

THE GREEN ISSUE

PACIFIC TIES

ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER NEWSMAGAZINE AT UCLA

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ACTION
AWARENESS
JUSTICE
ORGANIZATION
POLICIES

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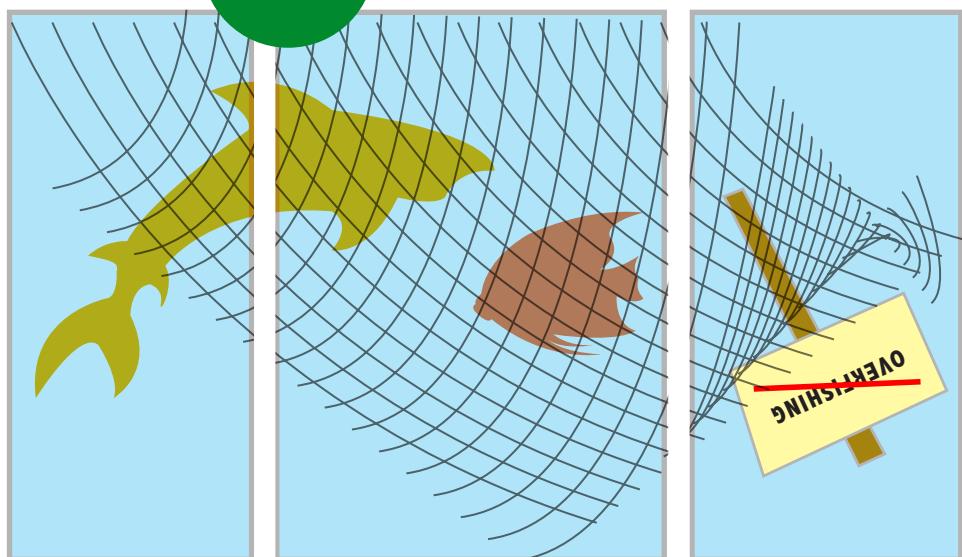
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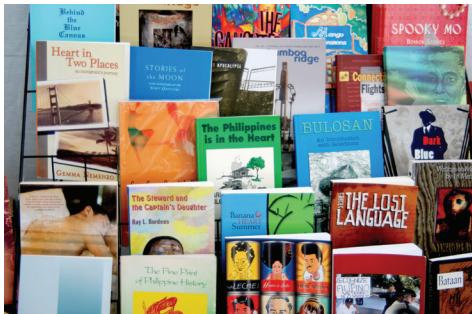
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Letter from the Editor

"Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect."

- Chief Seattle, leader of the Suquamish and Duwamish Native American tribes

The power of the person. I was in my Chicana/o studies course when our guest speaker, Dolores Huerta, sent us this resounding message. She was commanding our mediation efforts at middle schools around the L.A. area. I reflected on what "the power of the person" meant beyond that class: what kind of power do we have as students, as an API community and people of this world? After all, we play a role in shaping our lives, the lives of others and the world we dwell in. In this sense, there is continuity and interconnectedness in our everyday action. Imagine!—how much positive change can we initiate during our lifetime? Our efforts to conserve energy and our natural resources mean thinking forwardly for the future generation. Our endeavors to fight for a cause, advocate for our community and share our experience mean strengthening our "web of life." What will you do with *your* power? *Each one, teach one.* This model of the Community Programs Office has set a tone for the way my view of the world. We all have our networks (friends, family, classmates, co-workers, acquaintances) and they affect you in some way or some form, big or small. But what if we talked to one person, or five people or even twenty, about an issue we cared about? And what if they join us to take action? Margaret Mead cautioned us to "never doubt that a small number of dedicated people can change the world," and it's true. With people, passion and patience—*yes, we can.* But this spring issue is not just about earth conservation and environmental activism; it is about self-sustainability. This ever-growing, fast-paced world is characterized by our own busy schedules, dietary habits, high levels of stress and mental illness—among many other indicators of modern-day living. It is equally important to sustain ourselves, and gain a sense of rejuvenation everyday in our academics and work. In the hype of technological advancement, remember to keep it real and keep it organic. Being an advocate and activist will certainly have its challenges. But by being true to yourself and respecting each other and the process you must undertake (to win a campaign, to raise awareness, etc.), that is where the true growth lies. Keep it grassroots: for the people, by the people, with the people.

In solidarity,

Malina Tea Tran

Editor-in-Chief



TASTE THEN WASTE

By Stepfanie Aguilar

ninety-nine bottles
of water, soda, juice,
alcohol on the wall
to one hundred,
two HUNDRED
one thousand
two and a half MILLION
are there ways to decrease
that amount
without
wasting them all?

Plastic. Recycle it. Or re-use. Or refrain from its usage overall. Any ALTERNATIVES you can think of? Drink from bottles to taste then waste. Throw away. Many. Those bright blue bins with arrows following each other create adventures for the plastic, the paper. Mounds of trash. Not seen, but we know. No more to MASS production that leads to the MASSIVE amount of garbage filled with bottles, cans, plastic, plastic bags, paper, paper bags, neglected batteries, cell phones and inkjet cartridges. The recycling bin or the trash can? Clean or trash our world?

REDUCE RE-USE RECYCLE

REDUCE the bottles consumed
RE-USE plates, utensils, containers
YES TO REFILL AND NO TO LANDFILL

JOIN PacTies STAFF NEXT YEAR | 2010-2011

Since 1977, we have been committed to serving the Asian Pacific Islander community on-campus and beyond. Be a part of our dynamic staff! Staff positions available in writing, editing, advertising, photography, website development, design, illustration and more! Experience preferred, but not required.

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Glossary

We cover so many topics and issues here at PacTies that language often gets technical. Here's a handy little glossary to help you out while reading through the issue. Throughout our publication, you will find various acronyms related to the ways we identify ourselves:

AA: Asian American
AAPI: Asian American Pacific Islander
APIA: Asian Pacific Islander American
APA: Asian Pacific American
API: Asian Pacific Islander
AATP: Asian American Tutorial Project
AB540: Assembly Bill 540
BS: Big Straw
CITES: Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
CPO: Community Programs Office
DREAM Act: The Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act
E3: Ecology, Economy, Equity (student group at UCLA)
Enka: Japanese musical genre
HOPE: Higher Opportunity Program for Education
Hikikomori: self-confining people who shut themselves in their rooms to avoid judgment from society
IDEAS:
JACCC: Japanese American Cultural and Community Center
KASEO: Koreatown Awareness Student Educational Outreach
KORE: Khmer Outreach Retention and Education
NYU: New York University
PETA: People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
SB1070: Senate Bill 1070
TASSEL: Thai American Students for Success in Education and Leadership
TS: Thai Smakom
UC: University of California

Cover Art

Designed by ALICE MONGKONGLITE



For Alice, creative genius and insomniac nights and Passion Pit were ingredients for this cover. This spring's cover is centered around growth through awareness. By planting the seeds of knowledge, we learn about community issues--especially affecting the environment--and becoming agents for a better, more organic future.

NEWSPRINT

FEEDING YOUR APPETITE WITH SHORT NEWS ITEMS THAT YOU CAN REALLY SINK YOUR TEETH INTO +
IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF LOCAL, REGIONAL & NATIONAL NEWS FOR THOSE WHO ARE HUNGRY FOR MORE

Ads Plea for Asians to Test for Hepatitis

May 2, 2010



An older man receives his hepatitis B vaccination.

A provocative advertising campaign by San Francisco Hep B Free aims to eradicate hepatitis B by providing citywide vaccinations against the disease.

One of the more provoking images in their campaign features ten beauty queens smiling and dressed in beautiful gowns. Written across the photograph is, "Which one deserves to die?"

The image is serene and the message is shocking, but the campaign ultimately aims to rouse the Asian population into confronting the public health hazard of hepatitis B.

San Francisco health officials estimate that 1 in 10 residents of Asian descent are infected with the virus, a percentage that contributes to the nation's highest rate of liver cancer. In the general population, about 1 in 1,000 people are infected with hepatitis B, which attacks the liver.

Leaders of the Chinese American community, which is the largest Asian ethnicity in San Francisco, believe that a large part of the problem is due to the stigma associated with the disease, which is an endemic in much of Asia.

The advertisements hope to encourage people to get a simple blood test, because hepatitis B can be treated and prevented.

Fiona Ma, a state assemblywoman from San Francisco, who is also Chinese American, claims that if people knew that hepatitis could affect those they care about, they might want to talk about it.

The disease often shows few symptoms in its victims, and it manifests itself when it is already too late, said Dr. Edward Chow, vice president of the San Francisco Health Commission.

The campaign, which will also incorporate photographs depicting families, a basketball team, a group of doctors and office workers, is being published in several languages, including Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean.

Asian Civil Rights Groups Challenge Arizona's Bill

May 15, 2010

The Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC), Asian American Justice Center (AAJC) and a coalition of other civil rights groups filed a class action lawsuit this month in the U.S. District Court, challenging Arizona's new law requiring police to demand "papers" from people they stop who they suspect are not authorized to be in the U.S. This law, the coalition argued, invites the racial profiling of people of color, which violates the First Amendment and interferes with federal law.

"This extreme law puts Arizona completely out of step with American values of fairness and equality," said Julie Su, litigation director of the APALC. "In a state where U.S. citizens of Japanese descent were interned during World War II, it is deeply troubling that a law that would mandate lower-class treatment of people of color, immigrants and others seen to be outsiders would pass in 2010. APALC and its sister affiliate Asian American Justice Center, as members of the Asian American Center for Advancing Justice, joined this lawsuit to defend the rights of Asian Americans in Arizona as well as to stand in solidarity with Latino, immigrant rights, civil liberties and other organizations fighting this oppressive new law."

