making racial remarks, but Chen repeated her words back to her verbatim. Aaryn half-heartedly apologized and asserted that her comments were taken out of context. It's an excuse that doesn't really have credence, as the brunt of her racism was shown on the 24-7 live stream to the Internet to thousands of viewers. And does an apology ever just sweep all of the prejudice and discrimination under the rug? Words have been said, people have been offended, and lines have been crossed – it's not easy to just forget it all happened. Aaryn also blamed her Texan upbringing for her insensitivity and ignorance. In her attempt to apologize for her offensive words, she ended up offending yet another group of people in her generalization of Texans as bigots. (Later, she referred to as "squinty-eyed.") Aaryn also told her to "shut up...go make some rice," and she went on a tirade mocking Asian nail salon workers. Not only are these comments derived from overplayed stereotypes, they were made in a spiteful tone meant to denigrate the API community. Coincidentally, the host of Big Brother, Julie Chen, is also of an Asian background and was personally offended by the

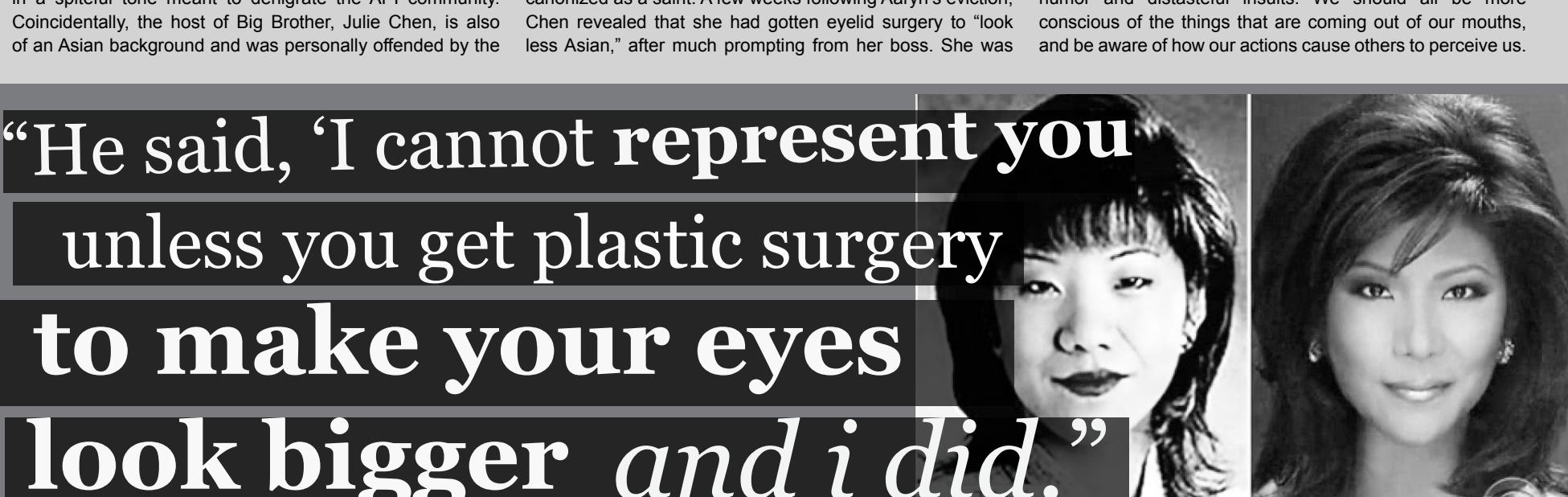
remarks. She went on *The Talk* – her daytime talk show – and criticized Aaryn's comments, relating them to the insults she endured growing up. It is no laughing matter when the host chooses to remove herself from her obligation to remain objective and denounce this kind of bigotry.

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convincing that her career would never amount to anything and that she would never get the big break she needed. The fact that Julie Chen would get surgery to further her career adds insult to injury, because it demonstrates that Aaryn's words – and likely the attitudes of many other uninformed people – have a degree of truth to them. Her response to the racism she faced in the workplace showed her complacency; she was willing to fit with the mold instead of break free from it.

The most alarming thing about this whole episode is that the houseguests made those derogatory comments fully aware they were being taped and streamed to the Internet. What else would they say behind closed doors? Ignorance still runs rampant in this country, especially in areas that aren't ethnically diverse. In particular, the lack of exposure to Asian people probably restricts their perspectives – what they know and presume about Asians is probably limited to stereotypes. Take how Aaryn feigned surprise at Helen being a political consultant rather than a manicurist as an example. In her mind, there was no way an Asian could take on a job that requires eloquent and articulate speech.

