

hardboiled

APRIL 2008

THE ASIAN AMERICAN NEWSMAGAZINE!



11.5

UNITING TWO GENERATIONS OF ACTIVISTS / WHOSE UNIVERSITY?
OUR UNIVERSITY! / THE GREAT SCHISM: CALSERVE VS STUDENT
ACTION / LONG LOST LIBERTIES / SFIAFF MOVIE REVIEWS / AND MORE!

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editor's note

Boycott 21?

The tagline for the new film 21 reads as follows: "Inspired by the true story of five students who changed the game [of Blackjack] forever." Yet it fails to live up to expectations and reality. The film is based off the book, Bringing down the House, which recounts the true story of a group of MIT students who essentially made millions by counting cards in Las Vegas during the 1990s. The students were predominantly Asian American, including their mentor and professor. In 21, the cast is mainly white with the principal character played by Jim Sturgess (of Across the Universe fame) and Kevin Spacey as the professor. Despite challenging Hollywood's old school casting with films such as Better Luck Tomorrow, the same old racist excuses are still being used (they want to appeal to a broader audience or they can't find any talented Asian American actors). What really bothers me is the small role that Jeff Ma (the main MIT student on which the book and movie was based upon) plays in the film as a casino dealer. Even though Ma has stated that he did not mind that his racial background had been changed in the film, how empowering would it be for Asian Americans to see a lead that was smart and charming? He also gets the "hot girl" (Kate Bosworth) at the end. The producers did cast two Asian Americans but they are stuck in one-dimensional characters. While the film is not racist, the idea of an Asian American lead in a story that stems from the Asian American community would have been refreshing. Since the release of the film in late March, a facebook group (Boycott 21) has emerged as an opposing voice to the casting decisions. As of April, more than 1,200 people have joined and if you're up for a cause, click away!

katherine nguyen
layout editor

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corrections

In issue 11.4, Erin Wong's article title should have read, "Things White Journalists should Know about Asian Americans." In addition, Melani Sutedja's name was spelled incorrectly.

student action vs.calSERVE

by melani sutedja

It is that time of year again—blue Student Action “DONE” flyers have appeared above chalkboards across Dwinelle, in contrast to CalSERVE’s bright green flyers, and SQUELCH candidates have...well, what haven’t they done upon the mouth of Sather Gate already? That’s right, we are in the midst of campaigning season for the Associated Students of the University of California (ASUC) elections. For the next couple of weeks, Sproul will play host to a momentous array of flyering, huge cardboard cutouts with beaming faces of the candidates, and some (questionably) good-natured ass kissing.

Yet, along with the festivities of campaigning, lending support, or avoiding Sproul for the more apathetic, comes the question of who to vote for. Friendship loyalties aside, the Asian American and Pacific Islander community is divided over several different priorities such as environmental sustainability, progressive agendas and Greek life. This causes an electoral apartheid within our vote towards Senators and Executives, especially for the position of President. To be frank, it really comes down to deciding whether to vote Student Action versus CalSERVE, the two main political parties of the election (though there aren’t any rules against switching back and forth between candidates). The 2008 Democratic presidential ticket between Obama and Clinton is, after all, already splitting the Asian American vote; what factors, then, are contributing to Berkeley’s own Great Schism?

Some find that the defining factor is each party’s past achievements and proposed contributions concerning the Asian American and Pacific Islander community. Staring up at the three “DONE” flyers in 125 Dwinelle, I see that Student Action has made it a point to emphasize “ASUC Bookswap,” “Spring Welcome Week,” and “Greek Philanthropy Fund” amidst their maxim of “Expect More. Get Results.” Anything close to touching base upon ethnic-specific issues and points of racial intersectionalities greets me ten minutes later upon my walk to Sproul—a flyer for the upcoming “From All Perspectives” diversity show. Scouring through The Daily Californian, however, I come across news on the front-page of the four newly slated CalSERVE executives—three of whom represent the Asian American and Pilipino American community. Having focused this past year on initiatives such as the Count Me In campaign, which successfully fulfilled its plan to disaggregate Asian American and Pacific Islander data on University of California applications, these candidates showcase a need for understanding the heterogeneity within the population coined under the “Asian” umbrella term.

While this progressive mindset might not appeal to the overall Asian American or Pacific Islander population, there are many who support CalSERVE because the intentions of the candidates reflect that of their constituency. Melvina Thai, a second year student majoring in Political Economy of Industrial Societies (PEIS) speculates, “Student Action’s slate seems to advocate for more funds to support more entertainment and social outings... For me, that just isn’t that important. I feel like a student government’s job is to protect me, to make sure that I am being represented on my campus, to make sure that people are safe.” She adds, “Just imagine our political system advocating for more television and concerts for all citizens while ignoring economic and social concerns. The thought of that is absurd. Likewise, a student government should be concerned with real problems that students face.”

A third year student adds, “Folks associated with CalSERVE re-

ally push for making stances and thus show support for Count Me In or issues on immigration ... whereas, Student Action is hesitant to affiliate themselves with ‘taking positions’ on issues because they find it divisive. Like their understanding of Asian American issues are about bringing awareness but not taking action beyond that awareness.”

Many of CalSERVE’s Senate candidates see the space as a forum to create the changes that underrepresented Asian American and Pacific Islanders feel like they have no power over. Jenabi Pareja, a third year Development Studies major running for Sen-

that each party pursues “multicultural activity” on campus through different forums. Student Action works respectively within the social scene, attempting to celebrate the differences and similarities amongst the vast cultures of Berkeley’s student groups. Such examples include the aforementioned “From All Perspectives” diversity show, as well as its promotion of various ethnic-specific fraternities and sororities on campus, which attempt to create communities out of common identity.

CalSERVE, on the other hand, prioritizes cross-cultural activity on campus by taking a more political stance that promotes social

justice and increased representation. The proof is in the resurfacing of third world Liberation Front (twLF), which most of CalSERVE’s candidates and community members have played an active role in. Uniting to reclaim the

The Asian American and Pacific Islander community is divided over several different priorities, such as environmental sustainability, progressive agendas, and Greek life, which causes an electoral apartheid.

ate under CalSERVE, says, “Not only does this space have the potential to increase awareness and build empowerment amongst the Asian Pacific Islander community, but create cross-cultural collaborations as well.” Pareja, who is also a coordinator for the REACH! Recruitment and Retention Center and the Count Me In campaign, presses that CalSERVE embraces the interests of all ethnic identities, as well as that of the Asian American and Pacific Islander constituency.

Still, there are those who find the CalSERVE party too “militant” or “ethnically exclusive” for their taste. There have even been blogs such as “CALSUCK,” dedicated to the “Homeless Guys On Sproul” party, cajoling that the candidates have “nearly ZERO

space from the university’s belated promise for a multicultural center, the organization has not only stayed true to the revolutionary fervor it once possessed during its run in the late 1960s, but its purpose in creating solidarity amongst all people of color as well. Hence, this may be CalSERVE’s appeal to many students on campus—an inclusive space within all intersections (sexual orientation, social class, ethnicity, and so on) of individuals—not just race.

Perhaps this will deconstruct sentiments that Student Action is purely “social,” or that CalSERVE is an “exclusive, minority party.”

Still, there are those who even find it disturbing that individuals from the Asian American and Pacific Islander community have subjugated themselves along the lines of partisan politics. One anonymous third year student suggests, “The rivalry has become so engrained to the point sometimes that it’s not even about making change together but seeing who’s going to win between the parties... which is sad.”

“Not only does this space have the potential to increase awareness and build empowerment amongst the Asian Pacific Islander community, but create cross-cultural collaborations as well.”

- Jenabi Pareja

years of ASUC experience,” and only succeed in “perpetuat[ing] the Berkeley stereotype: let’s all smoke weed and fight the man.” A third year student said he chose Student Action because “not everyone here identifies with a race-based club. Some of us prioritize other extracurricular [activities], such as sports, film... instead of focusing on small problems that we like to blame on race. They [Student Action] keep things to general interests and reflect the non-radical Berkeley you don’t always see on the news.”

While the Student Action slate has not been as vocal in their pursuit of ethnic-specific causes, individual candidates have voiced their hopes towards more on-campus collaborations within the Asian American community. David Li, a first year pre-Business major running for Senate under Student Action, uses his past experience in several different Asian American clubs to generate his vision. Li said, “Although I realize that each club is different ... a massive joint event from the different Asian American clubs would not only promote unity among the cultures, but also show the key differences among the different Asian cultures.” Looking towards a culture show that the Chinese Student Association will host on April 13th, for example, Li proposes the inclusion of other “Chinese speaking clubs (Taiwanese, Hong Kong, etc.) to hold a joint culture show. That way, the culture show would have different aspects of Chinese culture in it, not just CSA’s.”