Attacks on Asian Americans Possibly Racially Motivated

May 15, 2010

Recent attacks on Asian immigrants have prompted the Asian American community in San Francisco to protest, drawing anger from a community that has generally kept quiet in fear of retaliation.

Mrs. Cheng, who does not want to be identified further, was pushed off a public transit platform in March. She was knocked unconscious and awoke a few minutes later with her front teeth knocked out and a mouth full of blood. Mrs. Cheng's neighbor, an 83-year-old Chinese immigrant, had been beaten into a coma in January and died in March.

Such attacks have made the Asian American community wonder if they are the targets of racially motivated violence. Police have said that in all cases, the attackers were African American teenagers.

Chia-Chi Li, an organizer of a rally condemning the attacks on Asians, pointed out that although San Francisco is an activist city, the Asian American community is not a generally activist population.

The tension between the Asian American and African American community is due to steady growth of Asians, and decline of blacks. Asian Americans are also moving into predominantly African American neighborhoods due to affordable housing.

The elderly, young and women have been the main victims of the violence.

UCLA Alumnae, Activists Killed in Tragic Car Accident are Remembered

May 8, 2010

UCLA alumnae and undocumented student activists Cinthya Felix and Tam Ngoc Tran passed away on Saturday after a car accident in Trenton, Maine. Both were involved with the founding of IDEAS, an advocacy and support group for undocumented students. For many, their efforts in higher education despite their citizenship status was inspiring. Felix was a student of Columbia's public health graduate program, and Tran was a doctoral student of the American civilization department at Brown University. Their memorial service on May 10 in Moore Hall brought together families, friends, administrators and student leaders who celebrated their legacies.

Music of China Ensemble Performs for Spring Festival of World Music and Jazz

May 15, 2010

As part of UCLA's annual Spring Festival of World Music and Jazz, the Music of China Ensemble performed in Schoenberg Hall on May 15, featuring folk music, folk dance, opera, and bamboo music from various parts of China. Students of various ethnicities played a variety of Chinese musical instruments, including the *erhu*, a two-string fiddle popular in China and the *sheng*, an ancient mouth organ with 17 or 21 bamboo pipes, and also sang opera on stage in front of family, friends, and fans.

Director of the ensemble was Professor Li Chi, a highly accomplished artist on the *erhu* and educator of Chinese music. After graduating from the Conservatory of Chinese Music (Beijing), Li was an *erhu* soloist at the National Traditional Orchestra of China (the most renowned orchestra of Chinese musical instruments) and performed in renowned venues such as the Madison Square Garden in N.Y. or the Ronald Reagan building in Washington D.C.

The Last Airbender Casting Stirs Controversy

May 2, 2010

The movie industry, especially in Hollywood, is a realm where fans constantly object to bad adaptations, but the issue of casting actors of the "right" ethnicity stirs tremendous controversy.

Films with Asian characters played by non-Asians are typically scrutinized, and *The Last Airbender* is no exception.

M. Night Shyamalan's adaptation of the popular Cartoon Network series features white actors playing supposedly Asian characters, though the ethnicities of the actual characters in the series are actually quite ambiguous. However, the series does carry elements of Chinese and Tibetan cultures and is heavily influenced by Asian martial arts.

Some Asian American fans of the series are appalled that white actors are playing the main roles.

Noah Ringer, a tae-kwon-do champion from Texas, was cast for the role of Aang, the protagonist of the series and of the film. *Twilight*'s Jackson Rathbone and Nicola Peltz from *Deck the Halls* were cast as his best friends Sokka and Katara. Some other characters in the film are going to be played by Asian actors, such as *Slumdog Millionaire*'s Dev Patel in the role of the villainous Prince Zuko.

Some Asian Americans saw the film's casting as the latest insult from an industry where it was once common for white actors to play stereotypical Asian caricatures, such as squinting their eyes and speaking in bad accents, and in which Asian actors were confined to stereotypical roles as well.

But Shaun Toub, an Iranian-born actor, noted that if the film had cast all Asian characters, then people would have a problem with that as well, attempting to argue that it is stereotypical to place Asians in anything that has to do with martial arts.

"Ultimately, this movie, and then the three movies, will be the most culturally diverse tent pole of movies ever released, period," said Shyamalan.

The film is scheduled to be released on July 2, 2010.

Denny Chin Confirmed for NY Appeals Court, Only Asian American US Circuit Judge

April 22, 2010

The United States Senate confirmed Denny Chin, a Federal District Court judge in Manhattan, to the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

The confirmation arrived by a 98 to 0 vote, making Denny Chin the only active Asian American U.S. circuit judge on a U.S. Court of Appeals.

Judge Chin has been involved in numerous prominent cases, including that of Bernard L. Madoff, whom he sentenced to 150 years in prison for his Ponzi scheme.

Judge Chin, 56, was born in Hong Kong and immigrated to the U.S. with his family when he was two years old. His father worked as a cook in Chinese restaurants, and his mother worked as a seamstress in Chinatown. He graduated from Princeton, and received his law degree at Fordham University.

President Obama nominated Judge Chin to the Second Circuit in October 2009. The circuit is known for its decisions in financial and white-collar cases.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ZADE ROSENTHAL

For the Love of Education

Why the DREAM Act Matters for Students

By TUYEN BUI

As a second generation Vietnamese American who came to America as a baby, I was considered an “illegal alien” until I was 12 years old. All my older siblings had reached age 18 and were able to acquire citizenship through tests, and my younger brother had been born in the U.S. It was just me and my parents left in limbo without citizenship. As a young child, I remember not really understanding why becoming a citizen was so urgent. At the age of 12, I felt naively excited at the thought of changing my name and becoming more “American” in the citizenship process.

Coming to UCLA has definitely challenged and broadened my critical consciousness of the world and the communities surrounding me. After learning the stories of many AB540 students and their unjust struggles, I was baffled by how long this issue has been prolonged. It was then that I realized that it

higher education.

It is an education crisis when students have to resort to “under the table” jobs after receiving their hard-earned degrees in higher education. It is a sad moment when a high school student sees her education as having little relevance to her own life because she knows that she cannot work the “system” to her advantage in the future. It is deeply troubling for me to see the rest of the student population going about their lives and enjoying their documentation privileges without any awareness or social responsibility for others who cannot drive, travel, or receive federal student aid. It sickens my stomach to see the current sentiment of Arizona’s SB1070 upheld, which legalizes racial profiling and fires English teachers who have accents. The education crisis becomes painfully ironic when we mandate two years of foreign language education for UC

all boiled down to one question: Should education be a right or a privilege? Unlike many people who view the DREAM Act as an immigration reform bill, I view this issue as an education crisis, in which various students are denied the rights to the benefits of

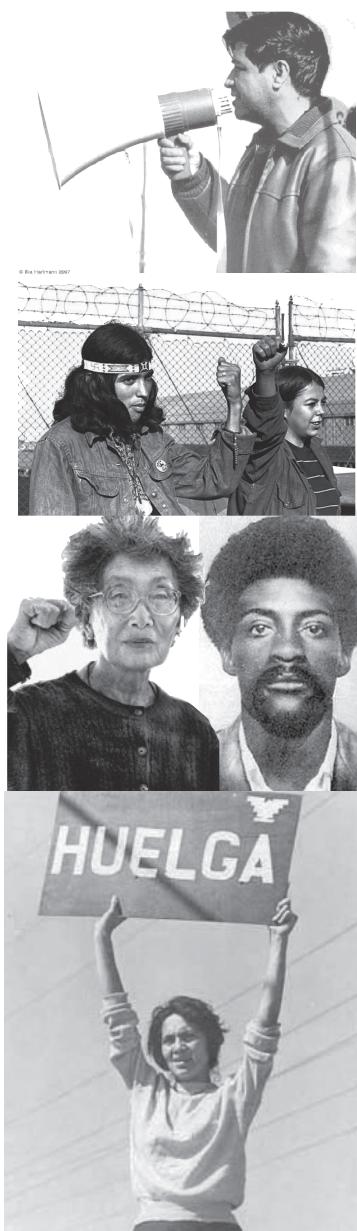
applications while, at the same time, hearing the echoes of “It’s America, speak English!”

In light of the recent deaths of undocumented student activists Tam Tran and Cinthya Felix, I ask students to consider the role of immigrants in achieving higher education. Both Tran and Felix were UCLA graduates attending Brown University and Columbia University, respectively. Despite the lack of financial aid available to them due to their statuses, they worked earnestly to fund their tuitions. They helped found an advocacy and support group for undocumented students, created media documentaries, and testified their stories to Congress, our campus and beyond to shed light on their circumstances. Their fight was a fight for educational access.

I strongly urge students – especially API students – to reflect on our privileges as students and to understand this issue through the lens of an education battle. No matter how you feel about immigration reform, it is still important to acknowledge that many students did not have a say in their undocumented status. I myself could have easily fallen into the AB540 student category and had not known it. So could you, or the people that you know. In these difficult times, assuming your social responsibility and educating yourself about the DREAM Act is crucial.