This raises the question of how tolerant we should be of racially charged jokes, particularly when they may affect the perception of an entire ethnicity. With YouTubers like Peter Chao in the spotlight, their "funky accent" or "overachieving Asian" jokes straddle a thin line between good-natured humor and distasteful insults. We should all be more conscious of the things that are coming out of our mouths, and be aware of how our actions cause others to perceive us.



“He said, ‘I cannot represent you unless you get plastic surgery to make your eyes look bigger and i did.’”

<http://i1.ytimg.com/vi/fRQOeMXkeWw/maxresdefault.jpg>

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[http://media.zenfs.com/en\\_us/News/ap\\_webfeeds/3704d0a05d71fd19380f6a706700f566.jpg](http://media.zenfs.com/en_us/News/ap_webfeeds/3704d0a05d71fd19380f6a706700f566.jpg)

[http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/sites/default/files/2013/09/julie\\_chen\\_plastic\\_surgery.jpg](http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/sites/default/files/2013/09/julie_chen_plastic_surgery.jpg)

# SPECIAL OFFER: Plastic Surgery for ASIANS

by jenny lu



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Diplomat of American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery

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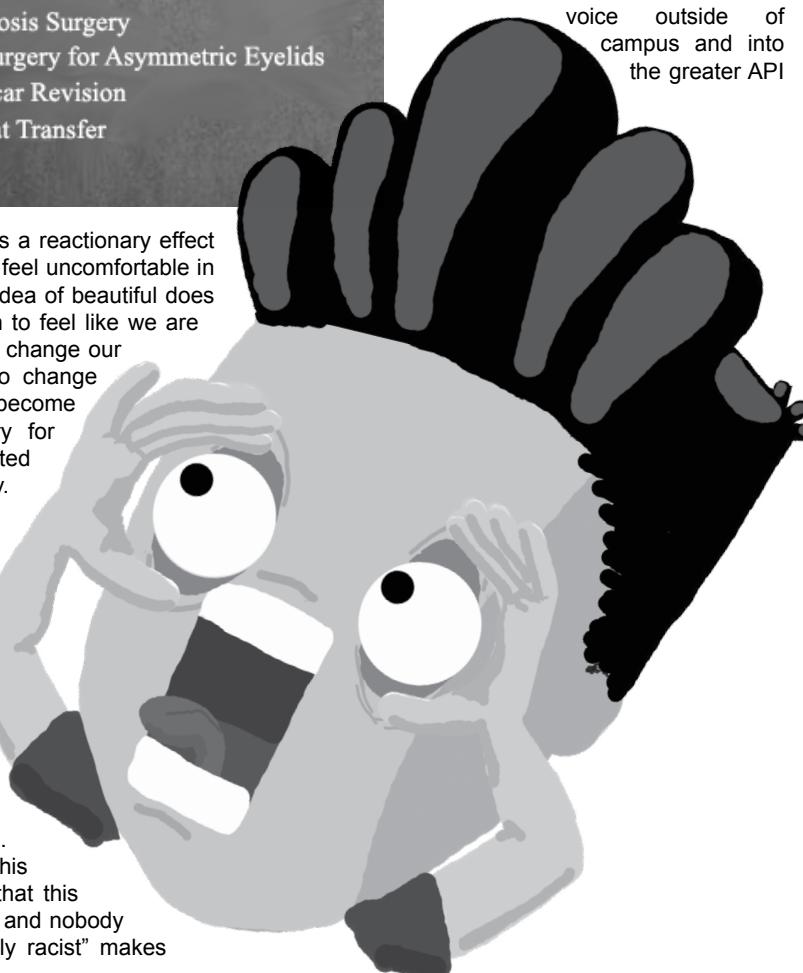
- Chin Augmentation & Reshaping
- Suture Technique Eyelid Surgery
- Cheek Reduction
- Ptosis Surgery
- Rhinoplasty
- Surgery for Asymmetric Eyelids
- Ear Pinning (Otoplasty)
- Scar Revision
- Double Eyelid Surgery
- Fat Transfer
- Asian Eyelid Surgery