While individuals on both sides take notice of the homogenizing pan-Asian label, there is also the issue of each party’s definition and stance towards “multiculturalism.” Considering CalSERVE Senator Maurice Seaty’s concern in early March over the Student Action-endorsed “From All Perspectives” diversity show being held the same weekend as bridges’ Senior Weekend, it is safe to say

I grimly think back to the ASUC Senate meeting that I sat in on Wednesday, March 19th, where votes were split between the two parties in regards to increased funding for the Pilipino American Alliance’s 32nd annual Pilipino Cultural Night (PCN). During the session, Senator Dan Galeon remarked that it was “ironic how one party would not vote for this [PCN] culture show, yet support their own culture shows with increased funding and still say they support ‘diversity.’” It is easy to see, then, what gridlock can emerge out of petty group loyalties. More importantly it is clear how these barriers could have consequences for various student groups who simply need more funding.

It is the product of mass-partisanship, rather than individuals, that is at fault for the tension, as well as the creation of such “our space” and “their space” rhetoric. As one Executive candidate has confessed, he would like to get to know certain spaces within the Asian American community more, but feels as if his party’s reputation has already earned him an unfavorable image within its members.

Still, there is hope for more amiable skies within the ASUC’s party tensions. An insider from the Asian Pacific American Coalition (APAC) mentions, “We have organizations affiliated with different parties, but we’re still able to unite on common issues. [For] the APAC Food and Culture Fair, our bill is co-written by Senator Duong (CalSERVE) and Senator Wong (Student Action), so I think it’s doable. It’s hard for some folks to put it past them.”

After all, the two parties ultimately work towards the similar goal of its students’ well being. It is important that we voters not only remind ourselves to transcend above party lines, but to remind the candidates to do so as well. Who knows, Wednesdays in the Senate Chambers might not even have to run into the wee hours of the morning anymore.

Who's University? OUR UNIVERSITY

Fighting for the campus Multicultural Center

by jennifer phung



photography by jennifer phung

Students unite to fight for a space that means multiculturalism, inclusion, and visibility.

When browsing through the UC Berkeley website, the first word found under the "About UC Berkeley" link is another link entitled "Diversity." The university consistently uses diversity on this campus as a selling point for incoming students. Campus representatives go to high schools to give presentations about UC Berkeley and often talk about how this university stresses the inclusion of all students and values the different histories and experiences that they bring here. However, to many students, the campus has failed to fulfill its rhetoric. It has not acknowledged the struggles and experiences of students from different backgrounds and has not given students a space that promotes multiculturalism. We need a space for representation of all marginalized peoples, a space that allows everyone to share their personal stories. The question remains, where is our multicultural center?

The UC Berkeley administration promised students a multicultural center that would provide resources to under-served students in 1999. Many students may not be aware of this, but Heller Lounge was given to students as a temporary space for the multicultural center. Yes, the room with a few colorful sofas, chairs, and tables is the only space that we have now. According to the original demands, our multicultural center is supposed to provide resources like an auditorium, a lounge, meeting rooms, offices, and academic and social support. Despite the inadequacies of Heller Lounge as a multicultural center, the temporary contract with Heller Lounge is set to expire at the end of June. After nearly ten years, we are still fighting for a permanent multicultural center-- a fight that many would agree should not be this difficult. As the struggle continues, the unity and resistance of the students also continues to grow strong. The third world Liberation Front (twLF), along with other supporting student organizations, has started up again to organize towards the vision of a truly inclusive community here. With careful planning and strategic organizing, many campus groups have worked together to come up with a series of events, awareness workshops, and rallies to fight for the space that belongs to the third world peoples and exemplifies the meaning of multiculturalism.

There were week-long teach-ins regarding the multicultural center during the week of February 25. These teach-ins were a space for students to learn more about the fight for a multicultural center. They created dialogue about what "multicultural" means and what this University should have and represent. The week long teach-in allowed for communication between students to take place, which was important in the process of organizing behind the multicultural center. Besides the teach-ins, a coalition of organizations put on a week of events in the beginning of March. "(RE)claiming Our Space" was the week's theme and most of the events took place inside Heller Lounge to create awareness about our multicultural center and the importance of this space. The main purpose of the week was to empower all communities on this campus to realize and claim Heller Lounge as a space for multicultural programming and visibility of all people.

As the next step to pressure the University to prioritize multiculturalism and fulfill its promise, twLF organized a rally on March 6 on the steps of Sproul Hall to demand a permanent multicultural center. Wearing bright yellow and black colors, approximately a hundred people came to support the cause and protest. Many protesters were holding signs on the steps of Sproul Hall that said "Power to the People" and "Back up your rhetoric." Students from different backgrounds and various organizations, even students who just walked by, came together and chanted in unity: "The students united, will never be defeated!"

Those with little understanding of the history of struggles in this campus community will think that the twLF rally was a "little rant" full of "profanity and threat," as a letter to The Daily Californian on March 18 would suggest. However, thinking about how this struggle has gone on for so many years, this rally actually represents an opportunity for those who currently feel silenced and disrespected to express their concerns and feelings, hoping that the Chancellor, administration, faculty, and other students will understand how important this multicultural center is. If students at the rally appear to be emotional, it is reasonable because it's frustrating to think that UC Berkeley, the top public university of this country, does not provide the space and adequate resources for our diverse student body.

In addition to showing unity of the community and reflecting common sentiments, organizers of twLF also collected petition cards to present to the Chancellor and administration. The petition cards included the student's demands regarding the multicultural center. The first demand was funding for staff, programming and immediate renovations to the current Heller Lounge. The second demand was the completion of a permanent multicultural center. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was also proposed to list specific demands that called for a functional and adequately funded temporary center while the process of building a permanent center was also in check. The proposed agreement asked for at least \$200,000 to renovate the temporary center. A negotiation team from the twLF had been meeting with the Chancellor and appointed officials to discuss the MOU.

After the rally, the Bridges Coalition had an annual meeting with the Chancellor at Heller Lounge to discuss the issues that the students felt were important. During the meeting, organizers from twLF and other students brought up the multicultural center and the

Chancellor did not appear to be open to listen to the students. Susan Deng, a member of REACH! the Asian Pacific Islander Recruitment and Retention Center, attended the meeting and felt that the Chancellor had disrespected the students. "Every time we brought up the issue about the multicultural center, he would try to divert the topic. I think a lot of students felt hurt because he didn't really seem like he wanted to be there. He said he was tempted to go to the women's basketball game while we were trying to ask him about the funding for our multicultural center," Deng said.

Not only did the Chancellor refuse to talk about the details of the current situation, but he even refused to listen to the students and understand their needs.

Due to the fact that the Chancellor and administration still did not give any guarantees regarding the MOU, twLF quickly organized an emergency rally on March 13 in front of California Hall. While twLF was waiting for the status of the multicultural center from its negotiation team, twLF also felt that it was important to mobilize the community and show the Chancellor why they needed their demands met. They wanted to pressure the administration and also present an opportunity for those who felt disrespected and frustrated at the university's response to express their thoughts. Many of the organizers talked about how they were spending their time to organize or attend the rallies rather than studying for their midterms because they understood the importance of unity among the students. Although every one at the rally was becoming tired of this long struggle, they all stood strong and said that they would not give up.

Erin Pangilinan, one of the organizers of twLF, talked about her motivations for this on-going fight for diversity and multiculturalism. "I wanted to see something permanent, something tangible, to see the programming we do more validated. We compete for space and we don't know how the space is used. I want to see a commemoration of the twLF and ethnic studies; something to tell people what twLF is. You go to the Free Speech Café in Moffitt and you learn about the Free Speech Movement; you see quotes and picture of Mario Savio, but what about our multicultural center?" Pangilinan explained. "Currently, Heller Lounge is dead. It's just a study room and a place for people to sleep.

I would like to see murals and a better use of the center."

On March 19, the ASUC Senate finally passed the Memorandum of Understanding, supporting twLF and the larger community's need for the center. This means that the university will fund \$40,000 for the renovations of Heller Lounge and that the third phase of the multicultural

As the struggle continues, the unity and resistance of the students also continues to grow strong. The third world liberation front (twLF), along with other supporting student organizations, has started up again to organize towards the vision of a truly inclusive community here.

center, development at Lower Sproul, will be looked into. Another \$200,000 of funding will be provided by a grant from the Haas foundation. The twLF negotiation team tried to work for the best agreement. In the future, they will try to negotiate more and keep the university accountable for its promise.

