

ISSUE 12.3

# hardboiled

THE ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN NEWSMAGAZINE!

DECEMBER 2008



IN THIS ISSUE: PIECES OF PEACE / THREAT TO THE THAI  
TEMPLE TEMPTATION / DISPROOF & DISPARITIES ...AND MORE!

12.3  
DEC 2008

# hardboiled

hb meetings  
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ABOUT THIS COVER  
November 2008 was a historic month, in which Berkeley with the rest of the nation celebrated Barack Obama as the first African American president elect in the history of the US. Unfortunately, it was also a dark day for opponents of Proposition 8, which has put many marriages in danger. This cover celebrates the many accomplishments we've struggled to accomplish. But the kiss reflects the injustices that have yet to be resolved. It is inspired by Indira Gandhi's quote, "you can't hold hands with a clenched fist." Prejudice cannot be extinguished by raised fists, but by peacefully reaching out to the "other" side. Please refer to the article Peace not Prejudice on page 5 for more information.

## editor's notes

Dear hardboiled readers,

It's been a year of late nights organizing workshops, writing and editing articles, and designing memorable covers (i.e. girl with throat slightly cut open by scissors personifying the freeze of the EALC budget cuts). There were many joyful moments and some tense times, but things always.... just barely came through.

**hardboiled** has always been about cracking open mainstream headlines by injecting our own slant on neglected Asian American issues. As the only Asian American newsmagazine in an overwhelming Asian American student majority, we serve a crucial role in standing up against prejudices and stereotypes including but not limited to Asian Americans. In a lot of cases, **hardboiled** is the lifeline to get to know what's going on for many students: we are the ten thousand kilowatt light bulb that brightens dimly lit issues.

What I will miss the most alongside those late nights chugging down some cheap green sludge "energy" drink that promises 10 hours of vitamin B12 induced hyper-activity, is working with the young and energetic **hardboiled** staff. It is to our newcomers that provide **hardboiled** that extra light to flash through superficial issues and get to the core.

**hardboiled** will truly be missed.

P.S. I am not that old.

Naomi Oren  
art director

Dear Babycakes,

It's been a wild ride and unfortunately, it's time to move on. When I first met you, you took my breath away, literally. Your big and bold style stood out above the rest. No other newsmagazine could compare. First impressions are important and you did not let me down. After picking up a copy two years ago, I googled you and found the amazing [hardboiled.berkeley.edu](http://hardboiled.berkeley.edu). (Don't worry, I google all my lovers.) After that, I enjoyed our weekly dates on Wednesday nights. Thanks for the free sushi and cupcakes! As things got serious, our commitment grew and I could not keep my hands off of you. You taught me many things that I will never forget in the editing room, in the classroom and in love. Thank you for showing me compassion, empathy and friendship. May you seduce many more lovers in the forms of writers, designers and activists for your never ending cause. \*Vive la différence! \*

Forever yours,  
Kat Nguyen  
layout editor

\*note: The phrase is used to celebrate the difference between any two groups of people (or simply the general diversity of individuals).

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# Say My Name

by jinhua zhang

My name is Jinhua Zhang, and my name is never on those stupid souvenir keychains!



"They would give me an African name, Barack, meaning blessing, believing that in tolerant America, your name is no barrier to success."

— Barack Obama

My name is Jinhua Zhang. I can just hear you say Gin-who-ah Zang. Many people with ethnic names, if I may speak on behalf of everyone, are quite used to hearing their names pronounced wrong. In fact, it often surprises me to hear my name pronounced even remotely similar to what it really is. I am used to responding to names that people give me such as Gin-Haw and Gin-who. Regardless of what they may sound, all the names I've been called seem to have a question mark attached at the end due to people's uncertainty.

I really don't mind when other people slaughter my name because I know that they don't mean to. What bothers me more is that I often have to more or less mispronounce my own name to make it easier for others. On these occasions, I feel as if I'm betraying myself. After all, what can be more pathetic than pronouncing your own name wrong? So like many people with difficult-to-pronounce ethnic names, I have tried to both adopt an American name and shorten my Chinese name.

Throughout middle school and high school, I went by the name Carrie. I picked the name on a whim. Having an American name made my life a whole lot easier, for the most part. When I introduce myself to a stranger, I am more likely to be remembered and I made more friends this way. People used to avoid talking to me because they do not want to offend me with their version of my name. It also helped other people to correctly address me as Ms. or Mr. when they're sending me an email and can't distinguish my gender.

While several problems were resolved by adopting an American name, it also caused some unnecessary confusion. For example, I always hated the first days of school because I had to hear my name being slaughtered, then let the teacher know that I



go by a different name, and watch them develop this "Where did that come from?" look on their faces.

More confusion arose on the days when we had substitutes because my name on the attendance sheet was still my legal name. The substitute would call out my legal name, and everyone in class would ask "Who's that?" In answering their question, I would attract a lot of unwanted attention that led to a string of even more questions. "Your name is Gin-who-ah?" "How do you say your real name?" "Why's your name Carrie?" It's not as if I'm reluctant to explain myself, but the more people try to pronounce my name, the worse their pronunciations tend to get. Not to mention the fact that this all happens while class is still going on.

Eventually, I began to loathe my Chinese name. I get embarrassed every time someone mispronounces my name. The various attempts people made sounded more and more like mockery. So in that sense, occasional embarrassment due to keeping an American name was more tolerable than being called by odd names on an everyday basis.

When I came to college, I decided to go by Jin instead of Carrie. I figured that college professors and GSIs would never learn my name anyway, so going by a different name would confuse them when they report grades. The nice thing about going by Jin was that most people could pronounce it rather decently while I remained true to the name my parents have given me.

My ethnic name once made me an outsider, yet I experienced guilt for adopting an American name. I felt as if I was in such a hurry to assimilate that I am willing to throw my Chinese identity away. Going by Carrie made me feel less Chinese somehow. My choice to go by Jin is by far the best compromise

because I'm sacrificing only part of my name in order to obtain a truer identity.

Of course, not all ethnic names are hard to say, and not all get replaced by American ones. Some are just harder than others. I've noticed that most Japanese names are kept the same while Chinese and Korean names are more likely to get Americanized. If you happen to have a rather "easier" ethnic name, that's great. But if your name is more or less like mine, difficult for the average American to pronounce, you have some options. My personal compromise is by no means the best and only one.

Depending on your personal preference, you may want to have fun with adopting an American name. After all, not everyone has the chance to name themselves right? But be sure to ask yourself whether adopting an Americanized name also means that you are adopting a more American identity. If not, having an American name does not necessarily mean that you are letting go of your ethnic pride just to fit in. On the other hand, you may prefer to keep the name that your parents have given you so that the next time you introduce yourself to someone, you can tell them something about your ethnic background along with the cool meaning behind your name.

One such person who has taken pride in their ethnic names is our president-elect Barack Obama. At the 2004 Democratic National Convention, Obama recounted, "They give me an African name, Barack, meaning blessing, believing that in a tolerant America, your name is no barrier to success." There's no doubt that Obama will make some additions to the list of "traditional American" names. (While he's at it, how about some additions to the list of names Microsoft Word accepts as well?)



# DEEP Experiences in North Korea

"North Korea through the eyes of Korean Americans" by alice tse

What is the word that comes to mind when you think of North Korea?

Perhaps, you, as many of the attendees of a report-back held by members of a peace delegation to North Korea, think of such words as "cold," "failed," "oppression," "isolated," "war," and "division"... but would you ever think "misunderstood," "reunification," or even "hopeful?"

The delegates of the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea/North Korea) Education and Exposure Program (appropriately named DEEP) shared their personal experiences in an intense two-week excursion into North Korea. DEEP was a program founded 8 years ago that, in conjunction, with KEEP (Korea Education and Exposure Program) in South Korea, seeks to increase awareness and mobilize for peace, justice, and reunification in the Korean peninsula.

