

ISSUE 11.3

# hardboiled

## cinemas

PRESENTS

A HARDBOILED PRODUCTION

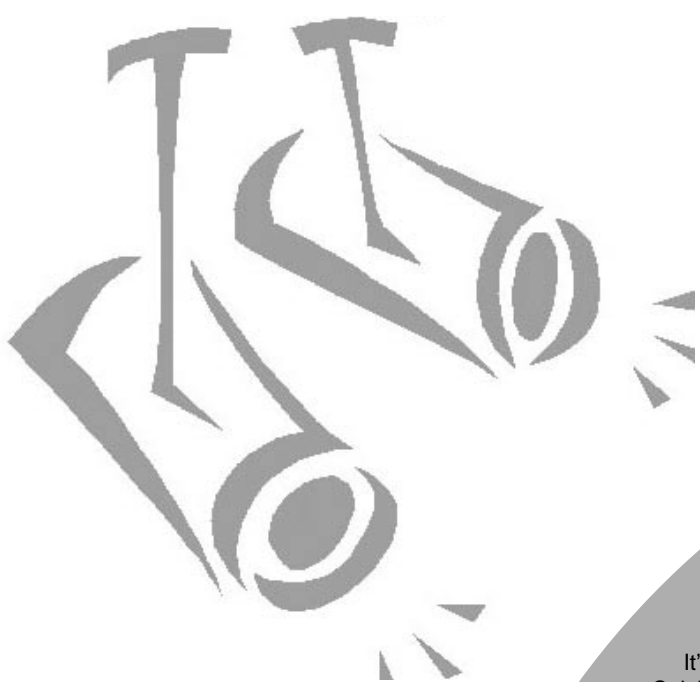
# THE HIDDEN EPIDEMIC

A TRUE STORY

DECEMBER 2007

ALSO NOW PLAYING

- Arranged Marriages
- Reach! ShadowNite
- Better Luck Last Time



# hardboiled

## 11.3 december 2007

### editor's note

It's the last week of what's quite possibly been both the longest and quickest semester of my four years here at Cal. By the time I figure out how that is or isn't a contradiction, the week'll be over and finals will have begun. Things will get hectic, sleep will be missed, and folks may end up just packing up and moving into Doe, Cory, or wherever it is people go to inhale books. Times like these, I tend to get nostalgic on the semester – it reminds me of when my hair wasn't whitening exponentially and it's a good way of putting off even more work.

This past Veteran's Day Weekend, I attended the Students of Color Conference held at UC Santa Cruz. The three-day conference, put on by the University of California Students Association, was filled with workshops, caucuses, and random deer, but the highlight of the event for me came early on with one of the opening speakers, Eden Jequinto. Eden's a UCSC alum who works with youth in Oakland, and for 35-plus minutes, she proceeded to deliver the most amazing address I've heard, period. It was like watching maggots at work the way she was breaking shit down. YouTube "Eden Jequinto," load up all six clips of that speech, and press rewind if she hasn't blown your mind.

While Eden was pretty much on point for her entire speech, the thing that Eden said that stuck with me the longest, that I've still been trying to handle since that conference, is that we need to heal ourselves. I mean, on some levels, it's a pretty basic thing to grasp – we got to heal. We stretch ourselves more than any doll named Armstrong ever could, and we are amazing because of that. But we ain't unbreakable, and we do need to heal. We do need to slow things down, we do need to live out what gives us joy, whatever that may be.

Especially for those of y'all who not only get shit done in the classes, but are out there in the community working for change, you gots to heal. For the scholar activists and activist scholars out there, there's a sense of urgency to the work you do because the work you do affects more than you. But that doesn't mean that we don't need to heal as well, and in many ways, it's that much more a necessity because of how difficult it is to make the world outside right when you can't say the same for yourself. So I plead to my activist folks to take care of yourselves too.

And I'm aware of the irony/blatant hypocrisy of me calling for us to heal ourselves when I'm writing this note at 4 in the morning, day before we go to print, sipping on the 16oz can of caffeinated piss that is Rockstar Energy Drink. While I'm trying to figure out how many minutes of my life each progressive sip takes away, I'm starting to think about how little I've done this semester to try and heal myself. I've been lucky it hasn't caught up to me just yet, but I'll put it out there that I know I'm going to have to start getting some healing done. What good is my advice if I don't even take it?

So hardboiled, we're going to work on this one together. You and me are gonna work on healing ourselves. Maybe we can even work on healing each other, but let's not get ahead of ourselves. One step at a time, now.

Much props to hardboiled staff for the amazing work y'all have done this semester. 14 weeks past that first meeting and we've produced three issues of issues, pertinent knowledge about the Asian American communities. There aren't a whole lot of spaces on this campus for us to come together and do this sort of work, and I'm thankful for getting to work with y'all.

brian lau  
story editor

#### STORY EDITORS

brian lau  
naomi oren  
lina peng  
pauline sze

#### MANAGING EDITOR

matt hui

#### LAYOUT EDITORS

wendy gu  
kory hui

#### INTERNS

eunice kwon  
katherine nguyen  
annie kim noguchi  
alice tse  
stephanie wu

#### CONTRIBUTING STAFF

davin chang  
albert chen  
crissy chung  
maria kim  
susan moua  
michelle nguyen  
jennifer phung  
yer yang

#### COVER ART

maria kim

### in this issue

- 3 Celebrating Asian American Women
- 4 Where is my "Shadow"?
- 5 Running to End Human Slavery
- 6 House of Broken Tiles
- 7 Down the Aisle
- 8 Race to Disgrace: Number 4
- 9 Better Luck Last Time
- 10 Interview with Connie Lim
- 11 Thai: My Life & Rhymes
- 12 Little Tokyo in Danger?

#### Contact Us!

10 Eshleman Hall  
MC 4500

University of California  
Berkeley, CA 94720

[hardboiledmagazine@lists.berkeley.edu](mailto:hardboiledmagazine@lists.berkeley.edu)

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

hb meetings  
Wednesdays 6-7PM  
247 Dwinelle  
[hardboiled.berkeley.edu](http://hardboiled.berkeley.edu)



# Celebrating Asian American Women

by wendy gu

The 1st Annual Celebration of Asian American Women dinner took place in Pauley Ballroom on Friday, November 9 with the purpose of honoring the achievements of Asian American women. This event was hosted by Asian American Public Leaders and Asian Pacific American Theme Housing.

The evening began slowly with a long seating period and entertainment by UC Jazz and the Golden Overtones being moved up in the program to fill up this time. Dinner began with a request for the men present to show their appreciation for Asian American women by serving the women their food and drink. This gesture eliminated the need for a serving staff but received a mixed response from attendees because half the dinner guests were unexpectedly forced to work for their meal. Even amongst the women being served, there were some who felt the gesture was patronizing.