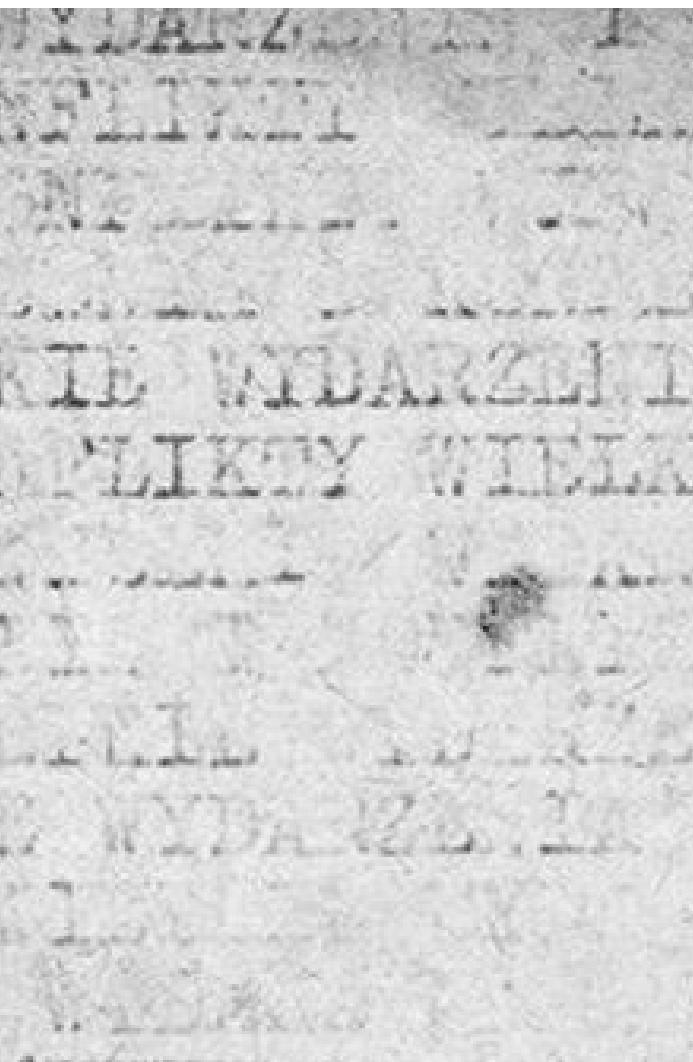
industries tell the Asian women? It creates a reactionary effect on Asian and Asian American women; we feel uncomfortable in our own skin because Western society's idea of beautiful does not align with the way we look. We begin to feel like we are not enough, and that it is okay to want to change our features. This desire to look different, to change the features that are deemed Asian, become normalized. There is a thriving industry for "fixing" the way Asians look. We feel alienated from our own bodies, culture, and identity. This is not the type of message anyone should be receiving.

Instead of teaching young women to embrace and love ourselves, these industries and stereotypes teach us how to change ourselves to even begin to accept ourselves. We need to create a healthy environment for the students on this campus to accept themselves for the way that they are, regardless of how society sees certain features. The placement of this advertisement does the complete opposite. The fact that the Daily Californian ran this advertisement is unacceptable. To think that this ad went through students on this campus and nobody stopped to think "hey, this could be really racist" makes

me extremely disappointed. It's a shame that no one in the Daily Cal recognized or stood up against the cultural insensitivity, offensive potential, racial and gender targeting, stereotype reinforcing, fucked up message in this advertisement. But this was also a good reminder as to why hardboiled was created in the first place. The founders of hardboiled felt that campus publications (such as the Daily Cal) did not fairly represent the API voice. hardboiled exists to speak up for the API community and take action against racist issues and we are not afraid to do so. Blatantly offensive race-centered ads like this still running in our campus newspaper shows that we need an API voice. Racist industries that target and commercialize our community need to be called out.

The San Francisco Chronicle recently published an article in October 2013 addressing the controversy of eyelid surgery in the Asian community. Many Asians and Asian Americans were interviewed in this article to gain a wide spectrum of opinions and thoughts on eyelid surgery and a couple of hardboiled editors and staff members were involved in the interviews. I was fortunate and privileged in that my quote was featured in the article. hardboiled was able to extend the API student voice outside of campus and into the greater API





# Have You Met My Girlfriend, ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES

Sometimes I wonder if I made the right choice, opening that Pandora's Box. I could have never met her, never let her teach me about the ugly side. Maybe it would have been better that way, because ignorance is bliss. There would have been no pain, no suffering, no self-doubt, and no realization that the world is still a messed up place filled with messed up people. I know I wouldn't be the same person had I never met her, but is learning worth the pain? Yet there is a reason things hurt and exploring pain is the only way we'll ever understand ourselves and our fellow human beings.