Empowerment through Ethnic Studies

By AN NGOC LE



César Chávez
Dolores Huerta
Ella Baker
Stokely Carmichael
Bunchy Carter
John Huggins
Angela Davis
Yuri Kochiyama
Ronald Takaki
Angel Island
Executive Order 9066
Freedom Riders
Alcatraz Island
Mendez v. Westminster
Freedom Summer
Thurgood Marshall
Harvey Milk...

of history has become further encased in concrete cinder blocks. Teachers and students are trapped within these walls, erected out of ignorance and bigotry. With one stroke of the pen, thousands of young lives across Arizona (and potentially other states) were denied a social studies curriculum that teaches tolerance and understanding. The ethnic studies ban in the state of Arizona is a wake-up call for all of us who truly believe in the importance of a critical pedagogy in education.

Ethnic studies do not promote resentment nor do they create divisions among its students—on the contrary, they bring unity to students across different ethnic and racial lines. Through ethnic studies, I realized that the struggles of other marginalized communities were similar to those of my own community. The personal is the political. The Forever 21 skirts and blouses that many women purchase today are made by “invisible” sweatshop laborers who are Mexican, Vietnamese, Ecuadorian, Khmer, Thai, Lao, and Korean—the same people who are also our mothers, wives, sisters, aunts, and friends. Regardless of their ethnic or cultural differences, struggling minorities fight hard to ensure that they receive fair wages and fair treatment from their employers. Their struggles are my struggles.

Ethnic studies were never designed for students of a particular ethnic group. They are designed for all students in order to open their minds to the experiences of peoples in the U.S. from all walks of life, including marginalized groups. The ethnic studies movement of the 1960s and 1970s fought to have these courses taught in schools because the histories of oppressed, marginalized, and minority peoples in the U.S. were for the most part excluded from the social studies curriculum. With ethnic studies, this changed, and for good reason. It is the seemingly ordinary folk—the slaves, farmers, sweatshop laborers, janitors, line cooks and dishwashers—who make up the backbone of America.

Ethnic studies do not serve as pity parties for black, brown, yellow, and red students demanding reparations from oppressors. Instead, they are a gateway to making students more open-minded and critical of what they are taught in school. Minorities have a right to demand that voices and histories are heard and taught in schools. Ethnic studies have taught me to love my country and even advocate on behalf of it. It is because I love my country that I work hard to make sure that America’s founding principles and rights are protected, and that these rights extend to all who live and work in it.

Understanding self, others through relevant education

These names and words evoke a powerful sense of strength and solidarity. But if we look at them from a linear perspective, both the events and individuals have passed on—recovered only in words, photos, museums, documentaries, and memorials. They remain alive only when people learn about them generations later.

The typical K-12 education curriculum in the U.S. generally teaches history from a narrow, linear perspective. In high school, I heard about people such as César Chávez, Ella Baker, and Thurgood Marshall and learned about their accomplishments, but I never truly understood the significance that they had in our collective history and present lives. Even worse, countless individuals, events, and histories were never mentioned—Mendez v. Westminster, Executive Order 9066, and Freedom Riders, just to name a few.

Upon entering UCLA as an undergraduate, I was overwhelmed to see a more comprehensive selection of history and ethnic studies courses available, courses with names such as “Southeast Asian Crossroads,” “20th Century Jazz in African American History,” and even “The Vietnamese American Experience.”

Ethnic studies gave meaning and significance to my life—with it, I gained a critical consciousness. It allowed for the voices of my parents, grandparents, and ancestors to be heard and recognized. I realized then that I am a product of their herstory; I am a member of an oppressed people in a war-torn country, many who fled as refugees with only a small sack of rice and one change of clothes. I am a product of communist indignation and capitalist exploitation. I am a product of those who gave their blood, sweat, and tears so that I didn’t have to hustle through the daily grind just to survive.

Ethnic studies challenged all preconceived notions I had about the study of herstory. Hystory is not just a study of the past, present, or future. We all live and breathe history and hystory lives and breathes among us.

Over the past several months, a series of unthinkable events have occurred, forever altering the landscape of America’s education system. My heart drops in anger and frustration as the devaluation of education in America continues its destructive course. It is already unfortunate that thousands of students across the U.S. are getting history through a linear vacuum, which instills for some a belief that hystory is irrelevant and impersonal. But in Arizona, the study

“It is the seemingly ordinary folk—the slaves, farmers, sweatshop laborers, janitors, line cooks and dishwashers—who make up the backbone of America.”

(Note: “Hystory” and “herstory” are inclusive and alternative terms for the word “history,” which is viewed by progressive activists and scholars to be hegemonic recounts by and of dominant groups and patriarchy-based society.)

Breaking the Silence

By SHIRLEY MAK

For many, college is a difficult time – moving away from home, making new friends, and struggling to stay on top of academics can be challenges for even the most unfazed individuals. However, for some, college isn't just difficult – it's unbearable.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, suicide is the third highest cause of death among the 15-to-24 age group in America. Recent studies have also shown that API students in particular are at high risk. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recently reported that APIs are more likely to commit suicide than the average American.

As part of a model minority, API students often face immense pressure from their families, peers, and society to succeed both in and outside of school. At the same time, their reluctance to talk about their failures and doubts may cause many who have depression to suffer alone. Jenny Liu, a fourth year economics major at UCLA and winner of the 2010 Jerry Greenspan Student Voice Award, an annual award designed to encourage dialogue about mental health on campuses and reduce the stigma surrounding emotional disorders, was one such student.

Liu suffered from depression starting from her freshman year in college and encountered firsthand the stigma surrounding the illness, encapsulated by the first time she considered seeking help from Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), a counseling center at UCLA that offers students psychological services.

"I remember walking back and forth in front of the building and debating whether or not to go in," said Liu. "But I never did it because it was a scary feeling and embarrassing. I felt like it was just a phase and something I was going through and could get over it."

For many APIs, being silent when it comes to confronting depression and other mental health issues may be related to how they were raised.



"Our families pressure us to do really well and we're perfectionists so we're not used to dealing with failing or things going wrong. When it does happen, especially in college, we (may) get depressed and not tell anyone about it," Liu said. "Being Chinese and talking to other Asian people, people like to talk about their accomplishments...rather than reveal their insecurities or the problems they might have. Seeing a counselor has a bad connotation; (people think) 'Oh she's not doing that well.'"

"It'll be good to let students see that people can be successful in doing what they do while dealing with a mental health issue."

- Jenny Liu

The pressure that results from the desire to live up to the model minority ideal is a theme that was explored in this year's Chinese American Culture Night (CACN), which took place on May 1 in Royce Hall. Put on by the Association of Chinese Americans, CACN focused primarily on exploring gang violence and mental health issues in the Asian American community, particularly on the overachiever mentality and suicide. The production included a screening of an interview with a CAPS counselor, who discussed suicide in relation to the model minority idea and its impact on Asian American students.

According to the counselor, the idea that all Asian Americans do well in school, do well in work, and have few social problems is often ingrained within the culture itself.

Among API females, body image is often an issue as well, putting API women at even greater risk for suicide and depression. API women ages 15 to 24 lead in the highest suicide rate amongst all ethnic groups, according to the Department of Health and Human Services.

Liu discussed her battle with an eating disorder along with depression in her award-winning essay for the Greenspan award.

"A lot of Asian girls are really skinny and there's the pressure to (adhere to) the image of being the petite Asian girl. And if you don't have that you just feel really down and low," Liu said.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JENNY LIU

Liu's paintings allowed her to express feelings about mental issues.

While depression, suicide, and eating disorders are often considered taboo topics for many college students, opening up the discussion about mental health has helped many students begin the recovery process. Awards such as the Jerry Greenspan Student Voice Award for Mental Health encourage students to reach out to their peers and raise awareness of mental health problems on campus. As part of her contest entry, Liu submitted pieces of her art.

"I try to open up the conversation about mental health in my paintings...one of (them) has a picture of a girl confined within a measuring tape just to show how being really skinny isn't healthy at all," Liu said.

Liu is also an events director for Active Minds, a student organization at UCLA dedicated to promoting awareness about mental health and reducing the stigma of mental illness on the college campus. Some of Liu's paintings were recently displayed in "A Piece of Mind," an art exhibit organized by Active Minds that encouraged students to submit poetry and artwork in order to speak out about mental health.

"I just thought for me, drawing was a really good outlet to express my mental health problems and feelings. If I couldn't talk about it, drawing was my source of therapy, and I wanted other students to do the same. Maybe they couldn't speak out because they were too nervous, but if they had another way to express themselves, then it's good and healthy," Liu said. "It'll be good to let students see that people can be successful in doing what they do while dealing with a mental health issue."

BREAKING THE SILENCE: STATISTICS

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For more information about Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), visit <http://www.counseling.ucla.edu/> or call

Free Mental Health Services Help Line:
1-800-834-6817

STRUGGLES FROM THE STREETS

the AMERICAN PRISON-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX & the ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER COMMUNITY

By LAYHEARN TEP and MALINA TEA TRAN

While some young adults were preparing for college, others were preparing for time behind bars.

"Gang life prepares you to go to prison," said Johnny Ty, a 27-year-old former gang member of the Tiny Oriental Posse (TOP). TOP has been recognized as one of the most violent Asian gangs in West Valley City, Utah. "You've been seeing your friends going to jail all the time. It's glorified."

Ty's story reflects the high number of Asian Pacific Islanders who are incarcerated and enter the prison-industrial complex every year. APIs are the fastest growing population in prison, having increased by 250 percent from 1990 to 2000. Despite the model minority myth, the API community has the largest growing percentage of youth incarcerated; in 2004, the Services and Advocacy for Asian Youth Consortium reported that the API conviction rate is 28 percent higher than all other racial groups.

For many APIs, gang life often starts at a young age.

In first grade, Ty befriended people who were involved with or knew other gang members. For Ty, whose family immigrated to America in the early 1980s after the Cambodian genocide, gangs were a form of protection. Their settlement in Utah was a difficult one; tension between recent immigrants and the predominantly white Mormon population often led to harassment.