As of now, the struggle for our multicultural center is not over yet. The students will continue to work together and make sure that future students who come here will have a space that recognizes the importance of their culture, histories, and struggles. More importantly, we will never allow the university to silence our voices and determine what our existence here means.

Uniting Two Generations of Activists

by albert wang

HELLO
my name is
18th Annual API Issues
Conference

On March 1, over 300 youth activists, Bay Area university students, and movement veterans alike flocked to the Martin Luther King Jr. Student Union for the 18th annual Asian Pacific Islander Issues Conference (APIICON). Under the unifying theme of "peeling off" labels oft-imposed on Asian Americans, APIICON addressed issues ranging from ethnic neighborhoods to the evolution of ethnic terms, brought in pioneering activists from the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA,) and celebrated Asian American and Pacific islander culture through food, art and music.

A highlight of the conference was seeing the veterans of AAPA return to campus for the Alliance's 40th anniversary. These 19 men and women played a major role in such late-'60s campaigns as the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) protests. Their efforts helped to win many amenities Cal Asian Americans take for granted today; AAPA participated in the battle for the Ethnic Studies department and sponsored one of the first Asian American Studies experimental courses. Even UC Berkeley's martial arts program was a result of AAPA's work. Yet their struggle is not restricted to the past; the fight for a Third World college continues today, and as one alumna said, although Asian Americans may be more numerous and better organized than in the past, the challenges they must face are greater still. The need for Asian Americans to stand against the stereotype of submissive quietude—and their own individual interests, if necessary—is as great as ever.

Wei Ming Dariotis, an assistant professor of Asian American Studies at San Francisco State, delivered the keynote address. In her speech "A Name We Can All Love Calling Ourselves," she discussed the importance of names, particularly for "those who are not part of the overprivileged, over-educated Asian American upper class." She identifies as "hapa," which she characterized as a "liberating identity," a word of her community's own and an alternative to passing as Chinese. However, she lamented, the word "hapa" had come to be appropriated by other Asian ethnic groups, many of whom, as "settlers in Hawaii," dominate the native Hawaiians. The term "hapa," Dariotis said, had gone from a symbol of self-determination to "a form of colonizing violence in which [she] was participating." She then renounced the usage of the word until it was reclaimed by those it originally belonged to, and ceased to be a label used to disempower.

One of the many panels offered at the conference addressed ethnic enclaves, insular ethnic-focused communities that often arose from alien land laws, redlining and other discrimination restricting members of a certain ethnicity to one area. The panel focused on Stockton's Little Manila and San Francisco's Japantown, both unique and endangered places. Little Manila faces the destruction of three historic buildings, and despite the assistance of the Black Eyed Peas and the History Channel's National Trust, the Little Manila Foundation's efforts to save them have proceeded poorly. Japantown was recently sold to Los Angeles-based firm 3D Investments, unable to claim the protective status of historical town because of its demolition and reconstruction in 1966. Although the city guaranteed Japantown 15 years of protection from changes by the company, the deal leaves San Jose's Japantown as essentially the only true Japantown in the United States.

Attendees were provided lunch from Oakland's Phnom Penh House, a Cambodian restaurant. They were then treated to an impressive art gallery, ranging from realistic portraits and anatomy studies to the stylized and fanciful, as well as performances by the High Notes, iLL-Literacy and Rising Asterisk (in addition to Cal Raijin Taiko, which gave a traditional drum performance after the opening address). These Asian American artists, selected to provide exposure to underappreciated talent, did not disappoint. The High Notes soothed with love ballads while Rising Asterisk had audience members gathering around the stage, hands in the air. iLL-Literacy married comedy and political awareness with a set of spoken-word performances.

"It feels like I'm on the sinking Titanic of American foreign policy," Nico Cary of iLL-Literacy said, "and I can't avoid watching Leo and Kate kiss."

The conference closed with what is known as a unity clap; all conference attendees began a slow clap that escalated rapidly, signaling the energy in the room, until thunderous applause filled the Pauley Ballroom. It was a fitting exult for a day that brought together the struggles of the past, the problems of the present and the promise of the future in one dialogue. Though the attendees were an extremely diverse group, when the conference was done, all shared a renewed understanding of the issues at stake in the Asian American and Pacific Islander struggle, and all had shed that pernicious label of the "passive Asian."



Two Student Organizers from Asian Pacific American Student Development



Wei Ming Dariotis, Keynote Speaker



Asian American Political Alliance

Photos by Andre Nguyen

APRIL 2008 hb 5

26th SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL ASIAN AMERICAN FILM FESTIVAL

san francisco international
ASIAN AMERICAN

With this year's SFIAFF logo, "We love film," in mind, **hardboiled** decided to check out this year's line up of films and interview one of SFIAFF's highlight actors-- **John Cho**. Having SFIAFF withdrawals? Relieve the week with us by checking out our interview and film reviews!

from harold to sulu: interview with **JOHN CHO**

hardboiled recently had the opportunity to talk it out with John Cho, star of *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle* and the soon to be released sequel *Harold and Kumar Escape from Guantanamo Bay*. Here are his thoughts on Cal, getting off the ground as an actor, and his role as an Asian American in the media.

What was your favorite memory when you were at Cal?

There were so many. One year I lived in an apartment building in North Berkeley that was filled with the craziest cast of people. Beneath us was a guy who would moan "I hate myself" throughout the night and we would always hear him. My neighbor was a woman who was thoroughly insane and would always run from me because she thought I was chasing her. There was also a guy who would invite us to the Reggae club and always wore a track suit. It was a very entertaining apartment building.

How did your parents react when you told them that you wanted to go into acting?

My parents were surprisingly cool about it. But I will add that I was rebellious as a kid, so by the time I broke the "good news" that I was going into acting they were sort of accustomed to me doing things they didn't like and they didn't put up much of a fight. But if it was the first thing I did, maybe it would have been very different.

Do you think the roles of Asian American actors have changed?

It has and it hasn't. I think it's gotten better in that you see more Asian men in television. This may sound megamaniacal, but I mean I can track things that have come from my roles. My wife has a friend that also is an actor that said he went to a commercial audition and the cast sheet literally said "John Cho-type." So we spent two or three beers hammering that one out. I feel like the guy that I played in *American Pie*, which is when people first saw me, which was a loud-mouth, asshole, that kind of guy became a type we saw in future movies and television. Even though things have gotten a little bit better, we have to remind ourselves that it's not where it should be.

Do you think *Harold and Kumar* broke stereotypes?

I think the most important thing that *Harold and Kumar* does for Asian Americans is making them protagonists. The protagonist is the surrogate for the audience and you understand the story through the protagonist. That's an important thing because American audiences are identifying their story through two Asian Americans. I believe that this is a very positive thing. In terms of stereotypes, we're not going by them, but also not denying their race, so we're not playing them blank. *Harold and Kumar* are Asian, they have Asian parents, they talk about their "Asian-ness" on occasion, but they're not obsessed with it either. It feels real in that way even though the events in the movie are fantastic. But the characters' attitudes about the film feel like real people and I think that's what people like about it.

Do you perceive a change in roles played by Asian actors?

I have been encouraged by seeing a lot more Asians in commercials. It is encouraging because it shows that they're

trying to sell products [to Asian Americans]. Albeit, it be detergent, a GNC truck, or whatever. If they're trying to sell us those things, then eventually they'll try to sell us movies and television shows. So when they smell the money, that's where they'll be.

Isn't money a bad motivating factor?

What an un-American thing to say! In fact, that's kind of the way things get done. I was talking to Justin Lin, director of *Better Luck Tomorrow*, and he found it very difficult to get producers to invest in it because studio heads thought that Asians did things differently from white America. They thought that they bought different clothes, cars, and different movies. But in terms of Asian Americans, their spending habits are very identical to white Americans. Therefore, there is no motivation on their part to make a separate product. That's why it's so critical to buy tickets to Asian American films that you support because it shows up on a pie chart somewhere. After *Harold and Kumar* I got some data about who was going to see what, which characters they liked, and it was broken down by race, age, gender. Your spending dollars are an important vote.

You're playing Sulu in the new *Star Trek* movie. What do you think about playing a Japanese character even though you're Korean American?