The purpose of the evening was found to be similarly ambiguous as dinner progressed. Speakers and performers covered subjects as varied as the need for Asian American bone marrow donors, Asian American political leaders, and Chinese folk dance. The variety of topics introduced caused the CAAW event to feel like an advertisement, a political platform, and a proponent of East Asian cultural preservation at different points during the evening, while failing to focus on empowering attendees. At the end of the event, attendees were left with an awareness of Asian American women in society but not the means to apply their new knowledge.

The speakers, dancers, and performers who took the stage during dinner showed the strength and diversity of Asian American women.

The organizers of CAAW were able to bring together presenters with backgrounds in public service, activism and the non-profit sector to share their experiences and achievements as Asian American women.

San Francisco School Board Representative Jane Kim spoke about the grassroots campaign that helped her become the youngest elected official in San Francisco. Kim worked with students in San Francisco schools to develop youth leadership and civic engagement and served as the Youth Program Director at Chinatown Community Development Center before beginning her political career. A graduate of Stanford's Asian American Studies program, Kim related experiences from her activist background and advised the activist community at UC Berkeley to find success through building community, building coalitions and knowing their own history.

Keynote speaker Julie Soo related her experiences growing up in a political San Franciscan family and attending UC Berkeley as a pure mathematics and statistics major. Soo serves as the statewide chair of the Democratic Party's Asian Pacific Islander (API) Caucus. Speaker Jan Masoaka recently retired from her highly successful position as chief executive of Compass

// The organizers of CAAW worked [...] to commemorate Asian American women as well as show appreciation for them. //



Photo courtesy of Muttika Chaturabul

**Keynote speaker Julie Soo talks about her political career and her responsibilities as statewide chair of the API Caucus.**

China with skill and precision but they seemed mismatched for CAAW in that this group was not related to honoring Asian American women.

Attendee Emily Wei said, "It was a very cute event. I think the event went well considering it was the first time for the event."

CAAW was modeled after Black Women Appreciation Night, a dinner event hosted by African American fraternity Alpha Phi Alpha (APA) to thank African American women in the Cal community. The organizers of CAAW worked with APA in creating a similar event, but one that seeks to commemorate Asian American women as well as show appreciation for them.

CAAW organizer Mike Yen said, "The idea for CAAW has been around since last spring, but we started working on it this semester." The student group Asian American Public Leaders was formed by the CAAW organizers when they realized the benefit of having student group status in putting on campus events such as CAAW. Future plans of AAPL include a mental health program that would serve Cal students.

Unfortunately, the evening was plagued by avoidable technical difficulties that led to the event starting almost an hour later than the scheduled time and lasting about two hours later than planned. A clip from "The Next Sunrise," a documentary in progress about stereotypes faced by Asian American women, was seen but not heard due to problems with the sound system. A photograph slideshow of early Asian American immigrants was moved up in the program because the borrowed projector needed to be returned to its owner. These mistakes could be easily avoided in future events through better planning.

CAAW had an impressive array of student group sponsors such as the Teo-Chew Association and Vietnamese Student Association, but the noticeable lack of South Asian representation in presenters and audience members could also be improved for future events. Yen said, "We were a small group of organizers and it was the first time many of us worked in a student organization. We had a hard time contacting other student groups and generating interest in the event. We had to put on this event very quickly."

The Celebration dinner ended with another gesture of appreciation for the women present. Male volunteers and organizers of the event gave each female audience members a single rose with more grace than when dinner had been served.

The 1st Annual Celebration of Asian American Women created an entertaining evening that discussed the frequently overlooked accomplishments of Asian American women. Future Celebrations of Asian American Women will hopefully continue to promote positive images of Asian American women and improve on achieving this goal.



Photo courtesy of Muttika Chaturabul

**CAAW attendees enjoy dinner with San Francisco School Board Representative Jane Kim.**

Point Nonprofit Services, a consulting firm serving nonprofit businesses. Masoaka applauded the politeness, sassiness and intelligence of Asian American women and noted the need for leaders of color in the Bay Area to address problems of poverty and health in minority communities.

A performance by spoken word artist Jennii Le proved to be one of the highlights of the evening. Jennii Le read powerful, emotionally charged poems about her Vietnamese roots. Le expressed the pain in the strained relationships between immigrants and their children and encouraged small girls to dream big. Le's poems were especially moving, as many audience members shared her experiences of growing up in an immigrant family.

Theatre Rice performed a skit exploring identity and insecurity called "Counting Sheep," in which a chance encounter at a coffee shop leads to a confrontation between two strangers that force them to face insecurities about aging, homosexuality, appearance, and loneliness. The San Francisco Chinese Folk Dance Association performed the traditional dances of the Korean and Inner Mongolian minority groups in

# WHERE IS MY "SHADOW"?

## ShadowNite provides a new perspective for high school students

by jennifer phung

At Cal, it is quite common to see small groups of people going on campus tours and checking out the Campanile and the buildings. But on November 8, there were about 100 high school students who came to Berkeley to attend ShadowNite. These students did not only come for the campus tour, but also for the various workshops and information about the path towards higher education. ShadowNite, organized by REACH! (The Asian/Pacific Islander Recruitment and Retention Center), is a three day, two night program that brings high school students from central California and the Bay Area to the UC Berkeley campus. From November 8 to 10, high school students from Stockton, Sacramento, Oakland, and Vallejo all participated in interactive workshops, shared common experiences with one another, and stayed with college students while learning about college life.

For ShadowNite, there were different ice-breakers, workshops, and social activities planned for the youth. Among the workshops, the political awareness workshop introduced the youth to a different perspective that is not likely to be taught in school. College students presented a different side of hip-hop to the younger youth. The high school students engaged in discussions about the different types of hip-hop music and artists. They talked about the common themes in hip-hop music, such as racism, challenge of authority, poverty, and youth empowerment. During this workshop, the organizers showed several music videos, talked about the meaning of hip-hop, and pointed out how hip-hop can be used as a form of resistance. In addition, the high school students were also challenged to understand how different hip hop songs are selected for the mainstream. Many students were especially amazed by the spoken word artists that performed that day, which included UC Berkeley students Diana Savangsy, Maurice Seaty, and Sannah Rahim. Their words, voices, and messages helped students understand how this form of expression can be a way for people to deal with their problems in their families, schools, communities, or within their identities.

Besides raising political awareness, ShadowNite strives to offer students academic assistance towards higher education. The participants that ShadowNite recruited were mainly Asian American students. Even though it seems that the Asian American population is doing well in school, certain ethnic groups within the category are less likely to attain higher education and receive academic assistance.

"We outreach to those youth that have potential to succeed in life, but are having difficulties to get to that success due to

limited resources around their communities. In our program, we stress the importance of pursuing any form of higher education to our students -- no matter if it is a community college, CSU, UC, private, or a trade school," said Anna Chiang, one of the coordinators of ShadowNite.