Calls for reunification would undoubtedly be met by a pervading skepticism throughout the globe that has been shaped by what, Christine Hong, an English post-doctoral fellow here at Berkeley, refers to as "Cold War and Bush-era caricatures of North Korea" and North Korea's very own policy of *juche*, or self-reliance (i.e. isolationism). The West's perception of North Korea, currently a communist state, is a negative and biased one which is compounded by isolationist policies that North Korea has chosen and the sanctions that have been placed from without. DEEP is specifically founded to "demystify the DPRK" and dismantle this Western perception of North Korea by providing Korean Americans the opportunity to "build person to person understanding" through interactions with North Korean people in everyday settings, to visit historical sites that predate the division of Korea, at the conclusion of WWII, and to really understand North Korea's prolific history through rigorous study and correspondences with North Korean scholars, farmers, workers, and students.

Coming from vastly different backgrounds, the participants had various reasons for partaking in DEEP: the three delegates that were present for the report-back included a post-doctoral fellow, an art teacher, and a Korea policy expert. Hong is endeavoring to do a comparative study between war commemorations in North Korea and in Vietnam. Kei Fischer, an art teacher whose mother is a zainichi (a second generation Korean who grew up in Japan) and whose father an



Photo courtesy of Wikipedia

The Monument on Mansu Hill was erected in 1972 to commemorate the collective efforts to combat American and Japanese imperialism during the Korean War made by the Korean people and their leader, Kim Il-Sung.

American, was motivated to engage in DEEP because she felt that North Korea is her "homeland." Despite these varying motives, all shared a common desire to learn about North Korea and to see "North Korea through Korean American eyes."

The delegates told of a rich history of nationalism that continues to thrive today. Prior to 1945, Koreans contributed to the effort to combat Japanese imperialism, a struggle that North Koreans continued against American imperialism after WWII; this layered history is commemorated in the monument on Mansu Hill. While Western media tends to focus only on the grand statue of Kim Il Sung, the leader during the Korean War and the father of Kim Jong-Il, we are rarely shown the mass sculptures erected on either side of Kim Il-sung to celebrate the war efforts of the common Korean people.

The delegates as well as others of the Korean diaspora feel the urgency for reunification. The people making efforts for reunification do not naively overlook North Korea's isolationist policies nor do they overlook the failings of the North Korean government and economy. Rather, the process has been a collective effort towards peace and the reconstruction of Korea which could help alleviate the state of North Korea, through the merging of resources, as well as ease tensions between North Korea and the U.S. The merging of the Korean states and resources could potentially elevate Korea to a major power in the world. Of course, as Hong notes, "no one said reunification wouldn't be messy," but the work that DEEP, the only program of its kind in North Korea, is putting forth in elucidating North Korean history and society as well as recent mobilization in the Korean American community to urge the U.S. government to sign a peace treaty with North Korea is progress.

For more information about DEEP and KEEP, visit nodutdol.org and find out more about Korea-US relations at kpolicy.org.



Photo by Tae Lim

Three participants of DEEP share their personal experiences and stories from North Korea.

## Korean Adoptions

by jack wang



When most people hear about foreign adoptions, the first thought that usually comes to mind is Angelina Jolie and her ever-expanding family.

But over the past few years, foreign adoptions have, for a wide variety of reasons, remained relatively popular, peaking in 2004 and 2005 with over 22,000 adoptions each year. Some families who cannot or choose not to have a child of their own instead decide to shelter and love one who had been born into less fortunate circumstances.

South Korea, a nation known for ethnic homogeneity, has been one of the most popular countries for Americans to adopt from – consistently placing in the top five along with China, Russia and Guatemala – with around 1,000 babies sent to the United States each year.

However, the South Korean government has begun implementing new adoption systems with a long-term goal to cease all foreign adoptions by 2012, in what appears to be a well-intentioned but ill-advised plan to battle the stigma surrounding adoptions.

Foreign adoptions of South Koreans began in the 1950s with casualties of the Korean War. Since 1958, 230,635 children have been adopted in South Korea, but only 30 percent of those were domestic. South Koreans, living in a traditional Asian culture that strongly emphasizes family bloodlines, have historically been leery of adoptions, and the government is seeking

to eliminate what they deem to be the shameful exportation of babies.

Since last year, the government has been offering incentives for domestic adoptions, handing out \$90 monthly allowances for each child adopted over the age of 12, as well as extra health benefits for adopted disabled children. The government has also made domestic adoptions easier, increasing the maximum age gap between adoptive parents and children, while imposing a five-month waiting period on foreign adoptions.

While any plan to boost domestic adoptions should be lauded, the South Korean government is stepping too far in seeking to completely eliminate foreign adoptions. By setting such a goal, South Korean government officials seem more preoccupied with the reputation and image of their country rather than the good of the orphaned children.

I also fail to see how limiting foreign adoption would somehow magically boost domestic adoptions. If a Korean couple plans on adopting a child, I doubt that their intentions are affected by whether or not another couple on the other side of the globe also wants to adopt a child. Foreign couples are also more likely to adopt older or disabled children, who would be likely left homeless if the government had its way.

The real problem with the low domestic adoption rate lies in culture and perception, and that's something that can't be changed by policymaking. Even South Koreans who adopt today still often hide the origin of the babies, falsifying pregnancies or claiming to have had affairs. Instead of targeting foreign adoptions, the South Korean government should launch a publicity campaign on abortion to fight the stigma surrounding it, while keeping or increasing the incentives they already offer.

It will take time, but it's better than sacrificing the welfare of orphans for phony posturing.

# pieces of PEACE



## A look back at Peace not Prejudice Week— “Shattering the Stereotypes” by tawny tsang

photo by charlie trung nguyen

Looking back, *Peace not Prejudice Week* was certainly an edifying experience. While the events were not explicitly didactic, the poetry slam, discussion panel, and communal mural project gave ample opportunities for students to participate in constructing a shared understanding of what peace is. *Peace not Prejudice Week* is a new tradition at Cal and was established last fall by the Coalition for Peace not Prejudice. The main purpose of the week is “to foster the ideals of peace, diversity, and unity within the student body [...] and] aim to achieve unity through diversity, realizing that despite having different cultures or religions, a common thread binds us all together—that of humanity.” This year’s theme, “Shattering the Stereotypes” guided the discourse on peace and cumulated to the peace rally on November 20th. Although the rally on Sproul signified the closing of *Peace not Prejudice Week*, the panel of speakers suggested that it was the beginning of further discussion. Obviously, the ideas surrounding peace cannot fully be transmitted within a week. In the spirit of continuing this discussion, I spent considerable time reflecting all that has happened over the past few weeks. I have come to realize that peace is not a subject to be taken lightly. In fact, in the process of shattering the stereotypes, one must be careful not to step on those shards. After several attempts of writing this article, I have learned that peace is a powerful force that is capable of driving people towards and against each other. In addition, by focusing on a common humanity, *Peace not Prejudice Week* attempted to disband the stereotypes surrounding peace.