I feel that it doesn't have any bearing on this particular role because he's Japanese American. I feel that I wouldn't take a part that was a Japanese from Japan or a recent Japanese immigrant because I don't feel that there was a way I could do that accent effectively. I talked to George Takei about it and he said Gene Roddenberry's original intent was that everybody on the bridge of the Enterprise represented a part of the entire world and that Sulu was to represent everyone from Asia. They didn't have a specific origin for his character, but when George was cast and they needed to come up with a name for his character. So Gene looked on a map and saw the Sulu sea, and it bordered several countries and thought it was a pan-Asian name. Since George was Japanese American, they decided to give him the name Hikaru, and the name Hikaru Sulu came to be. The intent was not to create a Japanese character, it was to create a pan-Asian one.

Personally, have you turned down any roles?

I've turned down roles since I've started acting. Usually it wasn't a big deal, I would just tell my agent, I just didn't want to do it. I think Asian American actors and other actors of color in general are under the impression that you have to do this stereotypical role so you can get to a place where you can do more pleasant roles. My feeling is that if you start taking these roles, those are the only ones you'll get. Also there is damage being done politically. On a personal role, I don't think you should take anything that will haunt you. If you feel good about it, then do what you want to do. But if you feel bad about it, and its politically insulting, then don't do it. There can be a thousand protesters outside the gate of Paramount trying to tell

someone that this portrayal is incorrect and they won't pay attention to it. However, an actor turning it down is different because an actor is a peer. I would try to do that; one time I was in a show and someone handed me a line that I thought was offensive. I had a talk with them, "You know, I don't feel good about this, and I'll tell you why." Peer to peer, they usually say, "I didn't even know that. That makes so much sense, of course we'll change this and keep me abreast of any other opinions you have." They're not out to piss people off. But it's easy to see those people with picket signs as radicals if your buddy, the person's whose name you know, is willing to do the part. So as artists, we underestimate our power. We have the power to say "no" and to ask for change.

Do you think that Asian American actors have a mentality that they need to take whatever is offered to them or they won't work?

Yeah, I think it is very easy to make that mistake. In some ways it is the most logical way to go. But you know, you should always have pride in what you do. You owe it to yourself to voice your opinion and do a line of work that you're proud of. There's a phrase that goes around: "fuck you money." Actors try to gather enough "fuck you money" so they can flip off everyone that they don't like. In my opinion, there's never really any amount of money that you can walk away from. Once you start doing something that is morally compromising, it's hard to stop, so you have to start early. You're not in acting to make money because the odds are really against you. You should do it to have a good time and to do something that you actually enjoy and are proud of.

Unfortunately our interview had to end there, because a screening of *Harold and Kumar Escape From Guantanamo Bay* was about to start. Let's just say that if you were a fan of the first one, you're in for a treat. Be sure to catch it when it opens in theaters nationwide April 25!



photo provided by charlie nguyen



First appearing at the Sundance Film Festival in January of 2007 and later winning the Jury Prize at the Deauville American Film Festival in France, Gina Kim's *Never Forever* was one of many films screened for the Narrative Competition portion of this year's San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival.

Never Forever is a departure from Kim's earlier works, *Invisible Light* (2003) and *Gina Kim's Video Diary* (2002) in that it is a romantic melodrama that is sure to have an appeal to wider audiences. Actress Vera Farmiga (*The Departed*) is cast in the lead role as Sophie Kim, the "perfect" Caucasian housewife of affluent Korean American lawyer Andrew Kim, played by actor David McInnis (*Tae-poong*). Completing the love triangle is South Korean actor Ha Jung-Woo (*The Unforgiven*) who plays Jihah, a Korean immigrant who becomes involved in a passionate and dangerous love affair with Sophie.

The film follows Sophie in her quest to save her husband and her marriage. From the very beginning we are presented with the desperation that Sophie and Andrew are facing – Andrew's father has just passed away, an event that carries a double meaning for Andrew, as he is unable to conceive a child of his own. Immediately after the funeral, there is a sex scene between Sophie and Andrew that is completely devoid of passion. It is here that Kim establishes the character of the husband, the perfect figure of a man with one fatal flaw – his inability to conceive, which causes much pressure from his family for both him and Sophie. This flaw ultimately leads Andrew to attempt suicide and it is here that Sophie decides to take matters into her own hands in order to save her husband's life. A chance encounter with a Korean immigrant at the fertility clinic that she regularly visits results in Sophie giving this man, Jihah, a business proposition – she offers him \$300 for every time they have sex together and an additional \$30,000 should

GINA KIM'S *never forever*

by omar narvaez

she get pregnant. It is a bizarre proposal that Jihah accepts, and what at first begins as a business relationship ends up becoming something much more.

Never Forever is a beautifully shot film with superb performances by both Farmiga and Ha, but it suffers from unclear motivations and sudden and rather dramatic character changes that are consistent with the melodrama genre. Sophie and Jihah are inexplicably drawn to each other. Yet as they learn more about each other, the whole ordeal shows that a business deal involving sexual intercourse is not so simple, especially when emotions become involved. While the actual narrative of the story did have its share of problems, Farmiga more than made up for it in her brilliant portrayal of Sophie. As the story progresses, Farmiga skillfully shows Sophie's transition from loving wife to desperate woman and finally to passionate lover. Her brilliant blue eyes and shocking blonde hair cause her to have an almost doll-like appearance, perhaps an indication of how her husband's Korean family view her, yet her demeanor and initial loyalty to her husband betray this appearance as she is constantly trying to please both her husband and his family by going to church and participating in prayer sessions regardless of her own lack of a religious background.

While Sophie's evolution as a character takes center stage in this film's narrative, it is worth mentioning how the film portrays Asian American, or in this case Korean American, men. As one audience member pointed out during the question and answer session with director Gina Kim that followed the screening, *Never Forever* paints a very three-dimensional portrait of an Asian American male. Kim was quick to point out the historical depiction of Asian Americans in media with the traditional hypersexualization of Asian American women and the desexualization of Asian American men. The film counters this traditional portrayal by showing Asian American men as almost oversexualized. While perhaps not the appropriate way to break away from stereotypical depictions of Asian American men, Kim's use of hypersexualized men fits the context of the movie perfectly and also gives us a depiction of Asian American men not often seen in Hollywood.

Jihah and Sophie engage in passionate, rather graphic sex scenes, but in general both Jihah and Andrew are thoughtfully written, dynamic characters that you can

instantly connect with. In this sense, Kim has created these characters to be inclusive rather than exclusive. Andrew is a man who, due to intense pressure from his family and his culture to bear a child, has become despondent and defeated – he no longer feels like the man he should be and the loss of his father leaves him at a crossroads in his life. Jihah is simply a man who, through circumstances beyond his control, is trying to seek out a living in a new land of supposed opportunity. With an expired visa he finds this to be rather difficult and is pushed to desperate, shameful behavior in order to get by. The two are opposites: rich versus poor, American versus foreign, sterility versus virility, and they serve as the foundation of the film. This causes Sophie to make a choice between keeping the life she has and starting anew with someone who can actually give her a future she would be happy with.

In addition to breaking some stereotypical depictions of Asian American men, *Never Forever* also deals with biracial couples. While we are generally used to seeing white males with Asian American women, it is rare to find a film that has a white woman involved with an Asian American male. This reversal is noteworthy, just like the three-dimensional portrayal of the Asian American males in this film; however, in the end, the film's main focus is on class difference and Sophie's development. In Sophie's eyes, Jihah is first seen only as a means to an end, but after spending considerable time with him and forming an emotional bond with him, she begins to realize that Jihah could be the answer to finding fulfillment in her life.

Never Forever is a good film with a script that, at times, seems rather poorly thought out but is more than made up for by terrific acting and directing. The actors do a great job of engaging the audience in their characters and for the most part, we are emotionally invested. In one particular scene toward the end, Andrew is on the verge of discovering his wife's affair and the tension within the theatre was palpable. Writer and director Gina Kim should also be applauded for her portrayal of Asian American men. In *Never Forever*, Asian American males are more than the figures mainstream media commonly associates them with. Absent are the Kung-fu masters, wise-old sages, and geeky model minority figures. Present instead are characters with very real, heartfelt problems that any person, Asian American or not, can relate to.



a conversation with IRIS YAMASHITA

by annie kim noguchi

At first glance, Iris Yamashita's journey to become an Academy Award-nominated screenwriter seems like a fairy tale. Growing up, Yamashita loved to write but majored in engineering, eventually working as a software engineer. However, she continued to write and after winning numerous writing contests, she hit the jackpot: She was hired by Paul Haggis to write the screenplay for a Clint Eastwood movie. Filmed in Japanese with English subtitles, *Letters From Iwo Jima* described the WWII Battle of Iwo Jima from the perspective of the Japanese who fought in it. But while Yamashita's rags-to-riches, or rather engineer-to-screenwriter, story may seem like fodder for many a young writer's dreams, it isn't as sweet as first appears.