The academic workshop informed students about the different forms of higher education and ways to pay for tuition. Students learned about scholarships, grants, loans, and the FAFSA. Another important aspect of this workshop was the Individual Academic Planner (IAP), which is a form that helps students plan their way to college, based on the completion of the A-G requirements. From this, the high school students were able to figure out what classes or credits they need to

**"When you see the growth of the mentees in terms of knowledge, community awareness, and self-confidence from the day they step in to the day that they leave the program, you will definitely feel that you had made a positive impact on a student's life."**

**- Anna Chiang**  
coordinator of ShadowNite

take in order to graduate from high school.

The political awareness and academic workshops certainly define a big portion of the program, but we must not forget that ShadowNite is also a chance for different students to get a feeling of what college is like. Many high school students may have heard of college, but few of them have actually taken campus tours or even seen how big a college campus is. Thus, ShadowNite is a great opportunity for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to personally experience the college environment. With the college students volunteering as big brothers and big sisters, the high school students can

learn about their mentors' experiences and insights, and understand that college is not just a dream, but can also be a reality for them. In fact, everyone learns from each other and realizes that they have grown a lot out of these three days and two nights.

"I enjoy planning this event because I believe that this event can change lives, not only the high school students' (mentees) lives but the college students' (mentors) lives as well", Chiang said, "I was a past Shadow mentor, and that experience of mentoring a group of students changed my perspective on everything. When you see the growth of the mentees in terms of knowledge, community awareness, and self-confidence from the day they step in to the day that they leave the program, you will definitely feel that you had made a positive impact on a student's life. This feeling is so rewarding; it makes my endless nights of no sleep from planning this event worthwhile."

For every ShadowNite, the most inspiring and memorable part of the event would probably be when the mentors share their life stories and the experiences they had in high school and college. Khristopher Patrick, a participant from Oakland High School, explains the impact of ShadowNite on him: "The intervention that we had on the last day was a real eye opener. I thought the things that I went through were stressful; but I really have nothing to worry about compared to the lives of the people who shared their experiences. Their stories made me want to change the way I live my life and get my priorities in line." Through this activity, the high school students learned about the different struggles that many mentors had faced on their way to higher education. From this process of opening up and sharing personal experiences, the students gained a new perspective and were inspired to persist when faced with their own hardships.

Overall, the ShadowNite event was a success, bringing in different groups of students and providing an eye-opening experience for the students and mentors. Surely, after the event, the students have a better grasp of "college" and are more socially aware about our communities. To those who come from socioeconomically disadvantaged communities, this experience has reassured their dreams and given them the confidence and resources they lacked before in terms of higher education. ShadowNite will definitely continue on, providing more opportunities to students who are in need.

For those who are interested in becoming a mentor, volunteer, houser, or a part of this life-changing event in Spring 2008, please contact the Shadow Coordinators: Anna Chiang, [annachiang@berkeley.edu](mailto:annachiang@berkeley.edu) or Brian Pham, [bpham2006@berkeley.edu](mailto:bpham2006@berkeley.edu).

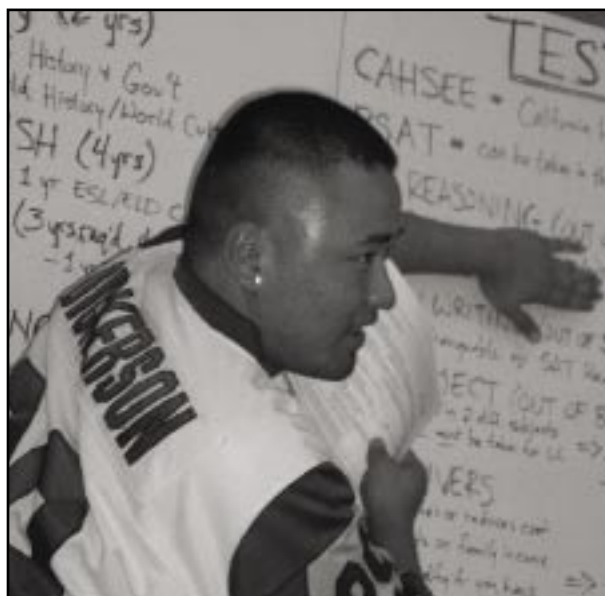


Photo Courtesy of REACH!

College students explain the A-G requirements and other useful information.



Photo Courtesy of REACH!

High school students engaged in activities organized by ShadowNite.



Photo Courtesy of REACH!

High school students learn about the mentors' experiences in applying for scholarships and financial aid.



# Running to End Human Slavery

## Bay Area Freedom Run

by susan moua

At 6:30 AM on a cold Saturday morning, I headed for San Francisco to join fourteen others in the very first Bay Area Freedom Run/Walk. The event, organized by the Students & Artists Fighting to End Human Slavery (SAFEHS), aimed to raise awareness of the human trafficking and slavery that occurs on our own familiar Bay Area streets.

On November 17th, fifteen Cal students and activists walked the six miles of Geary Street, from Embarcadero to 48th, an area along the Tenderloin district in downtown San Francisco. Geary Street was chosen as a reminder that behind its bustling daily traffic, this same street, like many others across the United States, at nightfall and during the wee hours of the morning, becomes witness to human trafficking and slavery.

SAFEHS, founded by Cal graduate student Annie Fukushima, through multimedia art, education and community coalitions aims to create a safe space to define what human slavery/human trafficking means to them and how we are all impacted by this "global phenomenon." In particular, SAFEHS supports artists who use their vision to express perspectives on human slavery. Centering their activities in the Bay Area, SAFEHS launched the Bay Area Freedom Run/Walk this year, raising over a thousand dollars with just fifteen participants. All the money raised will be donated to the Polaris Project ([www.polarisproject.org](http://www.polarisproject.org)), an international organization against human slavery, founded by two Asian American students from Brown University. Fukushima believes the event was a success, "To make the Freedom Run/Walk even possible was a success...it's about raising awareness" she said.

For many of us who walked instead of ran, we encountered supporters, passer-bys, and

others who were simply confused.

Human trafficking statistics are often hard to gather since the most majority of it is conducted underground. The San Francisco Chronicle recently reported that six hundred to eight hundred thousand women and girls are trafficked internationally. San Francisco is one of the major ports used to sexually traffic these women.

What also stands out is that Asians make up about 47 percent of all sex trafficking victims, with the Philippines being the number one exporter of humans being trafficked and 50 percent of all trafficked being children. Asian women who fall victim are often trafficked and exploited by people from their own countries.

They are lured in with false promises of good pay and jobs in wealthier nations but upon arrival find no such treatment. Their passports are often withheld, and then they are forced to work as sexual slaves in a completely unfamiliar environment under harsh conditions, with little chance of leaving. A study by the United Nations attributes 80 percent of prostitution to human trafficking activities.

In the U.S., the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Act of 2000 and its reauthorization in 2003 provide some protection and services for victims of human slavery, but with those convicted of such crimes spending only months in jail, it does little to hinder the ever growing \$8 billion international industry.