The day she broke up with me, I had just begun to feel comfortable in my own uncertainty. I tried to talk her out of it, to give me another chance, but she was adamant about parting ways. I knew it was inevitable,

but I had still hoped we could make it work. Sure, she made me angry, sad, and happy, but that emotional rollercoaster was part of the attraction. Or maybe it was the fact I could never tell if she really liked me. Did she approve of what I was doing and wanted to do in entertainment? Would I be able to reach her standards? Or would I be just another example of an Asian stereotype? The uncertainty was both exhilarating and frightening. She still frightens me. I still want to impress her. This is my last year of college. I'm leaving her after graduation, but she'll never leave my life. She changed my way of thinking and introduced me to a whole new world. I learned a lot about myself, and I have her to thank for that. I've never been more scared and ready for the future. Farewell, Asian Am.

**"IT WAS AN ACCIDENT,  
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I became an Asian American Studies major much in the same way I dated my first girlfriend. We met at an informal Asian American Studies gathering; I had agreed to help paint some banners to promote an upcoming department event. When I got to the arts room, I saw four other students there I didn't know. I remember feeling very antisocial that day, and going into the room, I planned to just go paint some banners and leave whenever we finished. Instead, we all quickly became friends and had ended up sharing our life stories by the end of the meeting.

She didn't particularly stand out to me on that first day. I thought she was nice, but I really didn't pay more attention to her than anyone else there. It wasn't until I ran into her a few more times in the Asian American Studies office, got her number, and we had hung out more than two people who had just met should, that I realized I was attracted to her. I wasn't even aware of this process; it just sort of... happened. It was an accident, or maybe it was fate. Fate that we met. Fate that she worked in the office I visited so often. Fate that I happened to take an Asian American Studies class to fulfill a Literature requirement freshman year of college. That class opened up a whole new world I had never known about, challenging everything I had ever learned in school, and I loved it. I was hooked on her.

During our "honeymoon phase," as she often called it, we spent as much time as we could together. She drew me in and I couldn't let her go, even for a second. I had never felt something so intense in my life. I wasn't in control, but I loved every minute. She warned me that this perfect phase would not last forever, and sooner or later problems would arise. I refused to listen, but sure enough, I began to struggle with my feelings for her. I went through periods where I was proud of her and other times where I was embarrassed of her. I was proud of her leadership but embarrassed people didn't think she was cool. While I loved being with her, I hesitated to talk about her to friends or strangers as they always held incorrect assumptions about her. Before I could answer why I chose her, they'd say, jokingly: "Because you're Asian, right?"

As we continued to date, I grew more insecure about our relationship. What if they were right? What if she was wrong for me? We had different priorities: she was committed to the community and I had more selfish goals. Nevertheless, I was really into her and that was all I cared about... or so I liked to think. I wish I had said fuck them and fuck my insecurity. Instead, I wondered if it would be better if I broke up with her. But at the end of each day, I would re-realize that despite her flaws, I really liked her.

# Project Asian American Runaway

*What does the rise of APA fashion designers say about the changing community?*

by sam lai

My interest in high-end fashion began at the ripe old age of 12. At the time, I subscribed to a magazine called Teen Vogue, which looks exactly like it sounds: the spoiled daughter of the fashion bible, Vogue. As someone whose idea of fashion meant hand-me-downs from my mother and sister, I was mindblown by the glossy images in Teen Vogue of skinnyass white models prancing around in overpriced clothes. At that vulnerable age, I got sucked into the world I saw in Teen Vogue, where upper middle-class white privilege made all things possible as long as you had the right dress size and money. Fast-forward to today: Asian Americans have taken ahold of the fashion industry, both consumers and producers. You may not have heard of Phillip Lim, Anna Sui, Thakoon, or Vera Wang, but they all make millions of dollars from their name brand runway lines. With this meteoric rise within the industry, what does the high profile of Asian American fashion designers tell about the community?