"Being born in Utah, from a refugee family, I didn't fit in automatically," Ty said. "A classmate of mine once said, 'Do you know about Jesus? Your parents never told you about Jesus? Then you're going to hell!'"

Childhood taunts spiraled into race riots during Ty's middle school and high school years. According to the West Valley City Comprehensive Gang Model Survey, high school students in West Valley City often experience intimidation and violence on a regular basis.

After witnessing a friend getting shot in middle school, Ty started carrying a gun for protection. Often humiliated for being Asian, he felt a pressing need to protect and be protected by others.

"There were very few Mexicans, Pacific Islanders, and no African Americans. There weren't that many Asians," Ty said. "The other students would pull and slant their eyes and make fun of me...we (minorities) got to stick together."

But Ty was also looking for a place that would accept him, a community he could identify with.

"When we go home, our parents are working low-paying jobs," Ty said. "They don't have time to watch you. It's like

being homeless. What we missed at home, we created in the streets."

Staff members at West Valley City high schools noted that family problems can sometimes lead to gang activity. More students are inclined to join gangs if another family member

ans), and Pacific Islanders, immigrants or refugees, poor, low-achieving in school and without parents to provide for them, found themselves in the streets.

"You get beat up at school, you go home (and) you get beaten because your parents are wondering why you got beat up," Ty said. "They felt as if we started it. They never understood we got mocked, so who do you really have? Your friends, who have your back."

In 2004, Ty was charged for burglary and in 2009, he was convicted of attempted murder. Six years ago, 13 other gang members of TOP were arrested and incarcerated in different facilities throughout the nation. Ty went to the Lompoc Federal Correctional Institution.

While Ty learned survival skills in jail, he also developed a passion for learning. He read everything from *The Godfather* to books about politics.

Eddy Zheng, project manager of Community Youth Center (CYC) in San Francisco and former prison inmate from Oakland, experienced something similar when he was imprisoned as a youth.

"It took me to go to prison to realize that knowledge is power," said Zheng, who learned to read and write in English during his time in prison. Zheng also became politicized during that time, recognizing how warfare and immigration has interplayed with the prison-industrial complex.

In regards to war-torn countries, especially in Southeast Asia, the U.S. "accepted them as refugees, but when they came over, they put them in the ghettos," said Zheng. Immigrants and refugees are then faced with further obstacles.

"They have to deal with language barriers, gentrification; they have to fight to survive," said Zheng, who immigrated to America at the age of 12. "Yet, we blame them and lock them up."

Now 37 years old, Zheng has compiled an anthology of stories, poetry, and art from API prisoners called *Other*. He currently works with Bay Area youth through CYC, which offers employment services and after-school tutoring.

"We outreach to the students and offer alternatives to violence," Zheng said. "We offer them a safe space for self-esteem and education."

Ty returned to Utah and is now a part-time worker and community college student. He wants to make a name for himself and earn an honest living. However, his identity and community are still strongly rooted in his gang.

"You can never really leave the life of a gang," said Ty. "You live, walk, and breathe the gang. As long as you have the tattoo, you'll always be a member."

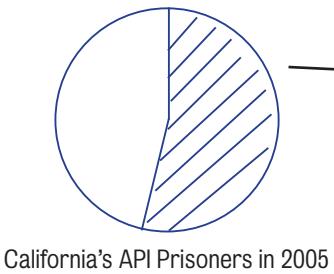
Ty's tattooed arms show his identity: etched on his right forearm is TOP (which stands for Tiny Oriental Posse), writing in Khmer on his right forearm and his hometown, West Valley on his wrist.

is in a gang, if there is a lack of parental support and supervision, or if they come from working parents and single-parent families.

With both his parents working and being teased by his peers, Ty found it difficult to be motivated in school.

"We were supposed to get good grades," Ty said. "It's weird, but that's not how we grew up. We didn't have goals. You don't see anybody doing anything in life (sic)."

The surrounding violence, coupled with familial neglect, forced Ty and others like him to seek solace in gangs. The conditions of those in the gang were very much similar to his: many of them were Southeast Asians (Laotians and Cambodi-



In California,
64.6%
of API prisoners were
immigrants and refugees

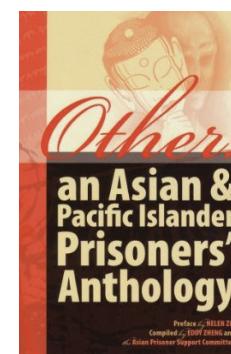
Among them, the largest populations
were Vietnamese and Filipino, followed
by Pacific Islanders and Laotians

1994 2006



FROM 1990 TO 2000,
API prison population grew by
250%
while overall prison population grew by 77%

Increase in API prison
population within 8
years
9,825 12,799



Other: an Asian & Pacific Islander Prisoners' Anthology, compiled by Eddy Zheng, is the first book to highlight stories and experiences of API prisoners

features

THINKING
globally

ASIAN NATIONS ENDANGERING SPECIES

for many people, the first word that comes to mind when eyeing a plateful of sushi is "delicious." However, as the recent Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) has demonstrated, when it comes to sushi, there is much more at stake than a piece of raw fish.

CITES, an international agreement between governments established in 1975 that protects more than 30,000 different species of animals and plants, had its 15th meeting last March. For many conservationists, it was a day of disappointment. Due to aggressive lobbying tactics by Japanese delegates, who have long held a commercial interest in sinking bids to protect marine species, the conference concluded without providing any trade protections for Atlantic bluefin tuna and four species of sharks (scalloped hammerhead, oceanic white tip, porbeagle, and spiny dogfish), two marine groups that are currently in rapid decline.

Japan, which imports 80% of the Atlantic bluefish catch, was able to convince developing countries during the conference – Libya, Egypt, and Zambia, to name a few – to vote against the ban. Their tactic of persuading poor island nations to vote with them in return for investment in their fishing industries is not new. *The Cove*, Louie Psihogios' espionage documentary about dolphin drives in Taiji, Japan, touched upon Japan's long history of hunting marine life and recently won an Oscar for Best Documentary. Popular television shows such as "South Park" has also satirized Japan's blatant disregard for protecting marine species, a phenomenon that will have far-reaching effects on the environment.

"Sharks are top predators. When you remove top predators from a system, every single level underneath them is affected. That means that the top predator won't be controlling the level below it, so whatever those sharks are eating will go up in number, and whatever those things are eating will go down in number. It's called a trophic cascade," said Debra Pires, an associate professor in the UCLA life sciences department.

In recent years, overfishing by Japan and other nations has also taken its toll on the environment.

"Commercial fishing is wiping out biodiversity, as miles of nets sweep up all the fish in their path – and take coral habitats with them," said Ryan Huling, senior college campaign coordinator and spokesperson for PETA. "Commercial fishers have

devastated the ocean's ecosystems to the extent that large fish populations are only 10 percent of what they were in the 1950s."

Despite scientific evidence that calls for protection of marine species, countries such as China and Japan seem to believe that commercial interest in sharks and bluefish tuna far outweighs any potential negative effects resulting from their depletion.

"If you look at big organizations that focus on environmental issues, they are European or American organizations," said Julia Kim, a second year linguistics and French major. "I think it has a lot to do with culture...in Asia, food is food, and they also place a lot of emphasis on health benefits derived from animals. Certain parts of animals, such as the shark fin, have medicinal value."

With the lack of API representation in major environmental movements and conferences such as CITES, one has to wonder if going green is simply not a huge priority in Asian countries.

"You don't see the same vegetarian slash vegan movements in Asia as you do in the West, and I think it's probably due to the standard of living," said Benison Pang, a third year ecology and evolutionary biology major. "Asia, with a few exceptions, consists of developing countries. Whereas in the West they have the luxury of thinking of where the food comes from, in developing countries they're thinking about whether they can get food or not."

Environmental awareness and activism may be more of a luxury in some countries than in others.

"If I was starving and poor, the environment probably wouldn't be the first thing on my mind either," said Laurel Brewer, a first year ecology and evolutionary biology major and member of Bruins for Animals.

While it can be easy to put the blame on countries perpetrating the decline of some of the ocean's most valuable populations, the lack of environmental consciousness among Asians and APIs may be limited to big corporations and government officials rather than to individuals.

"I don't necessarily think that the Japanese people don't care about the situation. I think that in Japan, just like in America, there are certain people who are more environmentally conscious than others," said Dorothy Le, a 2007 UCLA alumnus who majored in environmental science and was a former leader of E3, an

environmental and social justice organization based in UCLA.

"Japanese fishing corporations have a vested interest in keeping fishing alive because that's what their livelihoods depend on. I really don't think it's a matter of East versus West, because if you look at Japanese policy, other than fishing, they have done remarkable things for the environment." In many Asian nations, depictions of nature and the environment appear grounded in the culture itself.

Different types of Asian art are centered around nature. There are celebrations during certain times of the year where they harvest certain things from rivers," said Pires. "I don't think that APIs do not care (about the environment). It's just that conservation is sometimes called the luxury of the rich...and conservation practices make things more expensive." ■

What do Americans like to eat? Michael Pollan answers this question and much more in this bestselling non-fiction book, which follows consumed food in all forms – whether it is industrially produced, organic or alternative, or that which we forage ourselves.

The Omnivore's Dilemma
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While major environmental movements and organizations have traditionally been headed by a white majority, a recent poll conducted by the California League of Conservation Voters Education Fund in 2009 showed that Asian American (AA) environmentalists are on the rise. Of the more than 1,000 AA California voters surveyed, 83% of them described themselves as environmentalists.