Two years and one Academy Award nomination later, Yamashita came to speak at the San Francisco International Asian Film Festival in March as the focus of "A Conversation with Iris Yamashita." Speaking to an audience of one hundred, Yamashita addressed her experience in screenwriting and the film industry. She started by saying, "Paul Haggis didn't think he was qualified to write the screenplay from the Japanese perspective—he wanted an authentic voice, and so he narrowed it down between me and a screenwriter in Japan. I ended up getting the assignment!"

Haggis wanted an authentic Japanese voice for Japan during WWII, so he picked Yamashita, a young Japanese American,

born and raised in California, who speaks only English. In addition, she was chosen over a Japanese writer from Japan who speaks and writes in Japanese. What is the logic in this? A Japanese name is a Japanese name? A Japanese face is a Japanese face? A Jap is a Jap is a Jap?

Certainly not, and so why is Yamashita so excited about being mistaken to be an "authentic" Japanese from Japan? Does she not see the danger in herself, a Japanese American, representing Japan to the American public?

Whether or not Haggis really needed an authentic voice is arbitrary. The point is that Haggis automatically pegged Yamashita as an "authentic voice" for Japan just because she is Japanese American. When asked to explain how exactly she is an authentic voice, Yamashita is vague: "Well, I'm a little familiar with Japanese culture. And I did more research compared to *Memoirs of a Geisha* or *Last Samurai*."

Was being Asian American ever a disadvantage in the film industry? Yamashita said she didn't necessarily think so. "Being Asian American helped me get the job," she answered. "Having a unique voice helps you get your foot in the door. All writers are on the same playing field—what's going to make you stand out?"

Yamashita continued, "There is growing diversity in roles going to Asian actors. Just look at characters like the ones in *Heroes* and *Lost*. Moving in this direction is more likely to happen." She also added that in 2003, there were a number of very "different portrayals of Asians" in movies like *Kill Bill*, *The Last Samurai*, and *Lost in Translation*. "All of these movies

portrayed Japanese in different ways. There is definitely more savviness in portrayals these days."

Even with this so-called "savviness," does Yamashita feel a responsibility to promote Asian American perspectives, rather than just the Asian perspectives that are in the movies she mentioned? To this Yamashita replied, "It's hard to categorize... What is Asian American? Chinese American, Japanese American, Indian American...Asian Americans are so diverse."

While Yamashita's misconception may seem relatively harmless, it's not. It speaks to the difficulties Asian Americans face not only in society, but in the media and film industry. In assuming that Yamashita is an authentic voice for *Letter From Iwo Jima*, Haggis and Eastwood created a monolithic Asian identity—all Asians are alike, no matter if they're in Asia, from Asia, or have never actually been to Asia. With few exceptions, if you have an Asian face in Hollywood, you are Jackie Chan, the Chinese delivery boy, the masseuse at the massage parlor, or the diligent student who spends Saturday nights studying for the SAT.

And for much of the population of the United States who have little understanding of Asian Americans, these stereotypes are truth. In turn, these stereotypes affect how Asian Americans are perceived and treated by continuing to perpetuate the existence of a monolithic perspective that all Asians and Asian Americans presumably share. This monolithic perspective does not exist, and so please, Iris Yamashita, correct your mistake: A Jap is not a Jap is not a Jap.

Discount Babies

The Racial Dynamics of ADOPTION

by matt blesse

It seems impossible to pick up a celebrity magazine without seeing pictures of your typical Angelina Jolie, Meg Ryan, or Madonnas touting their "ethnic" children around parks and playgrounds like some made-for-TV, "We Are the World," racial-harmony Christmas special. How picturesque these scenes are with the noble white woman graciously taking the impoverished and degraded child of the third world into her arms to be raised in Hollywood—which, with its culture of substance abuse, mental health problems and anorexia, is the perfect environment in which to raise a child.

Don't get me wrong; there are many well-meaning parents of transracially-adopted children out there. One could also point to the fact that adopted children of color (this writer included) have undoubtedly benefited from the privileges of growing up in the United States and the privileges that come from being raised by direct beneficiaries of whiteness. However, this does not mean that we cannot examine the ways in which these well-intentioned parents play into the often-discriminatory process of adoption. While traditional discourse has celebrated adoptees as symbols of interethnic harmony and multiculturalism, there is a significant lack of critical analysis on the topic of transracial adoption. It is necessary to examine how adoption, as a process, frequently plays out in prejudiced, racist ways.

First, let's talk history. The roots of transracial adoption – Arnold Silverman, who has conducted extensive social analysis of the effects of transracial adoption, defines it as the "the joining of racially different parents and children together in adoptive families"—can be traced to the years following World War II. Orphaned children from war-torn countries were often adopted by white families in the United States. In particular, conflicts in Asia, namely the Korean War and Vietnam War, led to a boom in transracial adoptions. During this same time, increasing poverty and inequality in the United States left more and more children of color within the United States without families. Consequently, US-based adoption agencies



Photo courtesy of Time, Inc.

Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt are shown with daughters Shiloh (left) and Zahara (right), who was adopted in Ethiopia.

some well-established, licensed agencies, openly charge significantly higher fees for white infants than for children of color. Some agencies even go as far as to have separate fee structures for white, Asian, Latino, and African children. These fee structures are in fact economic reproductions of a racial hierarchy: white children are the most expensive, followed by Asians, who are seen as the "model minority" -- the next best thing to whites and statistically proven to do better on tests. In accordance with US racial hierarchies, this list is rounded off by Latinos, and lastly African Americans. Following this same trend,

sage that the lives of children of color are worth less than the life of a white baby.

Many agencies attempt to justify the separate fee structures using supply and demand economics. There are simply more white couples wanting to adopt than minority couples, and generally white couples will want to adopt children that look like themselves. Furthermore, babies of color are "discounted" to encourage adoption of these less-desired babies and so that minority couples (more likely to be impoverished due to structural racism) can afford the expensive fees of adoption. Additionally, many point to the many government subsidies for adopting children of color as responsible for the reduced prices.

Nevertheless, these arguments all apply a form of supply and demand economics to human lives. Has capitalism bought out our sense of morality too? To adopt a child of a different race is a huge commitment and a life-altering decision. It is not, let me repeat, NOT an economic decision that should be made to save money. It is a long and difficult process that will include trials, misunderstandings, racial-tensions, and failures. Think of the impact that a financially-based misjudgment could have on minority-adopted communities. What if the only reason a child of color was adopted in the first place was because their parents couldn't afford a white child?

If the goal of such subsidies was really to expedite the adoption of minority babies we would instead see a system with fixed prices, based exclusively on the actual fees and expenses incurred by the lengthy bureaucratic process—not a system that places a lower price on the life of a minority child. Subsidies instead would be applied to those parents who fall below a certain income level in order to help them cover some of the adoption costs. In this way, subsidies are determined by the parents' ability to pay the adoption fees rather than the race of the child. Such a system simultaneously addresses issues of systematic inequality in communities of color as well as eliminates the structure in which yellow, brown, and black bodies are devalued.

So remember this next time you pick up a People magazine: adoption is not just about saving the world one brown, black, or yellow baby at a time. While adoption can provide opportunities that would otherwise be impossible to minority children, it is also important to examine the negative aspects of it as well. The devaluation of a life, like some supermarket, "Blue Light Special" discount item, can end up harming the very communities that we seek to help.

Some agencies even go far as to have separate fee structures for white children, Asians, Latinos, and African Americans; these distinct fee structures are in fact racial breakdowns of fee prices.

began to put African American, Native American, and Latinos children with white families. However, in 1972, the National Association of Black Social Workers, concerned with the increasing numbers of African American children being paired with white families, publicly condemned the practice of transracial adoption. They noted "psychological maladjustment, poor racial identity, the inability to cope with racism and discrimination, and cultural genocide" as likely outcomes of transracial adoption. Though they lacked studies to backup their claims, they sparked an intense scientific and moral debate about the potential negative consequences of adoption.