No country is immune from human slavery and human trafficking. Human slavery has become a global issue that should

be immediately dealt with. The awareness raised by organizations such as SAFEHS is a good start, particularly if they spur action. Young runners, as young as fifteen were participants of the Freedom Run/Walk. Jamie Moua, a high school student from Fresno, came to San Francisco the weekend of the Freedom Run/Walk to support human rights for victims of human trafficking and slavery. "I'm only in high school but I want to be more involved with issues concerning human rights. I plan to go back to Fresno to inform my high school about the walk." Like the other fifteen runners, Moua found the experience refreshing and inspiring, "It was a small movement but it was powerful."



Photo courtesy of Susan Moua

Jerry Sithiphone, Cindy Moua and Jamie Moua hold "Freedom Run" signs for the public to view.



Photo courtesy of Susan Moua

The Berkeley participants after the Freedom Run. The run started early morning until after noon around Berkeley and Oakland.



Photo courtesy of Susan Moua

Freedom Runners cross the a streetlight on Geary Boulevard.

For more information about  
Students & Artists Fight-  
ing to End Human Slavery  
(SAFEHS), visit their website  
[www.safehs.com](http://www.safehs.com)

# House of Broken Tiles

## Gambling in the Asian American Community

by alice tse

It's called "attack" gambling—wagering everything in a rash attempt to attain the "American Dream"—the most detrimental stage of gambling addiction. Social workers have laid claims that the proliferation of gambling addiction can only lead to other problems including, but not limited to, "domestic violence, identity theft, and bankruptcy," and it affects families and communities, not just individuals. Gambling addiction has become alarmingly endemic in the Asian American community. Because seeking professional help, psychological disorders, and addiction are generally taboo in the Asian American community, only the symptoms of gambling addiction are treated—not the actual disease. Rather than coercing gambling addicts to seek professional help and lose face, families are inclined to give money to cover-up debts and in many ways, supporting and enabling the gambling addiction. Though the Asian American community has been given the honorable insignia of the "Model Minority", it painfully overlooks the fact that today one in eight Asian Americans live in poverty with one in five Asian immigrants having earned less than a high school diploma (AALEAD). Poverty and low levels of education do not lead to gambling addiction but casinos offer an escape and an opportunity to gain great wealth. In a recent survey commissioned by a social service agency in San Francisco's Chinatown, 70% of the residents interviewed ranked gambling as their community's number one problem. The survey also found that at any given moment, Asian American and Asian immigrant patrons can comprise anywhere between

**“Casinos have even begun to target the Asian American community by ‘catering’ to Asian American needs.”**

30% to 80% of the gamblers in casinos all across the nation, despite the fact that Asian Americans are only 5% of the population in America. About 21% of the individuals interviewed by the social service agency in Chinatown described themselves as pathological gamblers and

be arranged (between the parents of the bride and groom), networks to be connected, and friendships to be made. Even today, it is customary to see mah-jongg tables set up at weddings, family get-togethers, and even funerals. Beyond the "socialization factor" in Asian American gambling is the fascination with the properties of luck in many Asian cultures, particularly in the Chinese culture. The New Year, according to the Asian Nation, is a time of "heightened wagering" as the "bad luck" of the old year is replaced by the "good luck" of the New Year. Yet, the very existence of gambling within the cultures does not account for the staggering figures. Casinos have even begun to target the Asian American community, by "catering" to Asian American needs and luring them with Holiday-themed events for Chinese New Year and the Vietnamese Lunar New Year, first-rate popular Asian musical acts, Asian foods—they even go so far as to send free buses to International Districts to bring regulars to their doors where they are greeted by personnel in their native language. They are doing quite a lot to attract these Asian American guests, but what kind of help are they offering to aid

gambling addicts? Some radical reformers have called for a curtailing of casino hours to deter addicts and more moderate critics have insisted that signs in multiple languages with hot-line numbers be posted in clear view in the casinos.

Currently, the California's Office of Problem Gambling is underfunded and under-organized; in 2003, the agency's \$3 million dollar budget, which consists of contributions from 26 Native-American run casinos (without the support 30 other casinos, card rooms, race tracks, or the state lottery), was left unspent entirely. Diane Ujiye, the head of the problem gambling task force, laments that the inadequate budget is "unacceptable...what can you do with \$3 million? Publish a couple of brochures and run a hotline?" In addition to the lack of agencies that are actually well-equipped to help addicts, there is a pressing need to establish more institutions that are specifically tailored for Asian American individuals that hire staff that are bilingual and are sensitive to the Asian mentality as Angela Lee, a recovering gambling addict, describes, "it's shameful [in the Asian culture] to be emotionally weak, so you certainly don't get up and bare your soul before a room full of strangers."

However, the Asian American community is recognizing gambling addiction as a prominent issue and it is mobilizing to help treat addicts. NICOS Chinese Health Coalition, a coalition of healthcare organizations in Chinatown, focuses on researching issues, community mobilization and program implementation in the community, has done an extensive investigation on gambling. In January 2000, NICOS began to work on a campaign to recognize the issue of gambling and developed the Chinatown Community Problem Gambling Project to provide counselors, conduct research, and outreach to the community. As reported in AsianWeek, NICOS has launched an "aggressive media campaign targeting Bay Area Chinese Language newspapers, television, and radio" and has implemented a hot-line that tailors to Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), Korean, Vietnamese, and Russian speakers.

The critical need for institutions and resources that cater to Asian Americans is pressing and though NICOS is making strides in the Bay Area, there are many other cities and Asian Americans throughout the US that are without organizations that accommodate to Asian Americans. As the Asian American population and number of casino grows, it is crucial for the community to unanimously recognize gambling addiction as a problem and move to treat it.



Photo Courtesy of Astrokey44

16% described themselves as problem gamblers. According to Asian Nation, an online information resource about the Asian American community, only 1.6% of Americans are recognized as pathological gamblers and 3% as problem gamblers. Why does this disparity exist?

While gambling addiction is becoming increasingly viewed as problematic, gambling has been prevalent in many Asian cultures and communities through games such as mah-jongg and pai gow. Assunta Ng, a longtime publisher of Northwest Asian Weekly and the Seattle Chinese, offers an explanation, "American guys, they go to bars after work. A lot of guys in Hong Kong, Taiwan, or Vietnam, they gamble. It's an acceptable thing." Furthermore, Connie Cheng, a clinical manager of adult mental health, attributes a "socialization factor" to gambling. Traditionally, mah-jongg tables were commonplaces for marriages to

For more information about gambling addictions, visit the Office of Problem Gambling at [www.adp.ca.gov/](http://www.adp.ca.gov/) NICOS Chinese Health Coalition at <http://nicoschc.com/>





# Down the Aisle

## Re-envisioning Arranged Marriages

by crissy chung

The idea of marriage evokes many different thoughts and feelings for people, such as “children,” “sex,” “the wedding,” “love and happiness,” “commitment,” and “divorce.” These popular reactions to the institution of marriage depict the expectations of marriage in American society. Young girls and boys raised in America are led to believe that they are destined to find “the one” whom they will marry and love unconditionally. Simply put, marriage revolves around the joy of love. How many romance movies are based on the protagonist discarding all sense of responsibility and rationale to be with the one he or she loves?