"One reason why APIs are at least generally aware of and care about environmental issues may be because many of them are immigrants who realize that going green – using and buying less – is economical," said Debbie Chong, a 2009 UCLA alumnus who majored in geography and environmental studies and currently works as a naturalist at the National Recreational Area in San Francisco.

"Also, because many of us settled or live in cities, we know that

environmental destruction and pollution is very damaging to human health and aesthetically displeasing as well."

Although many Asian Americans do have a vested interest in the environment, more work can be done in terms of encouraging more APIs to get involved in environmental movements and organizations.

"In terms of leadership, it has been predominantly white males," said Le. "I think that has to do with the fact that many members of colored communities have been disenfranchised in many ways and it's hard when you're looking for jobs. In the past,

the leadership of environmental movements has not been in touch with people of color, but now we can see that there are more links between the two things. I really hope it continues to progress because I think all people need to think about the environment."

APIs often counter unique challenges when they pursue environmental studies both in school and as a career.

"When I was working at the Sierra Club, I was just one out of a handful of Asian Americans...there's the initial barrier of even applying in the first place knowing that (you'll) be a very distinct minority," Chong said.

Parental disapproval can also be a discouraging factor.

"The environmental sector is still an emerging field and if you work for a non-profit or for a small organization, the jobs aren't that stable and the salaries aren't very comparable to more lucrative professions, such as law or medicine," Chong said. "I feel like our community in general has the notion that it may not be worth it because it's a new field and the pay isn't necessarily that great."

Well-known conferences such as CITES can be helpful in educating the public on the importance of environmentalism and the people who lead it.

"I think even getting the word out is really helpful," said Brewer. "Stuff gets out into the media and people like you or me read it and take grassroots action."

For many, the beginning of a "green" education has its roots at the university.

"I encounter students all the time who haven't even heard about the (CITES) issue and who come into my class and find out about it and decide to do a project because they're used to eating sushi and shrimp and loving it," said Professor Rebecca Shipe, a UCLA professor in the ecology and environmental biology department.

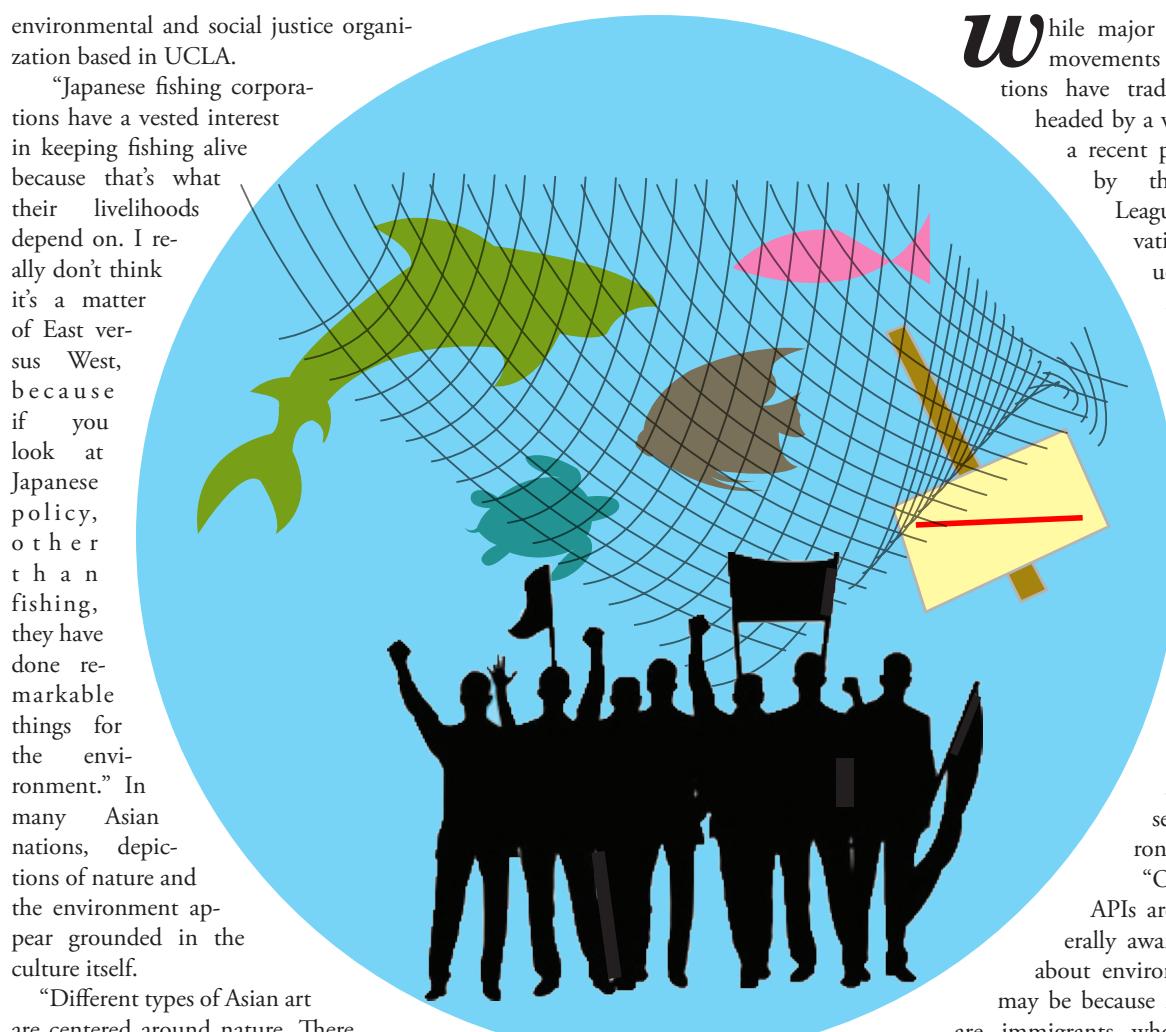
"Any awareness is a good thing, because a lot of the time people just don't know the impact of their actions."

- Professor Shipe, ecology & environmental biology department

ogy department. "Any awareness is a good thing, because a lot of the time people just don't know the impact of their actions."

As future leaders, students often find themselves at the forefront of the growing environmental movement, a trend that will hopefully continue.

"I definitely think it's important for students to get involved, especially students of color, whether it's through (environmental groups) or the respective groups that they're already in," said Le. "E3 is a great group to learn about the issues and to incorporate some awareness in the groups you're already in or in everyday practices. As students, we're supposed to be leaders not just on campuses but in the future, so if we can't come out, get together, and work on campaigns, then it's harder to say that we can do it outside of school." ■



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Cultivating a Community Classroom

Tutoring groups seek to help L.A. students in need By AZUSA TAKANO

If you're able to read this sentence, you are fortunate. In some parts of the U.S., literacy has become something of a luxury. Today, thousands of people in the U.S. are unable to read, write, or comprehend the English language. A simple thing like reading is something we often take for granted, but there are many citizens who struggle to live their everyday lives because of this handicap.

In Los Angeles alone, the literacy rate has dropped tremendously over the last decade: an estimated 53% of the Los Angeles community is illiterate, and the numbers keep rising. One reason for this high percentage is the increasing number of immigrants entering the U.S. Furthermore, high school dropout rates are relatively high and add to the illiterate statistic. In communities with many immigrants, a vicious cycle is at work: adults who are unable to speak or write English cannot teach their children, who often struggle in school because of language deficiencies.

To help lower illiteracy rates and improve education for all, tutoring programs at UCLA provide free tutoring and mentorship for those struggling to read and write.

Established in 1969 as part of the Asian American Studies Center and consisting of students from UCLA, USC, and Occidental College, members of the Asian American Tutorial Project (AATP) visit Castelar Elementary School in Chinatown every Saturday to tutor English and math for grades one through six. Anna Lu, a fourth year French major at UCLA and longtime member of AATP, believes

that it's important to have these tutoring programs for those in need.

"Education is very important, and these communities need us," said Lu. "Especially in Los Angeles, it's a good thing that we go and help. We're just providing a little extra for these kids."

Despite their name, AATP does not only teach kids of Asian ethnicity. The demographics of the children in the program range from Latino to African American backgrounds.

"The most rewarding part of our program (in the long run) is when we see our tutees go onto levels of higher education."

- Andrew Chomchuensawat

AATP is also not the only student organization that provides free tutoring to kids in need. Korea town Awareness Student Education Outreach (KASEO) members visit Korea town and work with underprivileged children in the inner-city area. Rather than tutor English, they teach mathematics to middle school students. In addition to tutoring, the KASEO program stresses the importance of mentorship.

"We encourage our tutors to reach out," said Sunghun Kim, a fourth-year business and economics major at UCLA and member of KASEO. "We're here for the kids if they want to talk about their problems or anything else."

Programs such as AATP and KASEO hope that the encouragement and social experience that the children gain will help them with their education and self-confidence in the future.

In additional to the various student-run groups that assist children, there are also some that strive to improve literacy in adults as well. Though they don't have to do worksheets and take tests, adults have just as much incentive to learn English. Having some command of the English language is necessary for them to get around society, especially when it comes to filling out job applications or knowing the names of different streets. Project Literacy at UCLA provides both children and adults with free English tutoring. Students go to Baldwin Hills to aid those who are willing to learn English.

English tutoring programs can be beneficial to their tutors as well.

"An immediate satisfaction comes from seeing the children enjoy learning," said Andrew Chomchuensawat, a fourth year physiological science major at UCLA and president of Thai American Students for Success in Education and Leadership (TASSEL). "The most rewarding part of our program [in the long run] is when we see our tutees go onto levels of higher education."