Admist concerns that racial matching adoption policies were leaving minority children without adoptive families, Congress passed the Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) in 1994. The act was designed to "prevent discrimination on the basis of race, color and/or national origin when making foster care and adoptive placements." Albeit vague, this bill supposedly ended discrimination in the adoption process by prohibiting racial matching preferences. And it appeared to have had a positive effect on transracial adoption. Since 1994 (and preceding it, to some extent) the number of transracial adoptees has soared. From 1997 to 1999 alone, the number of transracial children adopted annually increased by over 2,000. The numbers today stand even higher. So does this mean that racism in the adoption process is a thing of the past?

This couldn't be farther from the truth. Despite anti-discrimination legislation, there continues to be a form of de facto racism within the system. Many adoption agencies, including

the qualifications for adoptive parents also slide downward in correlation with the fee schedules ("less qualified" referring to non-nuclear families, lower income parents, or gay couples). Illinois' largest infant-adoption agency, the Cradle, charges \$9,200 to handle the placement of an African American infant but \$25,000 for the adoption of a white baby. Another website, Adoption Access Incorporated, reminds potential parents that you can generally expect to pay less for a "Hispanic" child and less still for a "biracial (African American/Caucasian) child" and even less for a "full African American child."

Beth Hall, the executive director of Pact, An Adoption Alliance, an Oakland-based organization that works on minority-infant adoptions, says that even programs without explicit racial policies "have a casual tradition of discounting fees for [minority] babies." She estimates that half of all adoption agencies base their fees off of the race of the child.

For a moment let's table the hot debate that adoption is, in itself, morally or intrinsically problematic. Even when ignoring these factors, the adoption process is still systematically flawed and discriminatory—prices predicated on race recreate a system in which whiteness is valued over all other races. It is a system that promotes a hierarchical, racial spectrum with whites on top and blacks on the bottom. In this way, the adoption process functions as a microcosm for the larger pattern of marginalization and devaluation of peoples of color. It doesn't save minority communities; it devalues them. It doesn't break down racial barriers; it only reproduces these unequal differences. It recreates hierarchy and ultimately sends the mes-

Long Lost

by alice lee

After decades of being overlooked, Japanese Latin Americans who were placed in internment camps are gaining recognition and working towards rightful compensation.

Try to remember the very first time you learned about World War II in your history class. Your memory will probably bring you to your freshman or sophomore year in high school—maybe even earlier. You most likely learned about Hitler, the Holocaust, the bombing of Pearl Harbor (perhaps even spent class time watching the classic film *Tora! Tora! Tora!* if you were lucky), and, to a lesser extent, Japanese American internment.

But, what's taught even less in the classroom—if at all—is the story of the internment of Japanese Latin Americans (JLAs). Personally, I became aware of these historical facts only after researching the topic online and coming across the website, www.campaignforjusticejla.com. There I learned a part of history that is not taught in our schools. You probably weren't told in your history class that JLAs faced civil and human rights violations under the hands of the US government. You probably weren't told that from December 1941 to February 1948, the US government implemented the abduction, deportation, and internment of 2,264 Japanese men, women, and children from 13 Latin American countries. You also probably

weren't told that once these JLAs reached the US, they were stripped of their passports and categorized as "illegal aliens." Or that the reason why the American government seized these people was to use them as hostages against Americans held by the Japanese, or that the JLAs who were in the US were interned without the due process guaranteed by the Fifth Amendment. Or that the JLAs were forced to leave the US upon their dismissal from the internment camps. Or that approximately 1,400 of them were prohibited from returning to their respective countries, causing about 900 to be involuntarily deported to a war-torn Japan. Or that of the 350 JLAs who stayed in the US and refused to be deported, only about 100 were able to go back to Latin America. Or that the rest of the JLAs were not granted the chance to become permanent residents until 1952. You probably weren't told that of the approximately 120,000 Japanese who were interned, 1,800 of them were from Peru alone. And you probably weren't told that the rising anti-Asian sentiment that was felt throughout the US—particularly between white employers and Asian immigrant employees—was just as strongly felt by the Peruvians.

Well, surprise!

Two thousand two hundred and sixty-four JLAs (according to the Campaign for Justice) experienced the same discrimination and difficulty as the Japanese Americans during World War II. According to the 1943 War Relocation Authority Report, families in concentration camps were crammed in "tar paper-covered barracks of simple frame construction without plumbing or cooking facilities of any kind." Nor

liberties

were there education, proper healthcare, or heating facilities for the winter for these internees. Food rations were low, about 45 cents per person. Some camps even became sweatshops for the US military. And after incarceration, the JLAs, like the Japanese Americans, not only lost their personal property, but also faced unquantifiable psychological and emotional damage as well.

It wasn't until 34 years after President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which called for the internment of the Japanese, that President Gerald Ford acknowledged that the evacuation and internment of the Japanese was "wrong." As a result, the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, propelled by the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s and President Ford's apology in 1976, granted \$20,000 in reparations for each internment camp survivor. But this amount mainly applied to Japanese Americans since Japanese Latin Americans (JLAs) were considered illegal aliens, despite the fact that these JLAs were brought to the United States and placed in the internment camps against their will.

The JLAs did not receive any compensation for their internment experiences until 1996 through a class-action lawsuit, *Mochizuki v. USA*. This resulted in a settlement of \$5,000 per JLA, in exchange for the termination of the lawsuit. The settlement, however, kept open the possibility of seeking equitable redress upon further litigation. Most JLAs ended up accepting the Mochizuki settlement, but some did not and filed lawsuits. Four cases were filed but eventually dismissed. Due to these four unsuccessful attempts, efforts turned to avenues outside of the judicial system. The three Shibayama brothers (who filed a lawsuit in 1999), in conjunction with the Japanese Peruvian Oral History Project,

made a petition with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in June 2003. The goal of the petition was to acknowledge the US's failure to provide reparations for the war crimes and crimes against humanity that the government committed.

Efforts by local Congressmen are also taking place to provide justice for the JLAs. In 2000, Representative Xavier Becerra (D-CA), eventually joined by Senator Daniel Inouye (D-HI), introduced The Wartime Parity and Justice Act which addressed the issue of Japanese Peruvian inequitable reparations. The bill was addressed again in 2003 and 2005, but lacked the momentum to pass. Then, in 2006, Inouye and Becerra proposed the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Latin Americans of Japanese Descent Act (S 381 and HR 662.) This bill called for a commission that would meet to investigate the JLA internment causes and effects and measure the responsibility that the US has for committing such war crimes and crimes against humanity. Upon such findings, the commission would then make appropriate recommendations. Inouye and Becerra reintroduced the bill in 2007, this time recruiting the assistance of Christine Oh and Van Luong, legal aides to Becerra and Inouye, respectively.

With new and capable team members on board, the Campaign for Justice (CFJ), established in 1996 in El Cerrito, plans to push for this bill again this year in full force. The organization has two main goals: to attain equitable compensation for the JLAs through litigation, and to educate the American public about this issue. One method that the CFJ plans to implement is to earn the support of Japanese American Republicans.

The CFJ is currently supported by the Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress, American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, and the Japanese Peruvian Oral History Project. If you want to be involved with this cause, you can contact your Congressional Representative by writing a letter, sending an email, calling, or faxing your concerns. Or visit www.campaignforjusticejla.org to get more information about what you can do to help.



Photo courtesy of Campaign for Justice
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The Asian American Perspective

by jerry sithiphone

Profiling other Asian American Student Publications

While the Asian and Asian American populations are increasing in the United States, this increase has not translated to a rise in the coverage of Asians and Asian Americans in the popular (white) American discourse. Thus, for Asians and Asian Americans it is important to express their views and experiences through various mediums in order to counteract the stereotypical role Asians and Asian Americans play in (white) American media. One way Asian and Asian American college students in particular attempt to voice their opinions is through Asian American student publications. With that in mind, hardboiled has decided to profile other Asian American student publications to help spread the word that Asians and Asian Americans indeed have opinions and experiences that matter. For this issue, we are profiling UC Davis' Vent Magazine, as well as the University of Southern California's Bamboo Offshoot.