In a society where marriage is generally, and sometimes unrealistically, perceived as an outcome of love, where do arranged marriages stand? In many South Asian cultures, the concept of arranged marriages is a norm. In an email interview, Aroma Sharma, the external President of Association of South Asian Political Activists (ASAPA), explains that, “Arranged marriages are not uncommon in the South Asian community. They are to ensure that a person is going into a good family—a family like their own. South Asians consider marriage the union between two families, not individuals. Thus, marriage is not a decision that one individual can make on his or her own.”

From the view of contemporary American women and men, marrying a supposedly “random” person would be out of the ordinary. However, within the South Asian American community, arranged marriages still exist, albeit they are not as common. While being in an arranged marriage is not viewed as a form of oppression among most South Asian Americans, there is a perception that arranged marriages are synonymous to forced marriages. However, this is not always the case because in an arranged marriage, if a man shows interest in a woman, she still has the right to accept or decline the proposal and vice versa. According to an interview in the television news show *Art Fennell Reports*, Ranjana Kumari, “a prominent activist and... a leading force in the women’s movement in India,” claims that having the parents choose a spouse will likely result in a match most compatible with their child.

UC Berkeley student Shahzeen Humayun, a member of UC Berkeley’s Muslim Student Association (MSA) and Indus, voices her personal thoughts and experience, explaining that “an arranged marriage is part of Desi (Author’s note: The term “Desi”

refers to someone with origins from South Asia, particularly India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and so forth) culture. People perceive it as something you’re forced into, but it’s not like that. The girl has the say to accept or deny a proposal. It’s less common than it used to be because a lot of people have adopted western views, but it still happens, even with American-born girls.” Humayun further elaborates, “The divorce rate is really low for couples who have been married through arrangement. Parents are experienced with being married; they can make a better decision for their children. The idea behind arranged marriages is that love eventually forms and that you can fall in love”

Arranged marriages are dominant in many South Asian cultures; however, families who have roots in America tend to be more lenient when it comes to arranged marriages. Whether it is a question of assimilating or the absence of cultural pressure, it is more common to see South Asian parents allowing their American-born children to marry whomever they wish to be with (as long as the man/woman meets “basic requirements,” whatever those may be). Sharma explains, “...many second generation South Asian Americans are not getting arranged marriages anymore because they find someone they love through their own means. I think it only becomes an issue if the family does not approve. This, however, is no different than getting one’s parents’ blessings, regardless of what culture he or she is from.”

Second-generation South Asian Americans do not necessarily push the possibility of an arranged marriage out of the picture. As Sharma puts it, arranged marriages are “treated more as an extended dating service.” Instead, it is important to acknowledge that an arranged marriage is not usually a tool of oppression. Oftentimes, a woman has the right to choose her future husband; she can accept or reject a proposal depending on her feelings toward the potential groom. According to Sharma, “There’s a huge stereotype of South Asian women as being obedient and faithful—people would not expect women to speak up if they do not agree to something. However, I don’t believe that either party [women and men] is oppressed in arranged marriages (at least in today). If a woman or man does not want to marry the person she or he is introduced to, no one is going to force them. I feel that family has a huge role in our community, so what our family thinks is going to play a big role in any of our lives’ decisions.”

# RACE TO DISGRACE

## Countdown to Asian American Sellouts



Long have philosophers spent sleepless nights pondering over one of this world's greatest questions, one of life's most elusive mysteries: what would an Asian American version of Paris Hilton look like? That is, someone whose only discernible talent is making bystanders question what her talents are. While imitators have come and gone, those of us who study these types of things (i.e., me) have been waiting patiently for our prodigal daughter to arrive. Well, the wait is over - hardboiled is proud to announce we've found her and her name is Tila Tequila.

And the wait was well worth it, because in many ways Tila embodies all the things we dislike about Paris and then some. They're both immensely popular, unbelievably talentless, and vaguely alien-looking. But there's something extra about Tila that lets her kick it up another notch. The self-proclaimed "Queen of Myspace," Tila has translated her popularity on the social networking site (over 2.3 million friends) to a record deal, appearances in mainstream movies, and her own TV show. All the while, she manages to be problematic on so many levels.

Our main beef with Tila isn't that she's successful for nothing - we're haters, but we have our limits. Rather, we've got problems with how she's become successful. By playing off hypersexualized images of Asian women and bisexual women, Tila's found success at the cost of essentializing both her race and her sexual orientation. And that's enough to earn her the number four spot on the countdown.

### To Be Bi or Not To Be

On her MTV reality show, "A Shot at Love With Tila Tequila," Tila brings sixteen men and sixteen women to live together with her and compete for her affections. The big reveal is that Tila is bisexual, and the show details the numerous efforts of the contestants to get with Tila (and each other). While Tila's bisexuality has come into question (a recent article in the New York Post claims she's not only straight, but that she's in the middle of a relationship), regardless, her presentation of herself as a bisexual contains numerous stereotypes about bisexuals, including the assumptions that they are constantly horny and always in a state of indecision regarding the sex of the partners they choose.

### Playing the Race Card in a Game of Strip Poker

Tila, who is credited with being the first Asian Playboy Cyber Girl, has built her career around looking particularly amorous, to put it delicately. In a photo spread for Stuff magazine, Tila poses wearing little and carrying a big sword. The image immediately plays up stereotypes of Asian women as hypersexual beings, and hits both the Geisha Girl and Dragon Lady archetypes with its implied aggression and passivity.

And it's not enough that she plays into exoticized images of Asians; in the video for her first single, "I Love You," Tila, brandishing a riding crop, is seen straddling a faceless black man, included for the sort of sexual healing all black men are supposed to supply. Again, we find the histories of people of color being hypersexualized carried through to the current day with Tila's work.

### No Talent Necessary

In researching information about Tila for this article, I had the privilege of listening to some of her music and watching clips of her show. While it may not be a legitimate reason to call her a sellout, I feel it's important to emphasize just how talentless Tila is. From her song "Fuck Ya Man": I don't know why you think I wanna rape ya boo / but then again if I was you, I would hate me too / I'm a badass bitch and y'all get nuthin' / Y'all need to tell ya boy sumthin' ... biatch! Rakim on the mic, she is not.