LEARN MORE ABOUT OTHER OUTREACH PROJECTS AT UCLA

HOPE

Higher Opportunity Program for Education

HOPE attends 3 sites every week, providing high school students from underrepresented areas with tutoring services, peer advising and leadership development. Founded by the Vietnamese Student Union (VSU), HOPE targets many students: at-risk youth, English language learners and college-bound students. Each site serves specific needs in the Vietnamese and Southeast Asian community.

Sites:
Chinatown Branch Library, Westminster High, San Gabriel High

KORE

Khmer Outreach Retention and Education

Established by the United Khmer Students (UKS) at UCLA, KORE is a mentorship program that pairs college students with high school students in Long Beach. Together, the mentorship pairs provide support, advice on access to college and attend field trips to places such as the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and California Science Center. Once a year, KORE outreaches to all high school students to visit the UCLA campus.

Sites:
Polytechnic High, Millikan High, Jordan High, Wilson High, Long Beach High

SPACE

Samahang Pilipino Advancing Community Empowerment

SPACE engages at-risk, historically underrepresented, under served high school and community college students, supporting their efforts toward academic and personal achievement. SPACE has supported hundreds of students through services such as peer advising, tutoring, and workshops. Services are geared towards promoting academic success, personal well-being, community engagement, and the formulation of solid post-secondary plans.

Sites:
Belmont High, El Camino High, Marshall High

Angeleno Publishing Press Takes Off

By KAREN LEE

Awriter. A teacher. An editor. A publisher. An *artist*. Chiwan Choi is all of these things, and not exclusively just one.

Though born in Seoul, South Korea and raised in Paraguay until he was 10 years old, Choi considers himself a true Los Angelino. In Los Angeles, according to Choi, there is no pretentious literary scene, and Angelinos are able to write for the sake of writing.

Choi's poems and essays have been published in numerous magazines and journals such as *ONTHEBUS*, *Esquire*, and *Circa*, but *The Flood*, a collection of poetry, is his first book, published by Tia Chucha Press in April.

Tia Chucha Press is operated by Luis J. Rodriguez, who wrote the novel *Always Running* and is one of Choi's literary heroes.

"I met him years ago through a friend, who showed him some of my writing. He told my friend that he really liked my writing and wanted to see a full manuscript. It wasn't ready so I never showed him a manuscript," Choi said.

But the friend mentioned him again some time later, and Rodriguez once again requested a manuscript. After submitting one to Rodriguez at the beginning of 2009, Choi learned a few months later that Tia Chucha Press wanted to publish his book.

"It's completely humbling because it's out there now: my writing, flaws and all. Don't get me wrong. I'm incredibly excited, even giddy, but then I sit here and think, 'Now what?' And I realize, damn, back to writing," said Choi.

Choi literally stumbled upon writing when a friend convinced him to attend a UCLA Extension poetry-writing workshop when he was in high school, where he instantly fell in love with the art.

"I loved it... At the time, I was not quite sure with my English skills, so the writing made me feel confident about it... I started writing, which helped me not be afraid of reading (and) it made me want to write more," said Choi.

At the workshop, Choi met Jack Gapes, a teacher with whom he would spend the next 20-plus years studying writing.

"He has taught literally thousands of people in Los Angeles... His approach to writing is writing like he talks... to be true and honest to your writing," Choi said.

Choi graduated from UC Irvine in 1992 with a degree in Humanities with a film theory emphasis and attended the Tisch School at NYU in a MFA program in dramatic writing from 2002 to 2004.

However, living in New York opened Choi's eyes to just how talented Los Angeles writers are and how little respect they receive.

"Everyone outside Los Angeles thinks it's Hollywood... The truth is, when I was in New York or San Francisco, I was amazed at how good Los Angeles writers are... We're not very pretentious. We just work and write and we don't worry about other things. That is the true, hardcore aspect about Los Angeles writers," Choi said.

Living in Los Angeles has had a huge impact on Choi as a writer.

"I tell other writers, and other artists of all kinds, that Los Angeles is an incredible city for us because the city couldn't care less about what we do. There is no reputation that we need to live up to, no style that has defined us. So it gives me, as a writer, huge amounts of freedom to focus on writing," Choi said. "This city is so raw, open, mysterious, (and) violent, a city of working class people. What it's allowed me to do is to keep my writing simple and clean...to continue to explore only what matters to me."

"We're horribly miserable people, but I love writers."

- Chiwan Choi

"I find myself writing about the same scenes, the same moments...I think I just really like examining and re-examining the same picture until I feel I have seen all that I can see in it. And when I write about Los Angeles, it's never to make any grand statement about what the city is. It is merely the setting of my life, which means nothing and everything," Choi said.

In March 2008, Choi and his wife, Judeth Oden, estab-

A writer brings unpublished L.A. writers under one book

lished a publishing company, Writ Large Press, to publish exclusively Los Angeles writers.

"There were so many great writers we knew in the city that were not getting any recognition that we wanted to do our part. We're horribly miserable people, but I love writers," Choi said.

Writ Large Press has published two books since its inception, averaging to about a book a year, though Choi hopes that will change in the future.

"We found a distributor, Small Press Distribution. That might give us a little more freedom to squeeze out two books a year," Choi said.

The first book published by Writ Large Press was a poetry collection, *Who's to Say What's Home*, by Kim Calder, and the second, a playwriting exercise book titled *You Already Know* by Aaron Henne. A third, another poetry collection, will be published at the end of July.

Writ Large Press does not have a genre preference, but there are some writers they prefer over others.

"We haven't been taking submissions because we knew there were certain writers we wanted to publish already. We've been approaching them and going from there," Choi said.

Choi currently hosts monthly readings at The Last Bookstore, which features writers with self-published books. He also teaches two writing workshops, one on Monday nights in Santa Monica, and the other on Tuesday nights in his own apartment in downtown Los Angeles, where he lives with his wife and their dog Bella.

"I met so many writers over the years and they have asked me to have writing workshops... Sometimes I'll be stressed out and I'll meet with my group and feel better... Seeing them work is really inspiring and makes me feel not so alone," Choi said.

Choi is also working on a new poetry collection and a play that he originally wrote while he was at NYU and is in the process of rewriting. In "Drywall," Choi explores the idea of a son born to kill his father, "in order to replace him as part of the natural cycle of things."

As busy as Choi is with multiple projects, he proclaims in his blog: "I am sure, more than ever, that I will keep writing."

Finding Stardom Across Cultures

By SHIRLEY MAK

Nothing screams East-West fusion like an African American singer on stage in Los Angeles performing *enka*, a form of traditional Japanese music rarely heard in the U.S., much less from someone wearing gold chains, a baseball cap, and projecting in many ways the image of the stereotypical hip-hop singer. Except that *enka* is anything but hip-hop, and Jero, the man in the spotlight, has a voice that is, oddly enough, not out of place.

Jerome Charles White, Jr., more commonly known as Jero, is the first African American *enka* singer in the history of Japanese music, lauded for his angelic voice and unconventional appearance compared with his contemporaries in Japan.

Jero's mastery of the musical genre of *enka* is unusual in itself. Modern *enka* first developed as musical ballads that emerged in Japan's post-war era, often incorporating political texts that were made popular by activists during the late 19th century. *Enka* bears some resemblance to American blues and is typically sung by females wearing kimonos or other forms of traditional dress. Anyone who has seen one of Jero's music videos, however, knows that he does not fall in either of these categories.

On stage, Jero possessed a quiet humility that contrasted with his brazen manner of dress. He repeatedly thanked the audience sitting comfortably in the Aratani

Theatre in downtown Little Tokyo, a group made up of both the old and young, who laughed and cheered as Jero commented on the unusualness of his own clothing.

"When I was doing a commercial in Japan, I had to wear a kimono," Jero told the crowd. "But I still kept my baseball cap on."

"Jero in Concert" was one of many performances in March celebrating 30 years of Japanese arts, culture, and community, organized by the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC), the largest Asian American cultural center in the U.S. Along with Jero, taiko artist Kenny Endo and jazz musician Hiromi Uehara also performed.

But Jero's performance was especially sought after, as it marked his long-awaited U.S. concert debut since he first became a smash hit in Japan. Raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Jero fell in love with *enka* at a young age after listening to his Japanese grandmother's recordings of famous *enka* legends. Jero knew he wanted to become an *enka* singer then, but it wasn't until after he graduated college and went to Japan that his dreams became a reality. There, he entered and won multiple *enka* karaoke contests and eventually appeared on a popular Japanese television contest, where he landed a contract and rose to the top of music charts with his hit single "Umiyuki (Snowy Sea)."

A singer finds his place in the art of *enka*



Jerome Charles White, Jr., also known as Jero.

At the concert, the crowd cheered when Jero announced that he would be singing "Umiyuki," the same song that he decided to close the evening with (following a demand from the audience for an encore). But the real emotional highpoint of the evening came when Jero performed a song he had dedicated to his grandmother, who passed away in 2005, lamenting how sad he was that she wasn't alive to see his success in the *enka*

world. It was because of both her and his fans, he said, that he was able to make his dream of becoming an *enka* singer come true.

Through performing *enka*, Jero hopes to reignite interest in the genre in younger generations, showing that music does in fact have the ability to create bonds between different kinds of people.

If his first concert in Los Angeles was any indication, Jero is well on his way to becoming an international success.

True Music Comes from Outside the Line

Kollaboration 10 performers share their passion for music

By RAY LUO

One of them wants to use her future psychology degree to teach kids in high school. The other wants to work overseas.