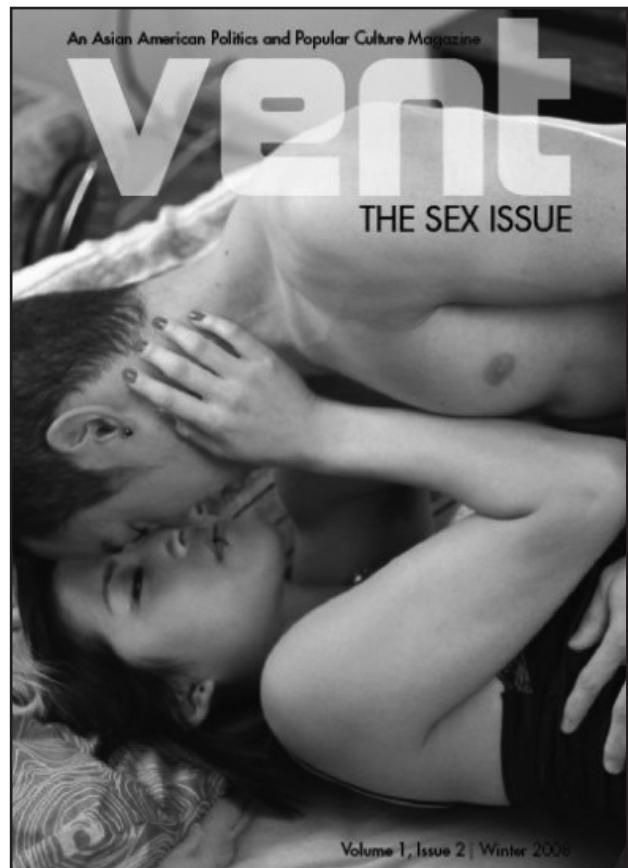


Photo courtesy of daviswiki.org
Vent's second issue, "The Sex Issue," came out during Winter 2008.



Background

Vent Magazine is an Asian American politics and pop culture magazine published at UC Davis. Vent was founded in the spring of 2007 "by a group of UC Davis undergraduates who grew tired of the lack of Asian American representation in the media and politics." In an interview, Daryl Suyat, Editor in Chief of Vent Magazine, states, "Some friends and I were talking one day about how no real publication represents us. Hyphen or Giant Robot? They're all good for the community, but they don't really represent us. Besides a few select people deeply connected with the Asian American community, we felt no one really knows who they are....at least in Davis. And on campus there isn't a student publication representing Asian America. There are Chican@, African American, even South Asian publications. But nothing represented Asian America as a whole. So we decided to make something ourselves. We had no experience, just a lot of passion." Vent is completely student-run "by the most talented and dedicated," as Suyat puts it.

Target Audience

While Vent Magazine is an Asian American magazine, according to Suyat, there is no particular target audience, "For now, we try to do things how we want to. There's no talk or discussion about how to appeal to a certain group or whatever. Like it says on the website, we like to keep things fresh, raw and honest. If we start to revolve our writing around what we

think people want to read, then we're lying to ourselves about what our community is truly about. At the end of the day the Asian American identity is created by individuals. Our purpose is to air out the views of those individuals who want to express themselves to the best of our ability."

Vent Magazine may not be concerned about who reads their magazine, but they are definitely concerned about how it looks, "Aesthetics is hella important to us. If you have something that looks hella tight, people will want to read it. The problem with many student-run publications is that they look like newsletters (mostly due to lack of funding)."

Vent proudly published its first issue this past fall 2007 "with hella people lining up for it," and you can view it yourself by



Photo courtesy of daviswiki.org

Students stand in line for the first issue of Vent, which are priced at eight dollars a copy.

Bamboo Offshoot

Background

Bamboo Offshoot is the University of Southern California's only Asian Pacific American publication. The student-run organization was established in 1993 "to express their distinctive viewpoints on issues concerning the APA community in Southern California" and has published their newspaper every other month since then. Currently, according to Dominique Fong, Managing Editor of Bamboo Offshoot, the newspaper is going through some transitions, including the move from a paper publication to an online one and the move to becoming a separate student organization.

Making the publication known also presents a problem. "A third difficulty we are working on is increasing distribution and awareness. USC's Asian American audience is about 24 percent of the total number of undergraduates, and we have yet to reach out to many of them. However, any challenge is a good challenge – working as a team to solve these problems and issues brings us closer together." Bamboo Offshoot is currently under the Department of Asian Pacific American Student Services, which helps fund Bamboo Offshoot. While mainly student-run, Bamboo Offshoot also receives some help and advice from an advisor regarding their newspaper.

Target Audience

As the only Asian Pacific American publication on the USC campus, Bamboo Offshoot does have a target audience according to Fong, "The target audience is APA students, faculty and community members. We strive to build a stronger APA student community, a forum that allows students, faculty, and

community members to express their distinctive viewpoints on issues concerning the APA community in Southern California." In attempts to attract to a larger audience, Bamboo Offshoot is also hoping to move from a newspaper to a newsmagazine. As Fong states, "We are hoping to turn Bamboo Offshoot from a newspaper to more of a newsmagazine with a glossy cover. Magazines have a lasting impact, while newspapers tend to get thrown away – plus, we only publish twice a semester so having a quality product would be beneficial to everyone."

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NEW ONLINE EDITION OF BAMBOO OFFSHOOT >> IN THIS ISSUE: TATTOOING, DANCE, TONY LAM, DENISE UYEHARA

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feature Who Killed Vincent Chin? lifestyle Tattoo Art Japanese-influenced trends in body art

'SCoop Listings: Learn more or help out in your Los Angeles community >>

Russell Peters + Angelina = Russellina? Satirical cartoon David Lau takes a humorous shot at interracial dating

Tony Lam's latest documentary explores the legacy of Vincent Chin in Asian American civil rights.

Tattoo artists like Taka Tamada uncover the origins of Asian-inspired tattoos in America.

>> More tattoo photos ...

opinion Asexual Asians Andrea Chin speaks on the myths of asexuality and what it means to be an asexual Asian.

The Bamboo Offshoot website - the paper is currently transitioning from a paper publication to an online one.

For more information on Bamboo Offshoot, please visit their website: <http://www-scf.usc.edu/~bamboo/bamboo.html>

zhan wang's floating

by kathryn wong



No method brings two cultures together better than art. Therefore, credit must be given to the Asian Art Museum for using its powerful presence to remind San Francisco of its history and cultural diversity. Aside from bringing a taste of historical Asia to the Bay Area, the Asian Art Museum offers contemporary art forms as well. Of the many beautiful exhibits the Asian Art Museum has featured these past years, one of its newest is the exhibit *On Gold Mountain* by Zhan Wang, which has been running since February 15 and will continue until May 25, 2008.

Standing beside the entrance to the exhibit are two giant boulders, highlighting the tension between human existence and nature. One boulder is completely natural. The other, with a surface of stainless steel, looking almost liquid as lights shine on it, is the work of a human being. The description on the side indicates that one of the boulders is hollow, but the other weighs over a ton (one can't help but wonder how they both made it through the museum doors).

Moving on to the main exhibit, one finds a miniature version of the city of San Francisco spread out, shining brightly and beautifully. The buildings, towers, bridges, and roads are all laid out neatly. But what is the most interesting about this scale model is that it is entirely made of kitchen tools. And not just any kitchen tools, but stainless steel ones, many of which may remind onlookers of the steamers and utensils often found in Chinese dim sum restaurants.

Surrounding this city of metal are rocks. Like the boulders at the entrance they are featured in pairs, one metal and the other natural. These representations of the Sierra Nevada foothills allude to the Chinese immigrant experience during the Gold Rush in 1849. Chinese immigrants would come to mine for gold in an effort to provide for their families back home. This exhibit is in remembrance of the Chinese immigrants who came in search of wealth.

The title of the exhibit, *On Gold Mountain*, is appropriate as it refers to the primary goal of the Chinese immigrants, to find gold. Here Zhan's rocks symbolize the belief in that gold mountain. The shining model of San Francisco serves as a reminder that even if the immigrants did not all discover real

gold, they did carve out for themselves a brilliant city. The Chinese immigrant experience *On Gold Mountain* is inextricably tied to the city of San Francisco (Jiu Jing Shan) which translates into "Gold Mountain" in Chinese.

Born in 1962 in Shandong Province, China, Zhan attended the Central Academy of the Arts in 1983, where he graduated at the top of his class. He is known for his style and unique way of altering nature into the industrial image of humans. Two of his more known forms of art are his stainless steel rocks and topographic creations. He first made his debut in the Bay Area in 2005, where he produced a sculpture for the re-opening of the deYoung Museum in San Francisco. He is reknowned internationally and has exhibited in various other countries and continents.

Zhan celebrates the bringing together of culture, but in a broader sense. First, his art addresses our changing world. In 1995, Zhan took special boulders in China called "scholars' rocks (jiahanshi)." These great boulders are originally meant to be meditated upon; however, Zhan took them and covered them in metal. He then pounded the metal into the form of the boulder, and peeled it off in pieces. After melding the pieces back together in the form of the boulder, he polished it until it became sleek and shiny. The constructed boulders are hollow, and the outside is a material of the new world. The old boulders weighed over a ton, but the new are light in weight and termed "floating rocks" by the artist himself. The shiny sheen of the rocks creates a strange terrain and mystical feeling when placed next to its original, especially when light and shadow play across the shimmering surface of the rocks. This clash of industry versus modernity alludes to our changing world and the power of industrialization and modernization, a popular theme especially in China.