On some levels, it's difficult to call out Tila as a sellout for a couple of reasons. The daughter of poor Vietnamese immigrants, Tila has undoubtedly had a rough upbringing, and thus there's a certain degree of admiration we feel for her success. Furthermore, we must be careful in calling Tila out as a sellout because we run the risk of setting boundaries on things we shouldn't. hardboiled isn't in the business of policing acceptable sexual behaviors, and while I may not be looking to bring home a girl who would dry hump my grandma (though it certainly would make for an interesting Christmas), it's a much more dangerous path to enshrine a particular type of sexuality and demonize all who deviate from that type.

Still, in Tila's case, it would be hard to do anything else but criticize the image she promotes. That dual image of the dominant Dragon Lady and the submissive Geisha Girl, the hypersexualized woman who caters to the white man, is the same image that has supported sex trafficking from Asia to the US. That same picture is seen in the teenage girls forced into prostitution in their home countries to fuck rich tourists. Tila didn't create these images, but that doesn't get her off the hook for making her money and finding her fame off of them.



# better luck last time

Justin Lin's latest film is a return to his indie roots

by eunice kwon

I was thirteen years old when Justin Lin came out with *Better Luck Tomorrow*. Before this, the only Asian man I had seen on screen was the Origami guy on Channel 18 who made paper monkeys out of toilet paper rolls. He was unarguably talented, not to mention highly resourceful, but as a young Asian American, I still felt under-represented in the mainstream culture. To see an entire cast of Asian American teenagers in a major blockbuster film was great, but what made it even better was that *Better Luck Tomorrow* was not just a good Asian American movie; it was a good movie period. The script was well written, the plot engaging, and the characters just happened to be Asian American.



<http://www.alivenotdead.com> film by Justin Lin. Unpleasant memories of one of Lin's last project, Annapolis, still linger in my head but I'm comforted by the thought that after Annapolis, Lin has nowhere to go but up.

Not that I don't respect Justin Lin as a director. I understand why he took a break from meaningful Asian America cinema to make slick Hollywood films with budgets worth more than the gross national product of some small Asian countries. I don't think he is untalented or a sell-out or the anti-Christ. It's just that Annapolis is a truly terrible movie, which makes me concerned that Lin has hit a rough patch.

Finishing the Game seems to be a return to his indie roots. It's a mockumentary on the casting of a Bruce Lee stand-in, in order to complete the film, *Game of Death*, which Lee started before his unpredicted death in 1973. The characters include Breeze Loo, a conceited action star who can't understand why people confuse him with Bruce Lee; Colgate Kim, a good natured (albeit a bit soft in the head) southern boy who is trying to break into the show business; the mixed Asian American activist Tarrick Tyler who is played by the very, very Caucasian McCaleb Burnett; and Troy Poon, a talented, classically trained actor who is reduced to playing Chinese delivery boys and eventually selling vacuums door to door.

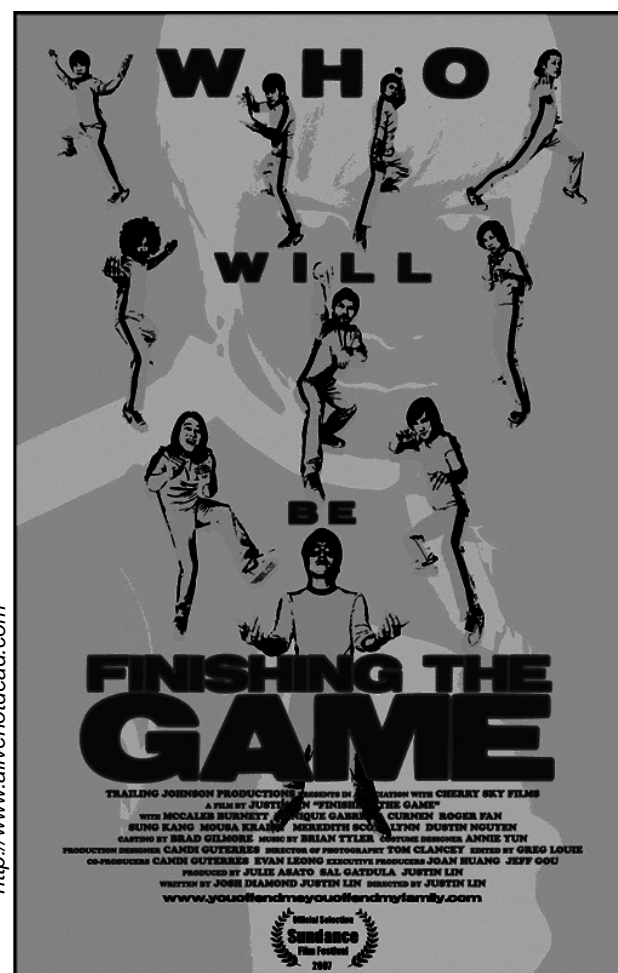
Although *Finishing the Game* is clearly a comedy, it makes serious points about the Hollywood industry, both back in the 70's and in the present day. The tendency for Asian Americans to be typecast into a certain role has decreased in the last few decades but it still exists in Hollywood and in other forms of media. The film pokes fun at the various stereotypes of Asian Americans that the media has perpetuated,

and uses snarky humor to slyly criticize these stereotypes.

The low-budget 70's setting works for the film. The acting is convincing, the jokes solid and the cameos somewhat relevant. It even serves as a social commentary.

Still, it's lacking. Lin created the characters to be ridiculous and the situations to be absurd but that leads to this movie feeling like one extended joke. The plot seems unsubstantial and overly silly. In an attempt to make the film an outrageous comedy, the strength of the story line is compromised and the movie feels like a SNL skit that has stretched on for far too long.

Finishing the Game is fairly entertaining, tackles social issues and has a cast studded with talented Asian American actors. The film does more good than harm, raising visibility and providing its audience with a few laughs. It isn't the most impressive work in the history of Asian American media, but hey, it's a step above paper monkeys.



<http://www.alivenotdead.com>

# THAI: MY LIFE & RHYMES

## Picking up where Jin's Fifteen Minutes Ended

by albert chen

In his interview with Jizo Entertainment, underground rap artist Thai Minh Ngo talked about the stereotypes that he has to face being an Asian American rapper. Thai said, "They think we can't rap and that we want to be black, but anyone that has been following me since I first came on to the scene knows I have talent and

that I'm my own person, I love music and the whole art form of it. Everything that I rap about is from my heart and nothing like what people assume."

Asian American artists within the sphere of American hip-hop suffer from memories of Jin, the last Asian American rapper to make it on television and radio. Jin earned his fame by beating many rappers on BET's popular program, "106 & Park." He defeated all his rivals and eventually signed a deal with Ruff Ryders in 2002 to produce his first album. Jin's flow is, to this date, undeniably one of the best anyone has seen on television. However, the songs that actually made it on to his albums were poorly produced and lacked the quality that mainstream hip-hop requires. Jin was hurried into a record deal and forced to throw out quick tracks that lacked depth and replay quality.