The phenomenon of Asian Americans gaining more visibility in the high fashion industry says as much about their exclusion as their success. In a business heavily built on image and creative expression, Asian Americans have been held back by stereotypes that cast them as lacking artistic ability, relegating participation to only low-

wage manufacturing jobs taken by Asian laborers. For Asian American fashion designers, the pressure to pursue more "traditional" careers in medicine, law, engineering, or business presents a barrier to their representation. According to the 2010 book *The Beautiful Generation*, author Thuy Linh Nguyen Tu, the majority of people she interviewed intended to have careers outside of fashion, studying anthropology or biology. For the fashion designers whose parents worked in garment manufacturing, Tu found that the designers felt "pressure from parents [...] to do something more 'practical'." The generation gap between the older immigrants who labored for their family's survival and the younger fashion designers who gave up college or switched professions speaks volumes about the opportunities given by class privilege.

Of course, one cannot generalize that all Asian American fashion designers came from working-class backgrounds and chose to go into fashion because of an instinctive desire to rebel. In the Asian American community, an increasing acceptance of the arts as a viable career choice has resulted in families being more supportive of designers' choice to study fashion, as *Wall Street Journal* found. Learning from their parents' values of self-sufficiency and familial roots, Asian American fashion

designers got their relatives involved in their businesses. Taiwan-born Jason Wu, the designer who catapulted to fame when First Lady Michelle Obama chose his dresses for both inaugurations, started his label in 2006 with his family's financial support. The direct contribution of family members to emerging fashion designers' enterprises kept alive their entrepreneurial spirit enough for the mainstream fashion industry to recognize their work. Given this, the success of Asian American fashion designers should be attributed more to the work that they and their families put in more than the people who wear their clothes, although the fashion press fails to reflect these narratives.

The growing representation of Asian American designer names such as Jason Wu depicts a hopeful future for greater acceptance of the community. With all of these up-and-coming Asian American designers making big names for themselves, presenting runway shows that draw names like Kanye West and Rihanna, their success may be interpreted as an achievement given the challenges they faced. Certainly, it shows how Asian Americans embody a hybrid identity, but entering an arena populated by white designers and critics, these designers have to cope with working within a structure that more often than not exploits Asian labor.

**Do you know these  
APA fashion designers?**

**Nini  
Nguyen**

photo credit: [fabulouslyminx.blogspot.com](#)



photo credit: [www.31philliplim.com](#)



photo credit: [www.observer.com](#)



photo credit: [main.stylelist.com](#)

**Design by Phillip Lim**



photo credit: [www.pomegranita.com](#)

**Design by Jason Wu**



photo credit: [fashion.telegraph.co.uk](#)

**Design by Thakoon**



photo credit: [www.justfad.blogspot.com](#)

**Rachel  
Roy**

photo credit: [www.sipchatchow.com](#)

The daughter of a Dutch mother and an Indian father, designer Rachel Roy grew up in the Monterey Peninsula of Northern California. Rachel launched her eponymous line in spring 2005, and has since gone on to dress celebrities like Lucy Liu. She also serves as a member of the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA).

# Fuck You: *Sorry, Is That Not Politically Correct?*



*Photo courtesy of Patty Chen*

by patty chen

This is an open letter to the racists I met at a one month undergraduate program in Tallahassee, Florida who helped me realize the importance of treating others as complex, multi-faceted human beings instead of treating others as a thing that needs to be categorized.

As I spent more time with you, I realized that you judged and viewed me as "Asian" rather than as Patty. You only asked me questions about my Asian American background as if I do not have other facets of my being worth knowing beyond my ethnicity. For the first time in my life, others treated me as a thing rather than a person. You didn't recognize my humanity, only my ethnicity. You were so eager to fit me into this box that you created for me. The questions ranged from "where I'm from" to "how it feels to be Asian." Somewhere along the line, I lost the energy to give a crap about what you thought of me. I just stopped reacting to your insanely ridiculous and offensive questions, but I hope you didn't mistake my silence for complacency or, worse, agreement with the racist bullshit you threw my way.

I held my tongue because I had to be around all of you 24/7 for a month, but that limitation no longer holds true. So let me share some of the thoughts I kept to myself.

Ahem. Fuck you for mocking my culture. Fuck you for asking me stupid questions that you knew were offensive and fuck you for making me feel like a sideshow act rather than an actual human being.

It feels so good to get that off my chest. I never said it to any of your faces because I knew that you would never understand and you would never try to understand my words or my anger. You chose not to acknowledge my humanity, so why the fuck would I waste my time trying

to talk to you as an intelligent being? I could've screamed and yelled at the top of my lungs to express my anger and hurt, but I know that would not have changed a thing.