Zhan's exhibit is a beautiful representation of history. To enjoy ancient to modern Asian art forms, the Asian Art Museum offers a wide collection. The historical importance and impact of Asian Americans is proudly represented by the museum. Look forward to future exhibits and events and take the opportunity to reflect on Asian American history and culture as they come together.

CHECK IT OUT FOR YOURSELF!

(415) 581-3500 or www.asianart.org.

Location:

200 Larkin Street, San Francisco, CA 94102.

Hours:

The museum is open Tuesday through Sunday from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, with extended hours until 9:00 pm every Thursday.

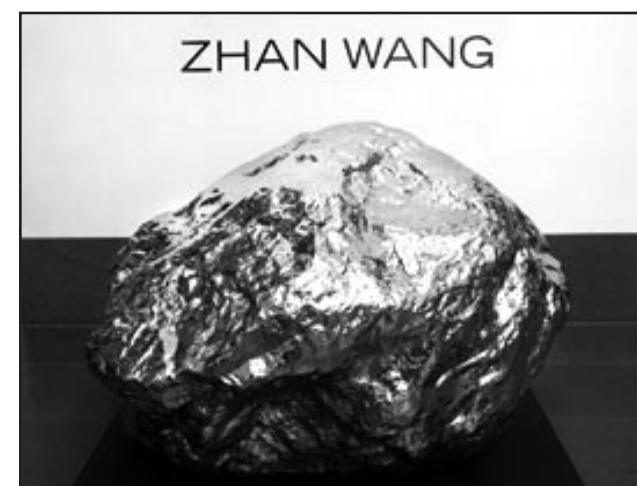
Admission:

\$12 for adults, \$8 for seniors, \$7 for youth/students 13–17, and free for children under 12. Thursday evenings after 5 pm admission is just \$5 for all visitors except those under 12 and members, who are always free. Target Tuesdays: The museum offers FREE admission to all on the first Tuesday of every month, courtesy of Target Stores. Beginning May 2008, Target Tuesdays will be replaced with Target Sundays, with FREE admission offered on the first Sunday of the month, courtesy of Target Stores.

Access:

The Asian Art Museum is wheelchair accessible. For more information regarding access, please call (415) 581-3598; TDD: (415) 861-2035

Information and Images Courtesy of:
<http://www.asianart.org/>



ZHAN WANG

RACE TO DISGRACE

Countdown to Asian American Sellouts

by lina peng

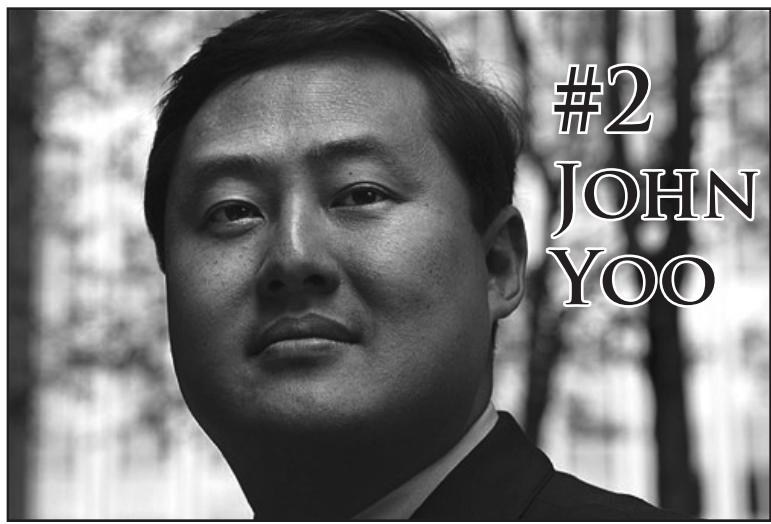


Photo courtesy of Boston.com

This article should not be a hard one to write. After all, wasn't John Yoo the guy who condones the torture of babies? That right there surely would be enough to put him on our list and I would've had a ball convincing our layout staff to put my baby picture next to a demonized picture of Yoo, just to get the point across. But before we all go picket outside his Berkeley office (yes, he teaches at Boalt) again, take a moment to read this edition of the hardboiled's countdown as a "Yoo" consciousness raiser for you.

Yoo authored the notorious Justice Department "torture memos" in 2002-2003 (one was recently declassified and is now available online). He has since then been widely criticized as providing the legal justifications for the Bush Administration's unlawful conducts in detaining suspects, harsh interrogation techniques among other controversial methods. The overall principle that the memo adopts is, "In wartime, it is for the President alone to decide what methods to use to best prevail against the enemy." If we accept that assumption, however frightening it may be, the rest of Yoo's memo is not surprising. It argues the President has the power to override domestic criminal law and inter-

national law if he so decides it is in the interests of national security. Yoo took the time to define torture very narrowly (from which most of the controversy surrounding him arises) so that Presidential action may be defensible within the framework of international laws, even if the President is not obligated to follow them. If Yoo is a brilliant scholar, he isn't so hot with public relations. The media has had a field day vilifying him with cringe worthy but clearly taken out of context quotes like this one during a debate with Notre Dame Professor Doug Cassel:

Cassel: If the President deems that he's got to torture somebody, including by crushing the testicles of the person's child, there is no law that can stop him?

Yoo: No treaty.

Cassel: Also no law by Congress. That is what you wrote in the August 2002 memo.

Yoo: I think it depends on why the President thinks he needs to do that.

Now come on, that just sounds bad. But let's be clear though, he isn't advocating the use of torture. He interpreted the Constitution to give the President the broadest legal authority possible to do whatever the President feels will best defend national security during war, which could include questionable means of interrogation but not necessarily.

The critics have charged Yoo's memo as granting the legal basis for the abuses of prisoners at Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay, and excesses of the USA PATRIOT Act. Some go as far as blaming Yoo for spurring such actions. Policy, however, is not made by memos. General policy direction is first decided upon (for example by the Bush Administration) then legal scholars are called upon to give the means to defend the policy's constitutionality. Yoo's memo was propelled to the forefront because it sat most favorably with Bush Administration policies, not the other way around. The PATRIOT Act, however objectionable you may find it, was passed by Congress, representatives of the people. Ultimate accountability for the consequences of those policies must lie with Congress or the White House. We should not stifle intellectual discourse because we disagree with what it says or with its imperfect real world applications. The responsible thing

for aspiring advocates and lawyers interested in defending civil liberties is to first understand the arguments made by the other side instead of simply dismissing them as distasteful. That self proclaimed open minded and no doubt First Amendment espousing Berkeley students would attempt to oust Yoo because of what he wrote is amazing to me. If anything, we should fight to keep Professor Yoo here if merely to understand and gain insight into the “enemy’s secrets”.

Yoo's memo highlights the ongoing tension between considerations of national security on one side and civil liberties on the other. No matter how each of us may personally feel, it is a fact that many Americans, including those who hold the power to make important decisions, did and perhaps still believe that in light of September 11th and the nature of terrorism, different tactics may be needed to defend national security, some of which may have to conflict with certain civil liberties. Civil rights do not exist absolutely in a sacred vacuum, but are constantly being balanced against other social interests such as order or stability. The most hackneyed example involves not being able to yell "fire" in a crowded theatre, but other restrictions on our behavior abound and most of us accept at least some of them as necessary. One of the problems with Yoo's memo, however, is that the nature of the "war on terror" is ongoing and persistent. There is no bright line for declaring victory. If we will always be in some state of war, the President will have permanent authority to override civil liberties whichever way he deems fit. That not only destroys the meaning behind the "wartime" qualification but certainly does paint a slippery slope demise for civil rights which I personally find very disconcerting.

To believe that security considerations do not exist and civil liberties ought to be protected absolutely all the time is naïve and potentially very dangerous if another September 11th is not prevented. Similarly, to subvert civil liberties haphazardly and illegally in the name of national security has proved highly disturbing and detrimental. The challenge then, as my legal studies Professor Martin Shapiro pointed out the other day, is one of economics. In a world of inevitable tradeoffs, how do we protect our families, homes and indeed our lives, while doing the least damage to things we could not live without, our civil liberties? This is a call out for you, for us, to come up with such a way, because that will be the most powerful challenge against Yoo's ideas.