The concept of peace resembles those psychological inkblots tests because it exists as multiple interpretations. Some idealists vision it to be characterized by individuals, holding hands in a circle singing Kumbaya. Others may connect peace with the hippie movement in the 70’s. *Peace not Prejudice Week* suggested that peace emerges from looking beyond the superficial labels ascribed to individuals. Because there are so many different conceptions of what it actually is, peace has ironically become a debatable subject. The idea that peace could lead to disparate action is reflected in how people react to peaceful pro-

tests, like the hanging of a Palestinian flag or the sit-ins during the Civil Rights Movement. While it is easy to claim that the opposite of peace is violence, those actions show that peace and violence are concepts that complement each other. Both are entities that do not exist on their own and require collective effort to gain momentum. However, the resounding difference is that peace connects others through common humanity, while violence connects individuals who experience common adversity through intolerance. While that black smudge of an inkblot can seem like a dog, a cup, or a flower, it’s just ink. Similarly, peace can come in all shapes and sizes, but at the end of the day, it exists just as it is. Peace arises as a collective recognition that different views of it exist and that it’s okay. *Peace not Prejudice Week* reminded participants of that by providing activities to allow us to see peace from different perspectives. For example, the poetry slam gave students the opportunity to express themselves in a supportive environment. The communal art project also joined individuals in a collective effort to create.

The artistic outlets provided by the events in *Peace not Prejudice Week* emphasized the profound human ability to create both positively and negatively. Just as we have been able to create skyscrapers and microchips, we have also been able to create stereotypes. These stereotypes misconstrue individual actions into over-generalized behaviors that are assigned to a category of people. While stereotypes are dehumanizing, it is just as belittling to view oneself as a victimized member of a minority group. However, disbanding stereotypes is not about being blind to labels such as “white”, “heterosexual” or “female” because those also make up a large part of who we are. Instead, it is about appreciating the multiplicity of being human and disregarding the negative implications ascribed to identities. Peace creates a space for people to converge and coexist in recognition of their differences. As sophomore Sadaf Sareshwala stated, *Peace not Prejudice Week* is a “great way to recognize the immense unity that this campus has.” Similarly, Jenalyn Sotto, the external affairs coordinator of the Asian Pacific American Coalition explains

that, “*Peace not Prejudice Week* has an ideological standpoint that we all need to take into consideration. Taking in the fundamental ideas of the movement leads to a better society.”

As demonstrated, the discussion of peace can become a bit preachy. Yes we know peace is good. So what? Why have a week be dedicated to it? Why have this article go on and on about it? In a large sense, peace is like voting. It seems like only a small percentage of our population is constantly active about spreading it; it draws its impact on collective effort; it involves some free-riderism; and theoretically doesn’t seem like a very difficult thing to do. However, like voting, I think people often overlook the significance of the individual and his or her ability to make a difference. This applies in two ways. I feel that some members of minority groups simply succumb to demonstrations of intolerance, violence, and hatred, and come to the misleading idea that peace is something that is unattainable. This develops into cynicism, which sometimes characterizes the mentality of refugees or child-soldiers. On the other end, some individuals may not realize that they can make a difference. ASUC Senator and organizer of *Peace not Prejudice Week*, Saira Hussein urged students to “live the change you want to see” stressing the importance of personal integrity to the propagation of peace. The clearest example is me. Coming into *Peace not Prejudice Week*, I was pretty much open to simply learning what others had to say about peace. But coming out of it, I realized that I was generating ideas of peace from others. While it is their prerogative to disagree with my ideas of peace, it still creates the same snowballing effect. Peace is not limited, but as of now, its size is pretty small. This can be demonstrated by the series of “disturbing and unacceptable incidents this semester [...] including] hate graffiti, racially derogatory remarks directed at specific students, and potentially criminal acts of retribution” as stated in a campus-wide email from the Chancellor. *Peace not Prejudice Week* provides a formal means to gather a mass of diverse individuals together to reaccelerate the discussion of peace and its implications not only for us as a campus community but also for the larger society.



Photos courtesy of Wat Mongkolratanaram

by lucy yu

# THREAT TO THE THAI TEMPLE TEMPTATION

*In light of the recent threats to close down the 25-year long Sunday brunch tradition, we have to consider—what is the lure of Berkeley's Thai Temple?*

The lines are ridiculously long, the food not the best in town (perhaps because it is mass produced), and the atmosphere not the most pleasant. Food is served in what resembles a militant assembly line.

So, what is the lure of the over-priced, below-average Thai food?

I sure didn't go eat at the weekly Sunday brunch to

help fundraise for the Berkeley Thai Buddhist Temple, and I doubt that most people did either.

The Facebook group named "Save the Thai Temple!" already boasts 700+ members and I doubt that number will decrease as the impending Dec. 11 date nears.

That is the date Wat Mongkolratanaram, the official name for the Thai Temple, will seek approval in a hearing from the Berkeley Zoning Adjustments Board to continue its 25 year-old Sunday Food Offering tradition.

Every Sunday, the Temple serves cafeteria-style food to patrons who give a suggested donation in exchange for tokens to buy a variety of Thai cuisine.

Part of the problem is that Thai Temple is located a few blocks away from where Adeline and Shattuck split in a typical Berkeley residential neighborhood.

According to Doug Coffee, one of the Thai Temple's long-running volunteers, the tradition has been threatened essentially because neighbors around the temple filed complaints about the strong smell of the food, the parking congestion, the excess trash, and the long hours of operation.

Neighbors during the last hearing in September said they counted 1,352 guests for brunch on one Sunday. This amounts to about \$10,000 in revenue for the temple each week at the average cost of \$7 per person.

This hefty amount is good news for the temple, which needs to pay its utilities, fund its cultural and language center expenditures

(including paying summer teachers from Thailand), and fund its Sunday school.

But since customers do not even realize their Pad Thai costs go toward the many items detailed above, there is no way to unite the people and fundraise without the food incentives.

The brunch has become an experi-

ence that is a part of Berkeley culture (whether hyped up or not), a sort of "must-do in Berkeley" activity.

Shouldn't Thai Temple avoid such antagonistic feelings from the neighbors who should really be their number one supporters?

By natural social laws, if ones' habits are causing a disruption to an entire community, one ceases to continue these acts, or does so somewhere else.

This leaves a dilemma that calls for

necessary, and adjusted hours to be a more reasonable three-hour block between 10 am to 1 pm (when it was 9 am -3 pm before), which is within the city ordinance's allotted time for noise of 8am -8pm.

This only leaves benefits to the donations to the Sunday Food Offering and the brunch in general: Funds a temple and supports the practice of religious freedom

The food may taste below average for my liking, but they should not discontinue providing food for college students of unrefined tastes and less-than deep pockets when they are willing to spend such prices for whatever reason.

The Thai Temple is old and for pure sentimental values I would hate to see this particular temple receive insufficient funds. It speaks for an entire community as the first Thai Temple of the Bay Area. Funding language classes is crucial as Thai language instruction is scarce.

Their language program has "evolved to involve mixed and multicultural families" now in addition to those of Thai descent, according to another Temple volunteer, showing the progress Thai Temple is making with its funds.

Berkeley's Thai Temple has provided a cultural learning center that the Thai community would not have otherwise and this is thanks to the continuous support from Berkeley students.

Whatever may be the lure for students—whether the communal atmosphere or the must-see attraction quality of the brunch—the Thai Temple deserves to stay because it has successfully created an attractive spot and most importantly, compromised with its neighbors.

And by natural social laws, we always look more kindly upon those who have compromised.



Photo courtesy of Wat Mongkolratanaram

**Patrons to the Thai Temple enjoy their meal after waiting in long lines**

a compromise, which is what the Thai Temple has turned around to do.

According to Coffee, the Thai Temple has compromised the height of the Buddha shrine, found alternative parking for their hungry supporters at Any Mountain (which is providing 32 extra parking spots) and posted "no parking" signs in certain areas. They've put out trash and recycling bins where

# ENTER, THE PRESIDENT OF THE WORLD

Fans across the globe rejoice as 'Barry' steps to power

by melani sutedja



www.usatoday.com

We know, we know. It's been how many weeks since the streets of Berkeley erupted in impromptu parades, people atop stoplights, and Daily Cal photo-ops on the night of November 4? Whether they are still in awe of our future cabinet or already critical of his foreign policy, students on the home front made it clear that Obama's platform on 'Change' will be the shiz starting 2009.