Both are madly passionate about music.

Clara C. and Jason Yang are two musicians who performed at Kollaboration 10, an annual Asian American empowerment-through-entertainment event, taking home the Best Overall and Audience Choice awards.

Clara is a Korean American singer raised in Los Angeles, where she grew up playing the drums, flute, guitar, and even the glockenspiel. These instruments are heard in Clara's YouTube videos, "Hallelujah," "Fireflies," and "Misery Business." At Kollaboration, Clara played the guitar, blew on the harmonica, hit the tambourine, and vocalized her way to the best overall performance with her quirky and infectious original "Off Beat."

Clara's success seems to come from her desire to create music that is not, according to her, "boxed in" as classical music. Her dream wasn't extinguished when she decided to study psychology and education at UC Irvine, but Clara didn't perform in public too often until she started participating in singing contests. Soon she was racking up win after win, including JC Penny's ISA Breakout Artist contest.

One of her passions, however, still remains school.

"Remember those kids in schools who always asked why for everything you say?" Clara asked. "I was one of those kids; I wanted to know why everything happened, why you think that way, why people react to this (and) not that."

Bodyguards and Assassins

By RAY LUO

The story of the prodigal son is one of the many heroic tales in Teddy Chan's historical drama *Bodyguards and Assassins*, the closing night film at the 2010 Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival.

The film takes place in Hong Kong in 1905, prior to the 1911 revolution in Southern China that eventually topples the Qing dynasty. Yan Xiao-Guo is sent to the city to assassinate Sun Wen, a revolutionary member, on behalf of the empire. In response, business tycoon Li recruits five elite bodyguards to prevent Sun's assassination by the Qing henchmen.

Bodyguards and Assassins boasts an impressive cast, including Donnie Yen, one of the few well-known actors in the film not from Hong Kong, and Mengke Bateer, an ex-NBA player turned martial arts actor who plays Wang Fu-Ming, a giant powerhouse capable of easily crushing stones but also a tofu peddler with a soft heart and simple smile. But it is Nicholas Tse who does the best job of immersing herself in his role, as Li's crippled carriage driver, A Si, the last of the bodyguards to sacrifice himself. Tse's character adds a dimension of humanity to what would otherwise be another martial arts film. When the assassin Yan is ready to strike down Sun's carriage, which is really his master Li's only son in disguise, Tse does the only thing he knows how to do, not by fighting but by love.

Leon Lai, a famous Hong Kong pop star, plays Liu Yu-Bai, a beggar who single-handedly takes on the Qing

In the future, Clara wants to do something she loves for the rest of her life, although the choices vary: it could be music performance, music education, or English education.

"Wherever life takes me, I'll be glad to follow," Clara said.

USC student and electric violinist Jason Yang espouses a similar attitude. Born in New Jersey to Taiwanese parents, Yang played classical violin for 16 years. After seeing the success of Vanessa May, a renowned British violinist, Yang's dad urged his son to take up the electric violin. Now, Yang's work can be seen all over YouTube, including clips of his participation in Adam Lambert's Zodiac Show and his award winning performance at Kollaboration 10.

And all this coming from a non-music major.

"It's a safer choice really," said Yang. "I've seen so many of my friends finish successfully with a performance degree and find no work; I wanted something more academic that I was still interested in."

Like Clara, Yang didn't think he had a music career in him until a friend of his found a flyer for a corporate gig with Panasonic in Las Vegas that demanded an electric violinist with serious rock chops. Yang took the last audition spot, got the gig, and had the opportunity to work with the Ford motor company and Amway.

Balancing school with his music can often be a challenge.

"I would be getting out of a class Friday morning, getting to the airport, in rehearsal Friday evening and Saturday, perform on Sunday, and get back to class Monday morning," Yang said.

Kollaboration was an opportunity to take

himself to the next level.

"My dream would be to perform and record and tour for as long as I can (support myself)," said Yang. "I wouldn't have to necessarily make hundreds of thousands of dollars like in an office job."

With graduation literally days away and his Kollaboration audience award tucked safely into his back pocket, Yang still finds himself at cross-roads between trying to sustain himself in Los Angeles as an aspiring artist or finding a "normal" job at the expense of forfeiting his violin performance career.

"I'd say (the future) is more terrifying than intriguing," Yang said. "Hopefully, opportunities of epic proportions are still waiting for me in the near future, but for now it's back to being an aspiring artist."

Clara, too, has a similar vision of her post-graduation plans.

"I'm still the same person with the same passions, quirks and character I was born with," Clara said. "In this world of entertainment, I keep myself level-headed (by) remembering that music is first and foremost art, not a mere product that is pumped out to be sold."

For both Clara and Yang, Kollaboration represented something bigger than themselves.

"The talents who shine, whether Asian American or not, are the ones who really believe in their art," said Clara. "They don't do it because of the money or fame; people can smell a phony."

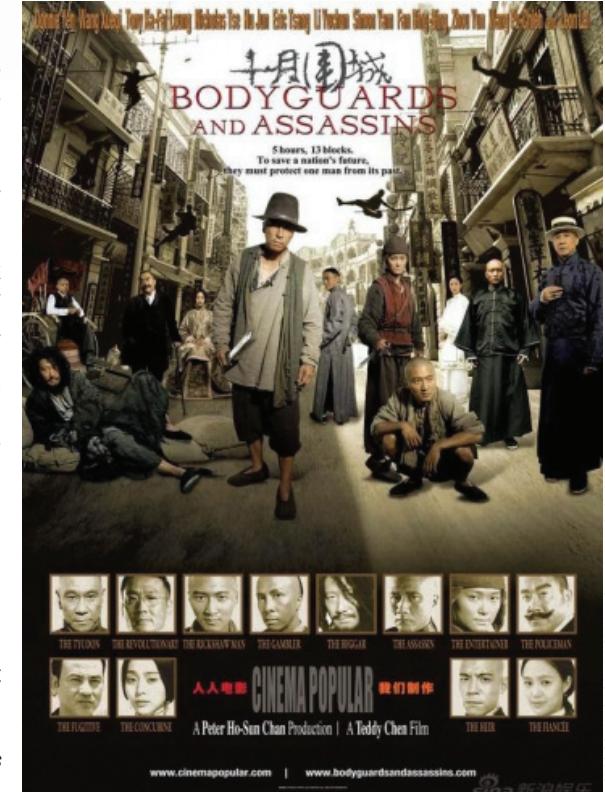


PHOTOS COURTESY OF ERICH CHEN



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ZACH DEZON

Chung won the grand prize, while Yang won the Audience Choice award at Kollaboration 10



PHOTOS COURTESY OF WE DISTRIBUTION LIMITED, HONG KONG

OUR COMMUNITY TIES

ROCKIN' THE MEDIA ACROSS THE NATION

NU Asian

While *NU Asian* magazine has been at Northwestern University since 2004, it was not until editor-in-chief, Nathalie Tadena, embarked on an ambitious publicity campaign that the venue became well-known around campus. Tadena started her rebranding efforts from a visual standpoint, as past issues were done in black-and-white from printers not really equipped to handle magazines. I wanted to completely restructure and redesign the magazine so that it was more aesthetically pleasing, said Tadena. Luckily, Tadena discovered that many members of her staff had an eye for

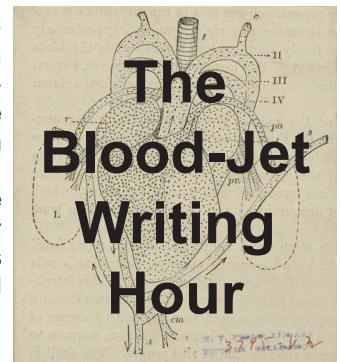
design and art. Though the colorful magazine would cost more, Tadena so believed in its necessity that she obtained grants and even contributed some of her own money. The newer look coincided with a marked shift in the content of the magazine. *NU Asian* now strives to tackle issues that are not covered by more mainstream student media. For instance, articles will highlight events hosted by Asian American cultural groups on campus, developments in the Asian American studies department, and highlights the accomplishments of Asian American students (chief among them should be the magazine itself).

e-mail ntadena@u.northwestern.edu



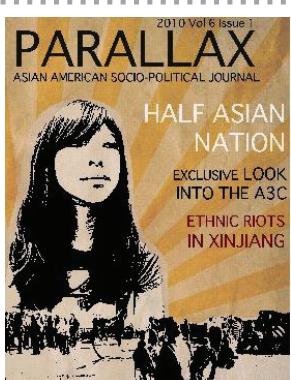
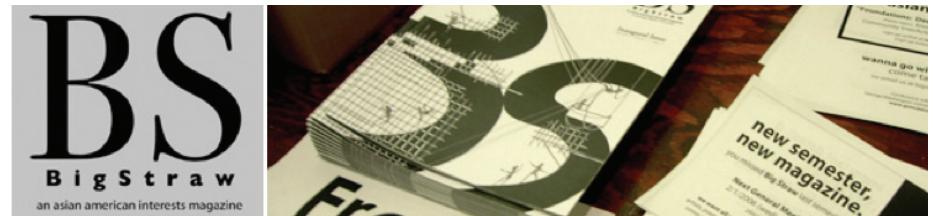
The title of this radio show alludes to the famous Silvia Plath quote: Poetry is the blood-jet; there is no stopping it. Likewise, there is no stopping host Rachelle Cruz, who, in the space of only a year, has managed to attract the very best writers of Asian American literature. Guests have included literary luminaries such as Joseph O. Legaspi, Lee Herrick, and Ching-In Chen. Rachelle Cruz conducts interviews by phone, which can be streamed live from her website or listened to at a later time. Of the inventive format, Cruz said that it recalls the origins of poetry as music, as oral tradition. The audience is privileged to hear the poet's take on their inspiration, craft, and artistic life, especially since it relates to being a writer of color. Following this dialogue, Cruz allots the guests the second half of the program to perform their work. During these readings, she said that sometimes you can hear me catching my breath, after a damn good poem.