I realized all of this after telling one of you how offensive you were and you told me that you knew you were offensive, but you consciously chose to keep doing what you're doing because you didn't believe that you needed to change. You actually had the nerve to tell me that you recognized your ignorance, but you planned to keep being ignorant. At that point, I don't know if it's ignorance or just arrogance. You said that everyone should become more tough-skinned and take things less personally, but how can I take your constant attacks on my identity without taking it personally?

Most importantly, I wanted to say something to someone specifically in the group of racists I met. To the fellow Asian American who sent me a farewell text stating that you usually didn't like Asians but I was the exception, I know you meant this as a compliment, but your internalized racism shocked me. You implied that it was a negative thing to be who we are. I am honestly your anti-thesis. I love being Asian American. I take pride in my heritage and culture because that has shaped who I am today and I do not automatically dislike others based on their ethnicity or race. It saddened me that you felt this level of dislike toward our community, but it showed me that racism is not only a white-on-people of color issue. Even though you chose to separate yourself from our community, I still consider you a member of my community because you are. Regardless of how much you may dislike Asians, you are still an Asian American. In the same way that you imposed this idea of who an Asian American "should" be, others will do the same to you because of your Asian appearance. I hope you

realize one day that how you perceive others does not actually reflect who they are and that you learn to withhold judgment on another person until you actually get to know them.

I don't know your stories. I don't know what you've been through in life, and I don't know you enough to make any judgments about you based on our limited interactions, even if you did not extend the same courtesy to me. While I treat my lack of knowledge about you as a fact, you reacted to your lack of knowledge about me by filling this empty space with unreasonable, archaic and misguided notions of my identity based on my ethnicity.

After experiencing this type of treatment, I know how harmful it can be to an individual's sense of identity. Luckily, I came out of this experience still proud of my Asian American identity because I already had a strong identification with this part of my identity. At the same time, I can understand how others would internalize these interactions as reasons to feel ashamed of their ethnic identity.

I don't expect an apology from any of you. I doubt any of you will read this, but I hope those who read this reflect on how they treat others and the potentially negative effects it will have on their well-being.

On some level, I believe that we all have experienced some level of socialization that has caused us to treat others differently based on their perceived ethnicity. While we do not have any control over these learned habits, I believe that we can choose to be better. We can choose to treat others based on their actual being rather than on these contrived notions that we, as a society, have created and forced upon others. Here's to treating each other with the respect every being deserves, no matter what "difference" is perceived among us.

"I COULD'VE SCREAMED AND YELLED AT THE TOP OF MY LUNGS TO EXPRESS MY ANGER AND HURT, BUT I KNOW THAT WOULDN'T HAVE CHANGED A THING."

## CHINATOWN: A SYMBOL OF RESISTANCE FROM TEMPORARY SETTLEMENT TO ETHNIC ENCLAVE

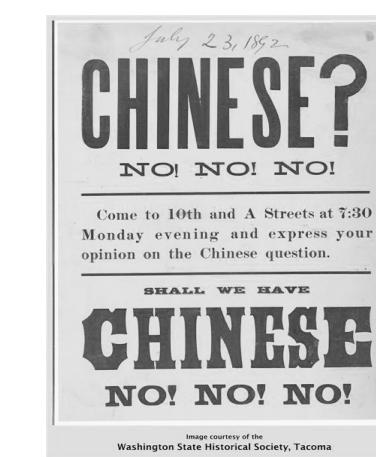
by melissa hu



*photo credits: www.virtualtourist.com/travel/North\_America/United\_States\_of\_America/California/Los\_Angeles-753836/Things\_To\_Do-Los\_Angeles-Chinatown-BR-1.html*

Growing up, I had always considered Los Angeles Chinatown a tourist attraction, a place of spectatorship. It was where I could get cheap goods and great food, but I always thought that the lanterns, pagoda architecture, and dragon statues were a bit dramatic, maybe even tacky. However, I finally understood the cultural significance of Chinatown after becoming involved with the Chinese American Museum two summers ago.

Chinatown was never meant to be a place of tourism; it just happened to end up that way. In 1849, the first wave of Chinese immigrants entered the West Coast. These predominantly male immigrants intended to strike it rich with gold, and then leave immediately. The Chinese men who were contracted to work on the Transcontinental Railroad had the same goals in mind. Chinatown sprung up to provide goods and services that were tailored to this community of laborers and former gold miners. For most Chinese immigrants, Chinatown was meant to be a temporary settlement until they could finally return to China with their dream-of fortunes.