While his delivery was excellent, his lyricism almost poked fun at Asian rap culture. His single, "Learn Chinese," made Chinese (and Asian) hip-hop lovers everywhere cringe.

Rapper, songwriter, and producer Thai is here to prove that Asian Americans can create and market legitimate hip hop music. In 2000, Thai released his first EP, titled "Portland Love," with the hit single "Vietnamese Gang," which was downloaded internationally. After his first EP "Portland Love," Thai went to work on his next album, producing and recording all the music in his room. In 2003, he released his first album titled "Together We Rise." His most recent album "My Life and Rhymes" was released on August 28 of this year.

Thai's style is best described as West Coast gangster rap, a genre of hip hop known for its promotion of gang life. Asian rappers have seldom ventured into this genre because mainstream hip-hop listeners do not recognize Asians as gangsters, thus delegitimizing Asian gangster rap as "wannabe." Thai's history clearly disproves this misconception. Thai was born on September 11, 1983 in Nashville, Tennessee, and he is the middle of three brothers. Thai's family grew up in San Jose, California, and he was raised by his mother after his father left the family when Thai was seven. His mother worked at a restaurant to provide for the family and these early memories emotionally scarred him, leaving him feeling empty and confused.

Thai's mother moved the family to Portland, Oregon in 1993 to start a better life. However, things only got worse since his mother worked two to three minimum waged jobs to make enough money for her family. At this young age and with no father, Thai began to explore the streets to find acceptance. He found himself spending his time mostly around Asian gangs. Around the 7th grade, Thai began to train his musical style by listening to artists such as Bone Thugs N Harmony, 2Pac, and Eazy-E. Thai would use their songs to make his own; he would use other artists' instrumentals and rap his own lyrics over them. In this way, he

began to develop his own Asian gangster rap style.

Unfortunately, at the age of 13, Thai found himself amidst gang activities that resulted in his involvement in a gang shooting after school. He was arrested and faced nine years in jail, but was let off with probation since he was so young and had no prior offenses. Instead of changing his ways though, Thai found himself living the same lifestyle in the streets. Soon after, Thai was attacked and stabbed in the face while hanging out at a pool hall. Thai's mother felt hopeless in this situation and her fear bred more hatred within Thai's heart.

Thai and his gang were involved in many shootings and their own homes were shot many times. He would get into fights weekly and the gang task force unit in Portland considered him a high-profile suspect. Thai dealt with this street drama by thinking that he would either die or go to jail at an early age, especially after seeing many of his own friends end up with similar fates. In 2001, however, the birth of his baby son Tysa changed his life forever. Thai knew that he had to change into a positive role model, and his son's birth gave him the strength to change his lifestyle, to become a better dad than his own father.

Seven years ago, at age 16, Thai recorded his hit singles, "Vietnamese Gangster" and "Around My Town." From the success of these songs from mere online downloading distribution, Thai began to work on his first EP release "Portland Love," a record full of songs about his gang life and his pride for his friends, family and ethnicity. Thai manages to gracefully intertwine Vietnamese rap lyrics in a few of his songs, a skill that Jin never learned to do very well with Cantonese.

Thai raps about his own struggles, overcoming these struggles, and the things he sees around him. Thai's goal is to help other people going through the same things everyday to realize that they are not alone and that he understands. In contrast to east coast/west coast gangster rap, Bay Area hyphy, crunk music or other mainstream forms of hip-hop, he is an artist purely rapping about his own situation. He raps about his life as a gang banger, his life as a reformed father, his pride for his Vietnamese ethnicity and his pride for all Asian Americans. On top of this, Thai's songs pave the way for other Asian hip-hop artists since he collaborates with mostly Asian Americans such as Myss Jane and JimmyBoi. In many ways, his music has created a new genre of hip-hop, hopefully pioneering the trend of Asian American artists among an industry where Asian Americans are unaccepted.



Photo Courtesy of thaistreets.com



Photo Courtesy of thaistreets.com



# CONNIE LIM: KEEPING THE FAITH

by pauline sze

**There is something striking about UC Berkeley fourth year student Connie Lim when you first meet her. She exudes a down to earth, no-fuss attitude despite the fact that she has accomplished so much in such a short time. Earlier in November, Lim released her first EP entitled *Shifting*, promoting it by performing at Blake's to a sizable crowd. The Connie Lim Band calls their style reminiscent of Fiona Apple, U2, Natalie Merchant, Tracy Chapman, and the Counting Crows. It is pop music mixed with blues and powerful vocals.**

Growing up in Southern California's Palos Verdes, Lim began studying classical piano at a young age. She recalled fond memories of her piano teacher, "She's 90 some years old now but still rides a motorcycle. She is a really unconventional woman who always encouraged me about music and encouraged me to write songs." Yet, this soon stopped when Connie got involved in other activities such as dancing and tae kwon do. Connie indicated that her parents were very strict and conservative and didn't want her to "get too into music and art," because "they didn't see music as a stable career."

With strict and conservative parents that did not support her musical endeavors, Connie says that they are slowly becoming more encouraging. "When you really want to do something that's unconventional, the people that will discourage you the most are the people that really care about you—well at least for many conventional Asian American families in my experience," says Connie. "Now my parents are saying, if you really want to do this, you should go to music school since you've never really studied music. So now I'm applying to Berklee College of Music."

Connie revealed that she was brought back to music during high school when she developed anorexia and was forced to stop dancing. This led her to start writing more songs. By her second year of college, Connie had made the bold choice to stay in Berkeley for the summer where she let the pieces fall together. This was the first time she truly devoting herself to her music. "I've always felt like I wasn't doing what I really wanted to do," Connie expressed.

That summer gave Connie the time to truly focus on her music and writing. The inspirations for Connie's songs are heavily influenced by outside observations. "I carry a journal with me, I'll write something down that I hear on the bus, for example. Also, novels are a big inspiration for me, such as Toni Morrison's *Sula*. There's a phrase in it, 'second-hand loneliness,' and I wrote a song about that." While she admits that her songs are usually not personal, she is beginning to write more personal songs and has started to interweave them with the things that she sees or hears. "But at the end of the day, you just have to write stuff that moves you, that gives you chills. So it's definitely become more emotional and also more meaningful and more put together—more natural," she asserts.

This past summer, Connie worked with childhood friend, James Blashaw, to produce her debut EP, a six-track disc entitled *Shifting*. Cooped up in James' bedroom working on a computer that had a knack for overheating, Connie calls the experience challenging but worthwhile, "We didn't know what we were doing; we just wanted to record these songs. So it was a lot of stumbling and it was a very humbling experience. I've learned that there's no evidence that you're going to do well, you just got to keep faith and that's not something I grew up with." The recording process took only a week, but the editing took over two months. Connie recalls, laughing, "When I had to come back to Berkeley for school, James and I would work over the Internet. I'd have my iTunes on listening to the songs and would go—James, three minutes and twelve seconds, did you hear that? We need to change that!"