Yet the 2008 elections have not just been an American election, but a world election as well. What else do you expect when an U.S candidate touches upon multiple intersectionalities? With a Kenyan father, an upbringing in Indonesia, and a Middle Eastern middle name of "Hussein," Obama breaks the royal lineage of last names sounding like "Roosevelt" and "Truman." True, the emergence of organizations called such as "Republicans for Obama" was already foretelling of his diverse support. Yet, by judging on how November 4 is already a national holiday in other parts of the world, it is safe to say that Americans are not the only ones stoked by the results.

In Indonesia, where Obama lived from 1967 to 1971, fans have created the "Good Luck Barry" group, titled after the name he went by in his schoolyard days—Barry Sotero. According to an MSNBC report, children at Obama's former school celebrated his victory as they gathered to watch his acceptance speech, which many didn't understand, but elatedly absorbed. Regarded as a "native son" in Indonesia whose "modest beginnings, captured this country's imagination," according to the report, Obama represents hope that those in their situation can someday step foot in places like the White House. While the children back in Indonesia's Menteng Elementary most likely don't know his policies, Obama nevertheless stands for more than improving race relations. He insinuates a better political climate between the two countries, and an especially better rep for America, whose hostile track record with the 'War on Terror' has not made it a favorite with Muslim-populated countries like Indonesia.

Many also see his victory as a potential source of help to the global economic crisis, which many argue was exacerbated in part by the United States' mortgage dilemma.

While Indonesian President Susilo Yudhoyono has been public about his support for Obama, he also has expectations that the new President can now possibly lead the world out of its financial quagmire. At a press conference, he stated that the United States can now "take concrete steps to deal with the global financial crisis... triggered by the credit crunch in the United States." According to a Bloomberg wire, Yudhoyono also hopes "America can take part in the effort to cope with climate change and global warming."

Yet, the gathering sense of simultaneous pressure and support are not only within

Indonesia, but other continents as well. Near his family's homestead in Kenya, crowds not only rejoiced until dawn at news of the United States' first black president, but declared a national holiday in Obama's honor.

Obama clearly has support from the place of his roots. In one picture, elated crowds in the Kenyan village of Kogelo lift Obama's half-brother Malik in the air—the caption reads: "We are going to the White House." As Reuters found in their series of "Postcard to U.S President," which chronicles messages to the new US president from citizens worldwide, many are aware of the victory's revolutionary implications. Bob Wekesa of Nairobi, for example, beams that Obama should be "president of the world rather than the president of the US" since "people have actually voted for you even if they are not US citizens."

Others, however, express simultaneous feelings of concern. In the Reuters' findings, Nairobi residents ask that Obama "improve the trade relations between Africa and the western countries," or "help our African countries where our people are dying of hunger, please come in and assist this countries." As with similar sentiments from those in India asking him to help fight the dispute in the Himalayas or those in Cuba wanting to end the U.S blockade, Obama's image has shifted from that of a politician, to that of an international humanitarian.

An international bevy of high expectations obviously awaits the incoming President, especially at a time when a global financial crisis is worsening the global famine, military deployment in the Middle East is up in the air, and all eyes look towards this new cabinet for answers. Yet how reasonable is it for us to put the weight of the world on one man? Realistically speaking, the incoming President may have time to only tackle two big issues during his first two years in office — alleviating the economy and maneuvering out of the war in Iraq—and some constituents may become aggravated. The tendency to idolize Obama further morphs him into a symbol, overlooking the politician, which will likely disillusion the world if any small function goes wrong.

For an election on the home-front, where he himself often downplayed race and glossed over issues of immigration and affirmative action, it is ironic that his skin color is what the rest of the world focuses on. While this election does command historical recognition for changing the visage of Americana, it is also important to recognize that it will mask institutionalized inequities that still persist by using the "if he can do it, there is no excuse" rhetoric. Nevertheless, we are slowly creating the stepping stones for more "Barrys" to rise above the glass ceiling. Hey, maybe there will be a couple of female ones too.



www.huffingtonpost.com, www.nytimes.com and www.ap.google.com

The world celebrates with Barack Obama's historic presidential win. From left to right: Jakarta, Indonesia, New Delhi, India and Obama, Japan.

# Why all the fuss?

by annie cho



<http://www.dailymail.co.uk>

**Ever since I was in middle school,** my mom would tell me to eat more because my height was the only thing that couldn't be fixed, and that I wouldn't grow unless I ate more. She would do this when I would complain that I was too short, too fat, too flat, too... anything that I found imperfect about my body. When I told her that if I followed her suggestion, I would just get fatter and not taller, she would tell me that I could fix that when I was older too. Recently, she brought up the idea of my getting the popular double-eyelid surgery when my family goes to Korea in two summers. "I mean, you'd look prettier if you did. And it's not a big deal anyway..." she said to me.

And she's right. It's **NOT** a big deal. Double eyelid surgery, also called Asian blepharoplasty, is a procedure that creates an upper eyelid crease. It is one of the least intrusive cosmetic surgeries possible and it is very popular with East Asian women, especially because about 50% of them are not born with the desirable double eyelid fold, according to Edward Kwak, a New York Plastic surgeon, on his website [www.eskfps.com](http://www.eskfps.com). In 2000, the American Society of Plastic Surgeons ranked eyelid surgery number three on the list of most popular cosmetic surgery after liposuction and breast augmentation. The procedure ranks number one in Asia.

## Before



## After



[www.dailymail.co.uk](http://www.dailymail.co.uk)

What I really don't understand is why there is such negative stigma about double eyelid surgery. Yes, I understand that double eyelid surgery has some negative history in that it was a westernization of Asian ideals of beauty, and that there is backlash in the Asian American community about double eyelid surgery. In an article by Sandy Kobrin titled "Asian-Americans Criticize Eyelid Surgery," published in 2004 by Women's eNews, Dr. Charles Lee, a plastic surgeon who specializes in double eyelid surgery, says, "The increase is due to more exposure to Western goods, culture and makeup in China. It has been that way a long time in Korea and surgery there has been popular

since the 1950s." In the article, the procedure was described as "self-mutilation."

But there are two sides to this story. In the before mentioned article, Lee also says "In Asia, people don't see it as ethnically altering the same way they do here... we believe we are just trying to make them look prettier. Just a prettier Asian eye, not a Western eye." I find this an important point because it's not that the double eyelid is simply a "western" trait. According to the statistic I mentioned earlier, about 50% of East Asian women not being born with double eyelids, would mean that the remaining 50% would be born with them. An article written by a CNN staff reporter in 2000 says that "many in the Asian American community argue that the point isn't to look Western, but to look more like other Asians, many of whom have double eyelids naturally."

As for me, I consider double eyelid surgery (and plastic surgery in general) as the same idea as getting braces. Of course there are people who need to have braces for a medical reason, but most people get them to have straighter teeth and more appealing smiles. Having braces involves a prolonged process of forcibly pulling and pushing the teeth into a straight, non-overlapping alignment. This can cost anything from \$4,800 to \$6,500 for children and more for adults, as their teeth are more permanently rooted and require more time and work to realign, according to a website edited by orthodontists Dr. David Resch and Dr. William S. Becker, located at [www.bracesguide.com](http://www.bracesguide.com). On the other hand, double eyelid surgery con-

**"My stance is that if someone wants to do it and has the means to, then why try to stop them? If it's going to make them feel confident enough to go out and do something with their lives without feeling self-conscious, then I am all for that."**

sists of a very short procedure that, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, costs around \$2,500, and the procedure could be performed for less in Asia. I'll leave you to do the math and cost-benefit analysis.