*photo credits: differenttogether.wordpress.com/2012/06/21/u-s-houseapologizes-for-chinese-exclusion-act/*

Nonetheless, the existence of Chinatown has always been precarious. Whites vehemently advocated purging these communities. In 1880, LA Chinatown was demolished to make way for Union Station, forcing Chinese residents to move elsewhere. Similarly, SF Chinatown faced the prospect of relocation after the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906. The whites vehemently opposed the rebuilding of Chinatown on "valuable land next to the Financial District" according to the KQED documentary Chinatown, and thus it was difficult to secure the resources for reconstruction. However, this opposition motivated Chinatown community leaders to strategically transform their cultural centers into tourist traps in order to make profits and consequently guarantee Chinatown's preservation.

This idea was almost fail-proof because wealthy and middle-class whites were fascinated by the Chinese "exoticism." Even before the destruction of these West Coast Chinatowns, whites had actively engaged in "slum tourism" to experience firsthand ethnic poverty.

According to Raymond Lou, other whites visited

disease from the harsh railroad environments, and worked for much lower wages. Anti-Chinese sentiment became steadily more violent, reaching its apex in the Chinese Massacre of 1871, in which 19 Chinese men and boys were killed by a white mob in Los Angeles—the largest mass lynching in this country's history. Discrimination based on economic and racial factors ultimately led to the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the first exclusionary practice that limited immigration based on nationality. These instances of discrimination slowly shifted Chinatown's purpose from being a temporary settlement to a safe haven, as it was difficult for the Chinese to trust outsiders. In an attempt to protect community members, leaders of Chinatown formed associations and de-facto gang-led police systems, according to Yong Chen's Chinese San Francisco. From here on, Chinatown became a means of protection and survival to Chinese immigrants.

Today, Chinatown has become increasingly integrated into the larger American society, while still retaining its cultural character. Events like Chinese New Year celebrations and mainstream music festivals are becoming more and more visible in Chinatown. Some argue that this integration is not beneficial. In LA Chinatown, the proposed construction of corporate chain stores threatens the community members whose

Chinatown because they wanted to buy Chinese style goods. While redeveloping these Chinatowns, Chinese community leaders used this curiosity to their advantage. The Chinatowns we see in San Francisco and Los Angeles today, with the touristic architecture and knick-knack stores, are the fruits of this strategy.

Today, Chinatown has become increasingly integrated into the larger American society, while still retaining its cultural character. Events like Chinese New Year celebrations and mainstream music festivals are becoming more and more visible in Chinatown. Some argue that this integration is not beneficial. In LA Chinatown, the proposed construction of corporate chain stores threatens the community members whose

**"Chinatown empowered the Chinese to stay strong even when the larger American public saw them as unworthy of basic social and political rights."**

livelhoods depend on sales from their shops, while new luxury apartments introduce a different generation of residents into Chinatown. These new projects may damage the cultural cohesion has tied the community together. On the other hand, some believe that these investments could "inject life" into Chinatown, helping it reach what LA blogger Brigham Yen calls "urban maturity." These opposing views clearly demonstrate the divided opinion regarding the direction in which Chinatown should be headed.

My journey into Chinese American history has fostered my deep appreciation for Chinatown. I no longer see it as a tourist attraction, but a community that began as a temporary settlement and ultimately became a symbol of resistance. It strategically changed with the times to ensure its survival, and I respect Chinatown even more because of that. Chinatown empowered the Chinese to stay strong even when the larger American public saw them as unworthy of basic social and political rights. Within that flashy exterior today lies a community that welcomed their members and fought to preserve their dignity. And if you ask what I think about those tacky decorations now, I'd say that they are absolutely brilliant.

# china doll, geisha girl,

# and the ASIAN AMERICAN WOMAN

by patricia williams



photo credits: [www.costumeclaz.com](http://www.costumeclaz.com)

With autumn comes the annual tidings of Halloween and everything that it entails: candy, late nights, themed parties, and, without fail, racist costumes. The occurrence becomes so inevitable that one eventually turns into a token of the other. What most people fail to realize as they don their "Oriental Delight" or their "Dragon Mistress" is the effect that these costumes have on the people they intend to represent. And, when it comes to the aforementioned costumes of Asian women (which do exist, by the way), these people choose to turn a blind eye to the ways that they affect Asian American women and the Western perception of them.