Connie and her band kicked off the debut of the EP by performing at Blake's, which she says has been her favorite show so far. "I'm still learning a lot about being a performer. For the first time, I just got lost in the music," Connie exclaims. "I wasn't thinking. The crowd was awesome, the setup was good, and we had great opening bands."

Connie has had gigs at various venues in the Bay Area, but she has also performed at some events geared towards Asian American issues such as the 17th Annual API Issues Conference this past April. These events reminded her of her childhood, especially because her mother is active in the Chinese American community. Yet, she confides that she feels "like many Asian Americans go through a phase where they hate themselves for a little bit and they try to adopt an Abercrombie and Fitch culture. That was frustrating for me and I don't try to be Asian or try to be white. I go with family values because that's all I know. So meeting people that were confident [at these events], not trying to prove anything, but having organized events that meant something—that was cool."

In the end, Connie has learned it's not just about the music. It's also about being a strong person. "This was not the path that I was going towards—I was pre-med, then pre-law and then I realized, I need to be honest with myself. It was the most liberating thing. It's okay if I'm not doing what I'm 'supposed' to do. I still have time to do the things that I want." Connie is also a big proponent of having faith. "I didn't grow up religious but being able to have faith is a good way to live life," she reckons.

Author's favorite songs off *Shifting*:

- Fly On
- Shifting

To purchase Connie's EP, *Shifting*, please visit [www.cdbaby.com/cd/connielim](http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/connielim)

To listen to tracks off of *Shifting* and to find out where Connie will be performing, please visit <http://www.myspace.com/connielim>



Photo Courtesy of [www.myspace.com/connielim](http://www.myspace.com/connielim)

*Upcoming Event: Catch Connie at the Los Angeles Orpheum Theatre as she competes in Kollaboration, an Asian American talent competition, on February 23, 2008.*

*For information on the contest and to buy tickets, please visit <http://www.kollaboration.org/index.php>*

# Little Tokyo in Danger?

## Los Angeles Community at Risk

by davin chang

On August 17, two landmarks of Los Angeles' Little Tokyo were purchased away from the original owners, East West Development Corporation, by a major investment company, 3D Investments. The New Otani Hotel and accompanying mall Weller Court were snatched away from Little Tokyo in a secretive dealing that has since caused controversy and speculation on what will become of Little Tokyo.

Many people worry that this new settlement with 3D Investments will change Little Tokyo into another typical American establishment; representatives and past 3D Investment purchases have tried to prove otherwise: "[3D Investments] are not going to change any concept. They value Japanese culture," said East West President Takeshi Ito. "They are not a company interested in just making money." In the past, 3D Investments have also purchased landmarks in San Francisco's Japantown, and rather than Americanize the landmarks, they just gave a superficial "Japanese" face-lift. Under 3D Investments, the Best Western Miyako Hotel in the SF Japantown was altered with decorations of J-pop culture, anime and Harajuku photography. In an attempt to appease critics who think that the historical side of Japanese American culture is underrepresented in this facelift, 3D Investments plans to decorate their other SF Japantown hotel, Hotel Kabuki, in a more traditional Japanese style.

3D Investments has forgotten the community and historical aspects of Little Tokyo. For many Japanese Americans, Little Tokyo is considered to be home or a special place to rediscover their cultural and historical roots. Little Tokyo is a place that reflects Japanese American culture and community. Although many people who used to live in Little Tokyo for community support during times of hardship no longer have the need to live in a cultural hub, those who hold the treasured memories of the past such as Nisei Week and the different summer festivals at Buddhist churches have always come back because it represents what is close to them and the feeling of home.

"I've been in and around [Little Tokyo] working and being part of different community organizations since 1950," said Tom Kamei, a former structural engineer, "I feel that this is my hometown. The place where I was born is gone. This is my hometown. It's very dear to me. It's shocking to see what's happening."

The idea of giving the ownership of these landmarks to non-Japanese corporations is unsettling to many Japanese Americans. Craig Ishii, the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) Pacific Southwest regional director, worries that Little Tokyo under the new ownership will not be able to represent Japanese American culture in its entirety.

"Both cultures [American and Japanese] are important to the holistic JA community. However, a community cannot simply be a collection of Japanese restaurants and anime shops. It must also include historical residents, community based organizations, community events and gatherings," said Ishii.

Others are worried that the new ownership will still eventually bring more American shops and establishments to Little Tokyo. Recently, American businesses like Subway, Starbucks, and Staples have sneaked their way into Little Tokyo while a small but historically significant street commemorating the first Japanese American in space, Astronaut E. S. Onizuka Street, has been renamed to Weller Street. With these Americanized and commercialized changes to Little Tokyo, it is little wonder why the community fears that 3D Investments will aid to the fall of Little Tokyo.

"Little Tokyo is in danger," said Ishii. "I see Little Tokyo in danger of further losing the sense of community that it used to have."

Through it all, it seems like Little Tokyo will be made-over into a more corporate center. 3D Investments' hopes will draw more business from many of the young and rich residents of Los Angeles, while pushing away the people who call the place home. Although people from 3D Investments and East West Development Corporation ensure that Japanese culture will be intact through the renovation and under new ownership, it is highly unlikely that the historical aspects and sense of community surrounding Little Tokyo will stay intact the way it has over the years. 3D Investments just recently purchased the two landmarks of Little Tokyo; we can only hope that they will not take away the soul and original sense of community that is slowly deteriorating Little Tokyo.



Weller Court in Los Angeles

[www.answers.com](http://www.answers.com)



The New Otani Hotel in Los Angeles

<http://www.pacificcitizen.org>

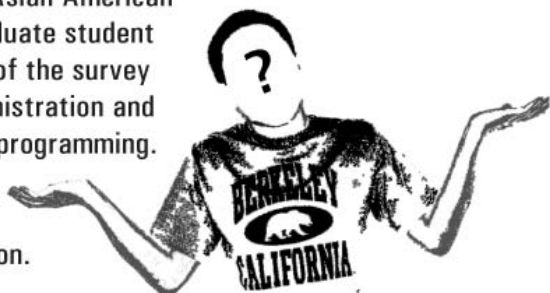
are **YOU**

**Asian American**

and/or

**Pacific Islander?**

We are conducting a survey on Asian American and/or Pacific Islander undergraduate student life at UC Berkeley. The results of the survey will be sent to the campus administration and have implications for policy and programming. Your participation is critical in learning more about the issues that affect this student population.



### Eligibility

- Current UC Berkeley undergraduate student
- Asian American and/or Pacific Islander

We are giving away gift cards worth **\$50** each to 5 lucky people who complete the survey.

complete the **ONLINE** survey at:

<http://multicultural.berkeley.edu/apasd/>

complete the survey by December 31st, 2007

Questions? Need more information?  
Contact: [aapiresearch@gmail.com](mailto:aapiresearch@gmail.com)

Sponsored by Asian Pacific American Student Development