Fact is, the first thing that someone sees about you is your outer appearance, as much as I think that personality is important. Think about all those cliché-sounding studies that showed that more attractive people get farther in life or are more successful in their careers. Wouldn't that make anyone want to be more attractive? I'm not advocating that people shouldn't care at all about the inner beauty and nonchalantly go under the knife and fix whatever little thing they find wrong. My stance is that if someone wants to do it and has the means to, then why try to stop them? If it's going to make them feel confident enough to go out and do something with their lives without feeling self-conscious, then I am all for that.

Maybe one year, after a summer in Korea, I will come back and look "different." Maybe it'd be because of the new hairstyle, or the "fobbed-out" outfit, or maybe, just maybe, because my eyes look different. But really, if this "different" is a good kind of different, then why the fuss?

# Negotiating the Third Space

by yining chou

## What Asian American clubs say about Asian American identity

On a campus where 45% of the undergraduates are Asian American, I've sometimes wondered at the presence of social clubs, community service organizations, performance troupes and the like built along lines of Asian ethnic identity. I, and perhaps others, tend to imagine ethnically-based groups as sidelined minorities uniting for the preservation of their interests, or as having a distinct cultural flavor and purpose. At UC Berkeley, Asian Americans constitute the majority and rarely appear to be oppressed. The bulk of Asian Americans I'm acquainted with seem so Americanized that I doubt their ethnic roots can color their organization in any substantial way.

My idea of ethnic organizations as being centered around culture and advocacy makes Theatre Rice easier for me to understand. A self-described modern Asian American theater group, it is shaped by the cultural aspects of the members' backgrounds as much as it is by their artistic visions. Theatre Rice's current director, fourth year Yue Tu, sees part of the their purpose as counteracting the absence of Asians in campus theater productions. "I think the best way to change perception is through action. In Theatre Rice, we actually act upon what we're going out to say – change perception [by giving] people the opportunity to perform," he says.

Whereas both Asians and non-Asians participate in their productions, and although their pieces rarely cover Asian-specific topics, the club is doing something that makes sense in the context of what I expected. To an extent, Theatre Rice acts in response to pressures within and without the Asian American community that limit its members from entering the entertainment industry. Commenting on the pressures within, Tu says "[My family] never put an emphasis on theater and performance. For a lot of Asian Americans, parents don't stress

"It could be that my intuitive conception of Asian Americans centers on their separation from American society, their connection with their countries of origin and their insistence on maintaining that distinction. This idea of mine would make Asian American clubs just islands of Asians trying to preserve their differences in America. "Asian American" as a single term then has no meaning; I've set up a dichotomy in which people have to be either Asian or American."

the arts in terms of really performing... the arts are often a way of teaching method. For example, a lot of [kids] are taught instruments not because parents want them to become great violinists or pianists, but because they want them to learn hard work." These internal pressures aren't the only restrictions Theatre Rice wants to address, though. "When there's a casting call, the parts are not written for Asian Americans. A casting director would probably not cast an Asian American for Romeo and Juliet, or Superman, or Batman." Tu continues, "No Asian American has ever won a 'Best Actor' or 'Best Actress.' Role models in the entertainment industry have traditionally not been Asian American."

Reflecting on my acceptance of Theatre Rice as an Asian American organization, though, alerts me to a vaguely disturbing thought. What allows Theatre Rice to better fit my idea of an ethnically-based group is my recognition of its outsider status. While not traditionally Asian, Theatre Rice

does place more of an emphasis on their relationship to Asian culture, and show how that relationship puts them in tension with the mainstream. It could be that my intuitive conception of Asian Americans centers on their separation from American society, their connection with their countries of origin and their insistence on maintaining that distinction. This idea of mine would make Asian American clubs just islands of Asians trying to preserve their differences in America. "Asian American" as a single term then has no meaning; I've set up a dichotomy in which people have to be either Asian or American.

Before coming to college I read Eric Liu's memoir, *The Accidental Asian: Notes of a Native Speaker*, in which he observes that his father became "a different kind of Asian" after immigrating to the US from China. The phrase struck me at the time, but I forgot about it until I visited Cal Queer & Asian (Cal Q&A). Then I began struggling for a new term to describe this group that my dichotomy didn't work to define.

Like Theatre Rice, the need for Cal Q&A came about due to the need for Asians to be included in certain communities – here, specifically, the queer community. As one of the club chairs observes, "Queer culture is almost an entirely different culture... and a lot of it is dominated by white people." Because of this, he says, Berkeley needs "a space for people who identify as Asian and queer to get together – kind of a support group where we... interact with people who face the same intersectionality." Indeed, after listening to the club members discuss what it means for them to be both queer and Asian, it's evident that there are concerns here that wouldn't be as easily addressed in a purely queer-focused or Asian-focused group. "There's this big stereotype that Asians

are the model minority... people expect that you'll be able to achieve a lot of stuff, always be the straight-A student in class and accomplish a lot," says a freshman girl. She juxtaposes this to the pressures she feels as a lesbian: "Being gay means being defined by what you can't do. You can't get married, have a child, visit your partner in the hospital."

The intersectionality Cal Q&A members face is further emphasized by Charlie Trung Nguyen, who brings up a similar conflict as a gay Asian American male. "Being queer didn't mesh with what I was raised to be," he says. Many Asian cultures have a high expectation for sons to carry on the family line, and this is an expectation Trung couldn't meet. "Being queer means you can never bear children... it's so important in my family to pass on a name. I'm the oldest male... I was seen as the one who would make the family proud. Being queer was definitely not something that would make my family proud."

What makes these sorts of statements a direct



Students of Theatre Rice, a self-described Asian American theater group, participate in a workshop to prepare for their upcoming production. [theatrerice.smugmug.com](http://theatrerice.smugmug.com)

challenge to my dichotomies is this: although not all issues discussed in club meetings are explicitly linked to the members' ethnic backgrounds, the examples given above are. The problems of "model minority" and familial structures are specific to Asians in America, and by bringing them up, Cal Q&A becomes, in a sense, a space for expressing ethnic identity. But at the same time, this is a very non-traditional form of expression, because many Asian countries do not yet have open discourse on queer sexuality. Mainstream American society is not highly attentive to queer Asian culture either, and given this situation, there's obviously no ready-made niche for Cal Q&A anywhere. What these youth of Asian origin are doing in Berkeley is creating a link between racial and sexual subcultures to the racial and sexual mainstream – and doing this in a single space.

This may be what Liu meant by "a different kind of Asian." The youth of Cal Q&A have come to express their Asian-ness differently than their parents, perhaps differently from their counterparts overseas, taking what they've received from two cultures, processing it through their own experience, and synthesizing it into something distinctly their own. Unlike what I initially expected an Asian American club to be, Cal Q&A is neither duplicating an Asian culture nor being completely absorbed into the American one.

Many of my original assumptions about Asian American student groups were wrong. Some of the empirical facts were incorrect; Asian Americans are marginalized more than I was willing to recognize, as proven by Theatre Rice and Cal Q&A. More importantly, however, I had a conception of Asian American identity that I recognize in retrospect to be too rigid. It's perfectly fine for Asian Americans to assist each other in entering the larger American community, it's perfectly fine for them to fight for their rights as a group. There's more to it, though, because instead of discussing them in terms of outsider status, it's equally necessary for me to recognize them as possessing a hybrid identity. Asian Americans occupy a third space, which is to be understood not in terms of where they've come from or the larger world they currently dwell in, but their assembly of varied parts into a distinctly unique whole.

# the princess of nebraska

## Film Review

by katherine bai

"The Princess of Nebraska," debuted last month on screens across the country... computer screens, that is.