Where were these stereotypes developed? For many, the stereotypical Asian woman has long been accepted as quiet, demure, shy, and exotic. These traits, however, stem from the long developed roots of orientalism and colonialism between the Western world and Asia. The Orient, which is now regarded as an antiquated term stirring up sentiments of racial discrimination, painted a picture of exotic locations and equally exotic women. Conquering Asia became a priority for the West as an attempt to spread their influence over these new lands.

Conquering Asia meant conquering its women. This occurred in two ways: the widespread sexual violence displayed towards women which was typically involved in colonialism, and the validation of the "superior traits" assumed of Asian women through literature and art. Colonialism relegated Asian women to property which colonizers desired. This created the image of desire for the sexual conquest and exotification of these women which lingers in the perceptions of Asian women today. Indeed, the Asian fetish we know today can be traced back to this desirability of these women as prizes of conquest. The rest exists in the early works of media which portrayed Asian women. Travel journals, plays, and novels praised the desirable qualities that their various writers, who were usually white men, perceived to exist in Asian women. Amongst these traits, the most prevalent were those which mentioned submissiveness and sexual abilities, especially in comparison to Western women. These stereotypes pressed on over the years and continue to exist today.

This combination of colonialism and orientalism has led to racist Halloween costumes. The geisha girls and China dolls of the costumes department play upon the stereotypes long set in

**■■*The very existence of these costumes perpetuates the commonly associated stereotypes that people fight every day to end. ■■***

place by history. Short skirts, deep necklines, and exposing cut outs characterize these outfits as they attempt to imitate what people perceive to be the traditional garb of the general blur that is the "Far East." By immersing completely into these stereotypes, these costumes aid the perpetuation of the misconceptions of what it means to be an Asian American woman, thereby damaging the perception of women who are indeed Asian and not simply donning an inaccurate costume for a few hours. The image of the submissive and hypersexualized woman exists in part through the continued use of these costumes, and their return every Halloween encourages the normalization of this form of casual racism.

Stereotypical costumes restrict Asian women into conforming to one of two categories; they can either be the submissive, objectified doll who bends to a suppressor's every will, or they can be the sexual, untrustworthy dragon lady. Asian American women represent neither category, of course, as these representations present not only inaccurate descriptions but also outdated ones. These expectations placed upon Asian women have existed ever since the West discovered Asia, and yet they have barely budged from their original incarnations. Racist Halloween costumes do nothing to aid in the removal of these perceptions; instead, they do quite the opposite. Keeping these costumes around essentially keeps these negative perceptions around as well.

While the existence of the outfits themselves present problematic implications, the ways that companies model them also proposes negative effects on Asian American women. Without a doubt, these costumes appear more likely, if not nearly always, on Caucasian models; very rarely, if ever, will an Asian woman appear modeling them. By imposing these appearances on what is generally perceived as the Western standard of beauty, these costumes bring a sense of distance from the "exotic Asian," instead taking it to a platform which is more easily deemed acceptable and desirable by the masses. This creates a culture which is palatable to Americans while also dehumanizing Asian women into objects. In a sense, these costumes impose what are seen as desirable traits onto Caucasian women. Additionally, these models always express one of two things: shyness or sexuality. The way that companies choose to represent these outfits perpetuates these ideals of stereotypical traits and associations of the submissive, hypersexual Asian woman.

Even the names of these costumes prove problematic. By using such labels as "doll," "sexy," and "mistress," Asian women become objectified and dehumanized; no longer individuals, the perceptions of them degenerate into merely objects for the use of others. The decision to label geishas as girls rather than women reveals the infantilization involved in racial conceptions of Asians. The outdated and racially charged term "oriental" attaches itself to many costume titles as well, such as "Oriental Delight" and "Oriental Princess," both of which paint Asian women as exotic and sensual objects to obtain.

Asian costumes certainly don't appear to be going anywhere any time soon, and they will therefore continue to damage the image and perceptions of Asian American women. With every Geisha Girl costume which is created, with every Caucasian model that shyly casts her gaze downwards, and with every outfit which butchers some vague resemblance of an actual traditional costume, Asian American women continue to struggle even harder to fight the stereotypes displayed before them. An end to these costumes means an end to another means of pushing these negative misconceptions, and the only way to stop them is to stop it as it's happening. So, the next time that blind eye turns away from the racist displays before it, turn the other direction and call them out.