Wayne Wang, director of popular films such as *The Joy Luck Club* and *Maid in Manhattan*, released his newest feature film on YouTube, allowing viewers everywhere to access the film for free. Garnering 200,000 views, a number that continues to grow, *The Princess of Nebraska* is able to reach far more viewers online than through limited-releases in select cities as a low-key, independent film.

The film follows Sasha (Ling Li), a product of post-revolution China, as she travels to San Francisco for an abortion. A Chinese exchange student at a school in Omaha, Nebraska, Sasha becomes pregnant after a one-night stand with her friend Yang back in Beijing. Though Yang is never seen, his presence looms throughout the film.

Sasha's recklessness drives her to shoplift, entertain businessmen as an escort, consider prostitution, attempt to sell her unborn child, and explore a sexual friendship with a bar hostess. In one poignant scene, Sasha is asked why she had sex with her friend Yang, to which she replied, "It was summer, and we were bored." Through these simple words, Wang captures the essence of the new generation of Chinese youth, one that he illustrates as aimless and independent, a stark contrast to traditional Chinese values.

While the concept of the film presents an interesting perspective on the new Chinese generation, the storyline meanders and the presentation tries too hard to be meaningful. The opening scene is long and

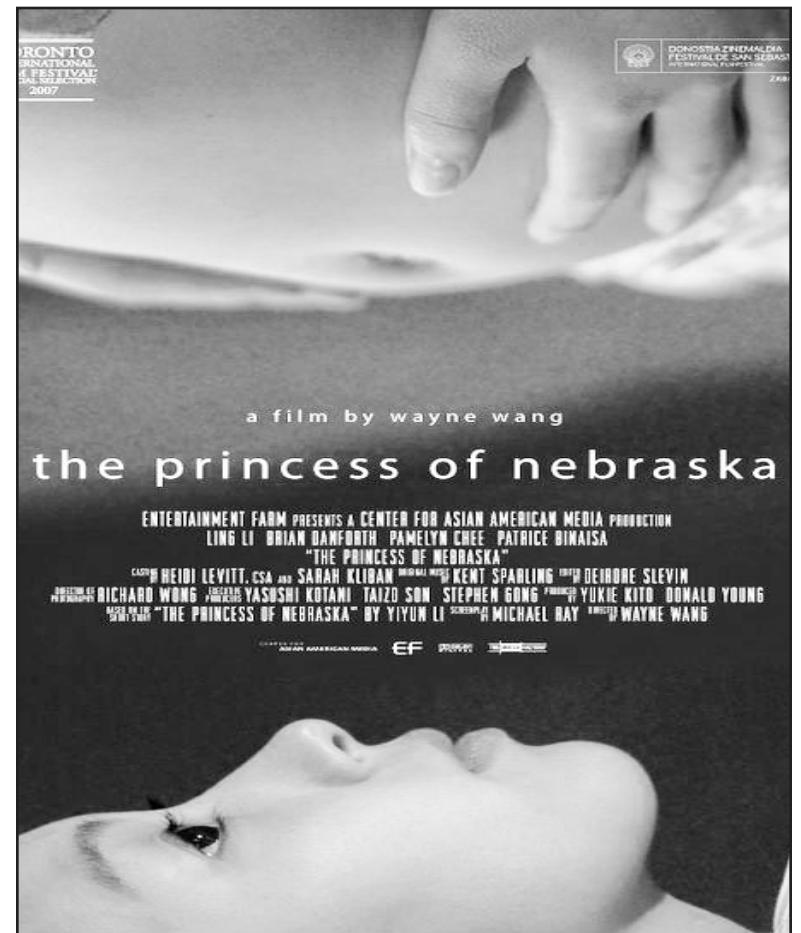
superfluous, with only shots of Sasha's red heels. Often times, very obvious ideas are forced upon the audience, in attempt to seem insightful and interesting. Sasha's rebellious nature is exaggerated and tested in too many situations to be realistic, and sometimes comes off contrived. Her angst-filled responses in a dinner party scene are ridiculous, and make the film appear cheap and underdeveloped.

However, the film is beautifully shot, with interesting intermittent cell phone video narratives separating scenes. There are many subtle contrasts,

To watch this movie go to:  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKgbIz6CM\\_E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKgbIz6CM_E)

such as a naval ring piercing Sasha's pregnant belly, her accusations that Americans cannot understand the Chinese while she herself acts like a typical American teenager, and rebellious Chinese youth singing along to traditional Chinese songs when entertaining seedy American businessmen.

Overall, "The Princess of Nebraska" is a heavy and confusing film, with the final outcome entirely ambiguous. While the themes are relevant to the Asian American community today, the film does a poor job in conveying the issues facing a new generation of Chinese youth as they enter the world with views deviating from tradition. However, *The Princess of Nebraska* is a worthwhile film to watch, with the sheer convenience of being only a click away.



The movie poster for "The Princess of Nebraska." Photo Courtesy of <http://www.movie-list.com>

# ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES RECOMMENDATIONS

compiled by  
annie kim noguchi

Here at **hardboiled**, we do more than research issues, write profound articles, and layout breathtaking pages. Surprised? Don't be! We also attend classes, like many of you beautiful readers hopefully do. And so here, straight from the bosoms of **hardboiled** staff and editors, are some of our top picks for Asian American Studies courses offered here at Berkeley! Take one, take two, take four... Just take them dammit!, as our lovely Internal Managing Editor Alice Tse urges, and make sure you pay attention and go to section every week. Trust us. It's worth it.

### CLASS: ASAMST 20B Intro to Contemporary Issues in the Asian American Communities

PROFESSOR: Harvey Dong (Spring 07)

REVIEWER: Alex Tagawa, 2nd year, Asian Am Studies

ALEX SAYS: This class teaches you all of the basic information that you need to know about Asian American communities and the ways in which they have become the way that they are today. Harvey is really interesting when he starts to talk about the Asian American Movement because he was an active participant during his days at Cal. Most of his lectures contain some story about something he's been involved in, which makes some of the more boring topics a little more interesting.

### CLASS: ASAMST 122 Japanese American History

PROFESSOR: Jere Takahashi (Fall 07)

REVIEWER: Michael Mikawa, 4th, Asian Am Studies and Economics

MICHAEL SAYS: Jere is awesome. He teaches you the intricacies of Japanese American history that are often unknown. He enjoys showing material through the medium of film. Readings were both historical and contemporary!

### CLASS: ASAMST 126 Southeast Asian Migration and Community Formation

PROFESSOR: Khatharya Um (Fall 08)

REVIEWER: Alex Tagawa, 2nd, Asian Am Studies

ALEX SAYS: Going into this class, I knew nothing about the Southeast Asian refugee experience and community, but Professor Um really helped to open my eyes to many of the issues surrounding this group of people. Her lectures are very eloquent and interesting because she uses many personal

examples or ones that she gained through her own research. I learned the history of the Southeast Asian refugees that high school history textbooks choose to leave out. I learned facts that I would never have learned if I didn't take this class.

### CLASS: ASAMST 141 Law in Asian American Communities

PROFESSOR: Tom Fleming (Fall 08)

REVIEWER: Elaine Chen, 3rd, Political Science/Asian Am Studies Minor and Education Minor

ELAINE SAYS: Aside from the ridiculous and crazy discussions we have in class about what is just, what is racist, and what is morally right, this class gives great insight into how the law affects Asian Americans. From Korematsu to Prop 209, the professor (who is a lawyer himself) pushes students to critically think about real life scenarios involving Asian Americans and the Asian American community. Really vital for Asian American students, since it'll equip you with the knowledge on important topics such as affirmative action, hate speech, and more.

REVIEWER: Michael Mikawa, 4th, Asian Am Studies and Economics

MICHAEL SAYS: It inspired me to go to law school. Interesting lectures along with fascinating material about civil rights, discrimination, and the law.

### CLASS: ASAMST 171 Asian Americans in Film (Spring 08)

PROFESSOR: Elaine Kim

REVIEWER: Elaine Chen, 3rd, Political Science/Asian Am Studies Minor and Education Minor

ELAINE SAYS: Besides getting to be in a course taught by the badass Elaine Kim, this course will really open your eyes to the world of film, and the Asian American role within cinema.

Although taking this class will inevitably ruin your perception of certain films because of the stereotypes that you now begin to see perpetuated in them (i.e. TOM CRUISE IS THE LAST SAMURAI?), you'll begin to have a newfound respect for all those Asian American actors and directors trying to make it out there in the big world. Plus, at one point, you get to watch feature-length films in the class for free!

### CLASS: ASAMST 172 Asian American Literature (Fall 07)

PROFESSOR: Elaine Kim

REVIEWER: Eunice Kwon, 2nd, Intended Asian Am Studies/Peace and Conflict Studies

EUNICE SAYS: This class was my favorite of the semester. Not only is Professor Kim super legit, the books are interesting to read and to discuss. I had some trouble with attendance... but I still learned a lot whenever I actually made it to class. I don't know if you guys would have the same GSI, but I had Sylvia Chan and she was very well organized and a pleasure to learn from. Plus, sometimes Professor Kim would bring her dogs and we got to pet them while we were having our discussions. Definitely take this class, definitely go as often as possible.

### CLASS: ASAMST 190 Creative Writing

PROFESSOR: Fae Myenne Ng (Summer 08)

REVIEWER: Katherine Nguyen, 5th, Mass Comm/Asian Am Studies Minor

KAT SAYS: It changed my life. It's a small class so we were able to do a lot of writing and workshops. Summer weather also made it pleasant to be indoors and discussing stories while drinking lemonade. The professor was amazing and continuously supportive and helpful.



# JUST Nice Guys?



From left to right:  
Wesley Chan  
Ted Fu  
Philip Wang

Three Asian American directors break into the directing field and struggle to realize what obligations being "Asian American" brings for them

If their t-shirts franchise and online videos didn't emphasize it enough, Wong Fu directors Philip Wang, Ted Fu, and Wesley Chan proved themselves to be just the ordinary, nice guys they advertise themselves to be. Although this was my third time interacting with them, the reality of their normalcy was still a little off-putting, since it resulted in our formal interview slowly tumbling from something like an interrogation and then into a discussion about race, Hollywood, and the obligations of representing the Asian American community. Limited by an hour and confined in the Asian Pacific American Student Development (APASD) office, **hardboiled** shared a conversation with the three Wong Fu guys to get an insider's look on what it's like to be rising Asian American directors in a world where Asian Americans aren't nearly represented enough.

Although we would have loved to publish a professional, clean, articulate interview with the three guys in this last issue of the semester, the interview that we actually had with the guys largely consisted of the majority of us struggling to find the right words to express our thoughts, in ways the other party would understand. Admittedly, it was largely **hardboiled's** fault for assuming that all Asian Americans have taken an ethnic studies course here on campus, so it was not surprising that our conversation was mostly awkwardness, fumbling, and struggling to not sound racist.

Coming into the interview, I was determined to stump them with "hard" questions, pushing the three to reveal their thoughts on the very community they represented. Did they consider themselves Asian American directors? Did they want to even be associated with that term? Was it all just a coincidence that they use Asian American actors in their pieces? Do they feel an obligation to the Asian American community with their popularity?

But I soon realized that as easy as these questions were to throw at these up-and-coming directors, they were not as easy to answer. This was made clear with my first question about Asian Americans in their films. Here is an excerpt:

**hardboiled**

hb: When you guys approach your filmmaking, do you have a specific audience in mind? I notice that most of the video shorts you've done include actors that are Asian American. Is there a specific reason for that?

wc: The question is itself kind of funny because you wouldn't go up students filming and ask, "hey I see in a lot of your works you have bunch of white people, is there a reason for that?" It shouldn't really matter who we choose... Like if we choose an Asian story of course we're going to use Asians. But we are telling regular stories and "regular" shouldn't have to be Caucasian. If Caucasian people use Caucasian people you're not going to question it... but if Asian people use Asian people, why do people expect that we shouldn't?

**hardboiled**

hb: So do you think white experiences and Asian American experiences are easily transferable and similar?

wc: For the most part our everyday stories we tell are universal. There are certain bits of our characters that seem more Asian American than others: they're shy, they're kind of nice guys, right? Besides Yellow Fever, is there an Asian American story that we've told?

pw: That's true, we haven't actually targeted, at least story wise, an Asian American issue but we do try. I think how it is is that we are afraid of people just looking at us and saying that we're Asian American and we're just going to do Asian American stuff. I think that kind of pigeonholes yourself. And once you do that, it limits the potential you have to represent that Asian American community. I think if people just draw the line at "all they do is Asian American things" it kind of stops us before we are able to say, "Well look at what else we can do..." If we get those opportunities to do other things, it'll speak something for us. So I guess what Wes was trying to say was that we don't like to draw attention to it that this is an Asian American short with Asian American people.

**hardboiled**

hb: So basically you would like to de-emphasize that your characters are Asian American.

wc: Not de-emphasize, draw attention.

tf: It's apparent enough that we are Asian American, we don't have to stuff it down your throat and say "it's all about Asian Americans."

wc: When there is a story that requires us to emphasize it we will.

pw: We definitely want people to know and recognize that we are Asian American and we're very proud of that and we're proud of our audience and grateful that we represent them. We're not trying to stuff it down people's throat. We want them to look at the work for what it is. We don't want people to like it just cause its Asian American and say, "I gotta like it cause its Asian American" even from our own community. We don't want white people to be like "oh, I don't like it because it's Asian American." Just look at the story and hopefully look at it colorblind and if you enjoy it, enjoy it.

by elaine chen with alice tse

It was here when I realized that representing yourself as an Asian American out in the real world is not as clear-cut as I had initially assumed. The innumerable dilemmas that Asian American directors face are made even more complicated because of the very fact that these directors are... Asian American. The supposedly simple question of "what should I make my film about" is instantly burdened with other thoughts of "what could I do to represent my community" "what issues about Asian Americans do I want to make more apparent" "how do I reach people without isolating others?" "how can I create a film that I like?"

It seems unfair that directors of color have this additional burden. Of course it'd be ideal for us to all transcend race, as Ted idealistically notes in the middle of our interview, but we can't deny the current status quo: that our race is with us from the start. Being in the public eye and having considerable influence as a director of color means you are given a whole additional set of responsibilities.

So what are the three Wong Fu guys going to do now? Although they've been in the public eye for years now, gaining larger and larger hordes of frothing-at-the-mouth teenage and college fangirls/fanboys, what can they do to outreach to the Asian American community in an "Asian American way"? Other than creating a short that sort of makes some social commentary on the phenomenon of interracial dating and infusing their other video shorts with Asian American actors, what more is being done? Can that be considered enough? During the interview, Philip earnestly asked me, "Do you think we should be doing more? Do you think we should be more vocal about being Asian American?"

Truthfully, there's no definite answer that I can think of. It's not a clear-cut line of "what is enough" and "what you're supposed to do as an Asian American anything" in order to help the community. However, what is clear is the fact that Asian American directors are placed into a unique position of needing to prove themselves as competent, capable, and artistic through their work without having to blatantly say that they even need to prove themselves as Asian Americans. All Asian American directors need to inevitably come to this realization: that as much as race shouldn't matter, it does, and as the Wong Fu guys progress through their career, they will be faced with boundless more scrutiny than any other director solely because they are not white.

Taking these thoughts into consideration, the job that the three Wong Fu guys have is revealed to be something not so simple and easy. Although the three guys are as normal as they claim, the amount of work that they are committing to, within a field that typically excludes or marginalizes Asian Americans, is of great significance at this time. Although, as they repeatedly admit, they are still new and learning, they will hopefully inspire others to follow them towards this very important arena which needs Asian American representation and Asian American voices.



photo by cyrus hung

Wong Fu Directors Wesley Chan, Philip Wang, and Ted Fu introduce themselves at an event hosted by AAA that hardboiled didn't even go to. Apparently it was good. And we missed out. But that's okay, because all their shorts are online at <http://www.wongfuproductions.com>. Check it!

# Disproof and Disparities

New survey reveals unexpected statistics for the Chinese American community

by jennifer ng

On November 12, 2008, the Asian American Studies Program of the University of Maryland in partnership with the Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA) released *A Portrait of Chinese Americans*, an extensive survey of Chinese Americans surveying the Chinese American community with regards to age, population distribution and growth, education levels, job occupations, and marriage.

This study is remarkable for being all-encompassing in surveying the Chinese American community.

Far too often, Chinese Americans are not even considered as a separate group in surveys, but thrown in the vague umbrella term "Asian American." Though those surveys may give insight into the Asian American community as a whole, those survey results cannot be accurately prescribed to individual ethnic groups in the Asian American community, as a particular group might not reflect the trends of the greater Asian American community.

A study that focuses on a specific ethnic group is progress, in terms of the accuracy of information attributed to that group. *Portrait* goes even further by organizing survey results by locale. Chinese Americans are divided in sub-ethnic groups based on locations of origin: Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Chinese Diaspora (those not from the previously mentioned areas). Sub-ethnic groups are compared among each other and the Chinese are compared to other Asian ethnic groups.

*Portrait's* findings serve to invalidate some of the stereotypes that surround Chinese Americans.

A popular one is that Chinese Americans are well-educated and hold advanced degrees. Although the survey reveals that over 50% of Chinese Americans are indeed college-educated and degree-holding, it also shows that a significant percentage, about 20%, of Chinese Americans have less than a high school education.

While the media frequently highlights the Chinese whiz kids enrolled in brand name colleges, the truth is that the percentage of Chinese with less than a high school education is actually

higher than for the general population, 20% versus about 15%.

The stereotype that Chinese are well-educated goes hand in hand with the belief that they all hold well-paid white collar jobs. The reality is that those without at least a high school education, one in five Chinese, probably hold menial-wage occupations in limited fields due to their lower education levels.

Chinese Americans are also perceived to be affluent when the reality is that the Chinese community has a poverty rate of 9.4%; the poverty rate for the general population is 9.8%. It does not make sense for Chinese Americans to be held as a

model minority when their poverty rate is around the same as that of the average American.

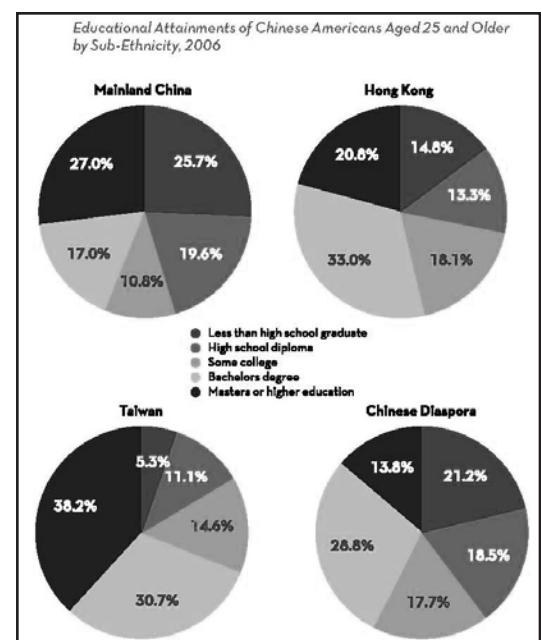
In fact, it is a disservice to Chinese Americans to claim they do not face the same financial issues as everyone else, and that they are somehow immune to poverty, when the survey reveals the facts to be opposite of the conventional belief.

Through such organization, the survey highlights the disparities between sub-ethnic Chinese groups. The median household income for Taiwanese was significantly higher than that of Mainland Chinese, \$91,161 for Taiwanese versus \$70,433 for Mainlanders. A much higher percentage of Mainlanders (16.4%) did not know English, compared to percentages of Hong Kongers and Taiwanese, which were below 3%.

Just as the Asian American community is not homogeneous, the Chinese sub-ethnic groups are significantly distinct from one another. This information will be useful to Chinese community leaders in addressing important issues such low rates of English proficiency that affect certain Chinese subgroups, such as Mainland Chinese, more so than others, like the Taiwanese.

I was surprised to learn of much higher rates of limited education and poverty and of significant disparities between different Chinese groups. This finding certainly wouldn't have been possible if surveyors had not taken care to distinguish between different groups of Chinese Americans, and definitely impossible if they sampled the entire Asian American community.

I hope that *A Portrait of Chinese Americans* will inspire extensive surveys of other Asian ethnic communities. Those surveys would probably reveal accurate and precise statistics about the surveyed group, which in turn might aid community leaders in resolving the unique problems that distinct ethnic communities face, just as *Portrait* could do for the Chinese community.



<http://www.aast.umd.edu/PortraitofChinesesAmericans.pdf>

**A significantly larger proportion of Mainland Chinese group have less than a high school graduate education compared to the Taiwanese population.**



## HARDBOILED DECEMBER PLAYLIST

### REVOLUTION OF THE MIND

HEADQUARTERS: BERKELEY, CA

GENRE: HIP-HOP

LATEST RELEASE: REBEL RAP

CHECK THEM OUT IF YOU LIKE: HIEROGLYPHICS, ZION I

HEAR THEM AT: [MYSPACE.COM/REVOLUTIONOFTHEMINDHIPHOP](http://myspace.com/revolutionofthemindhiphop)

### THE BLACK KIDS

HEADQUARTERS: JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

GENRE: INDIE POP, DANCE ROCK

LATEST RELEASE: PARTIE TRAUMATIC

CHECK THEM OUT IF YOU LIKE: FRANZ FERDINAND, THE CURE

HEAR HER AT: [MYSPACE.COM/BLOCKKIDSROCK](http://myspace.com/blackkidsrock)

### MEIKO

HEADQUARTERS: LOS ANGELES, CA

GENRE: POP, FOLK

LATEST RELEASE: MEIKO

CHECK HER OUT IF YOU LIKE: COLBIE CAILLAT, IN-

GRID MICHAELSON

HEAR HER AT: [MYSPACE.COM/MEIKO](http://myspace.com/meiko)

### JOYCE KWON

HEADQUARTERS: BERKELEY, CA

GENRE: JAZZ, WORLD MUSIC

UPCOMING RELEASE: COMING SOON!

PERFORMING LIVE ON DECEMBER 5TH AT  
HERTZ HALL, UC BERKELEY (12:10PM)

CHECK HER OUT IF YOU LIKE: ASTRUD GILBERTO, MILES DAVIS

HEAR HER AT: [MYSPACE.COM/JOYCEKWON](http://myspace.com/joycekwon) (OR [JOYCEKWON.COM](http://joycekwon.com))

### VIVA LA UNION

HEADQUARTERS: LOS ANGELES, CA

GENRE: ALTERNATIVE ROCK

UPCOMING RELEASE: CHINESE BABY

CHECK THEM OUT IF YOU LIKE: U2, SWITCHFOOT

HEAR THEM AT: [MYSPACE.COM/VIVALAUNIONMUSIC](http://myspace.com/vivalaunionmusic)



FIVE ASIAN AMERICAN ARTISTS AND MUSICIANS TO CHECK OUT