website [www.thebloodjet.wordpress.com](http://thebloodjet.wordpress.com)



Started in 2004 as a class project under Professor John Eperjesi, *Big Straw* magazine expanded the next year into a full-fledged organization at Carnegie Mellon. Editor-in-chief, Robin Chen, said that part of the goal was to provide an opportunity for students to express themselves, whether through writing or through art. Under this general banner, writers and artists are encouraged to cover Asian American topics that are not normally discussed in everyday conversation. Following this style, *Big Straw* has become a hub of Asian-American activity at Carnegie Mellon, and students consider it an honor to be published in its pages. Nonetheless, Robin Chen is striving to provide more opportunities for students. She recently spearheaded a simpler redesign of the magazine, as it allows *Big Straw* to publish more frequently since the staff can work faster now. Chen has also carried *Big Straw* over into the digital world, with an online version of the magazine as well as a Twitter account and Facebook page. *Big Straw*'s internet presence has given it yet another tool for reaching out to the community.

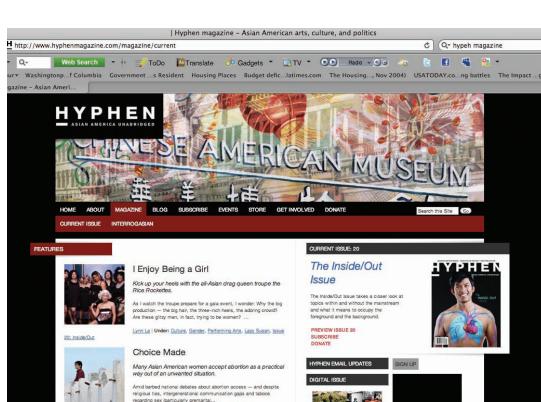
website www.bigstraw.org



PARALLAX

In 2005, *Parallax* became an independent campus journal at Cornell University. Its goal was to cover social, political, and cultural issues as they relate to the Asian Americans, in order to promote greater advocacy in the community. Jack Yeh, editor-in-chief, acknowledges that some prospective writers are put off by the very idea of an Asian American journal. He said, when they see Asian American, they imagine a narrow-minded approach to looking at the world. Ironically, this is exactly the opposite of our mission even the title *Parallax* is meant to convey multiple perspectives. Due in part to Yeh's dispelling of common misconceptions, *Parallax* has experienced a boom in staff recruitment, in everything from writers and layout artists to programmers and web designers. With continued (and generous) financial support from Cornell, Yeh plans to lead his staff toward producing a magazine that innovates the traditional journalistic mold. To this point, Yeh seeks to include articles that are humorous yet relevant pieces that will appeal to a wider audience and simultaneously make Asian-Americans proud of their heritage.

e-mail jcy38@cornell.edu



HYPHEN

website www.hyphenmagazine.com

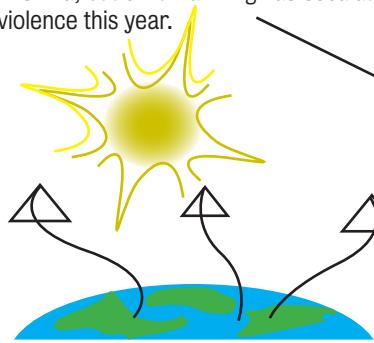
A group of artists and journalists founded *Hyphen* in 2002, largely in response to the financial collapse of *A.* magazine. Since then, *Hyphen* has prospered with twenty issues, due to amazingly enough, an all volunteer staff. Their collective goal is to [look] beyond identity...explore cultural issues while tackling what is Asian-American by accident, by tangent or by happenstance. Their move into the blogosphere has further widened their scope. Blogger Ken Choy, for instance, ostensibly covers the arts, but it's actually much more than that. I think there's a misconception about those who cover the arts as frivolous, said Choy. I try to frame the coverage around a larger social issue. Art is meant to provoke as well as entertain. In one month alone, Ken Choy authored eight articles (to say nothing of bloggers dealing with different issues). He has written about everything from the film, *Stand Up for Justice*, which deals with a Mexican American who voluntarily joins his Japanese friends in the internment camps to a critique of the self-promotion (or lack thereof) at a Coalition of Asian Pacifics in Entertainment (CAPE) mixer. Choy's work, and that of other bloggers, clearly supports his contention that art is activism for APIs because of its visibility.

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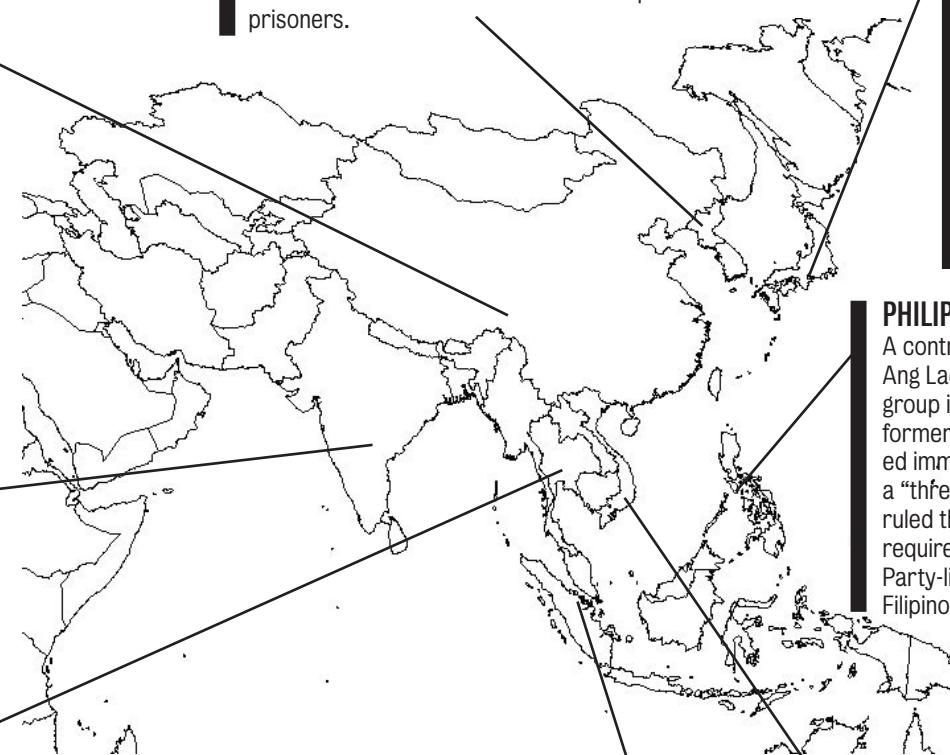
CHINA

A string of gruesome killings of children across China has left its citizens baffled and horrified. Even during China's most violent period, the Cultural Revolution, such massive attacks on children did not occur. Most of the suspects lived at the bottom of society, leading observers to blame their anger on the rich and the government, but there has been no explanation as to why children are being repeatedly targeted. In 2004, counterfeit milk powder caused the deaths of 13 babies and permanent disablement of 141 others. Such an incident reflected moral decay in China, but child-harming has escalated to raw violence this year.



INDIA

Debate continues in India over whether the country should enter a legally binding contract to limit carbon output. Many Indians argue that their country needs to grow and develop in the same fashion as the U.S. and other developed countries and can only do so by continuing to emit greenhouse gases. India's economy and government cannot handle transitioning to a low-carbon emission contract, but some Indians believe that implementing such a measure will propel the nation forward.



THAILAND

The Red Shirt rebellion is threatening the political and demographic landscape of Thailand as Buddhist followers take over elite areas to protest the military-backed government. Most of the political drama is focused on parliamentary elections and the exiled Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, but fragmentations across class and region are overlooked. Thailand could see a major battle among its different regions and become disunited if the elite do not give in to a secular democracy.



NORTH KOREA

Zheng, a worker at a military factory located in Hamhung city in North Korea, was recently executed in a public shooting for disclosing the country's rice market price to a friend in South Korea using a Chinese cell phone. North Korea prohibits residents from engaging in any foreign telecommunications, and violators are treated as traitors or political prisoners.

INDONESIA

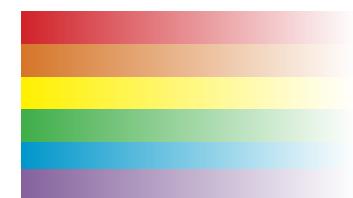
People living in Jakarta, Indonesia are tired of the protests and debates being led by demonstrators and legislators in their new democratic government. A recent survey conducted by the Indonesia Survey Institution revealed that Indonesians feel that the country's transition from a dictatorship to a democracy has failed. Political activists have resorted to distasteful and offensive acts to prove their point, including painting "SiBuYa" on a water buffalo, insinuating that President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono is big, lazy, and stupid.

JAPAN

The Cove, the Oscar-winning U.S. documentary on dolphin slaughter in Taiji, Japan, will be screened by at least 26 movie theaters across Japan starting in June. Unplugged Inc., the film's distributor, faced the possibility of canceling the planned screening of the film in Japan due to strong opposition from the town of Taiji, its fishery association, and other groups. *The Cove* was mostly shot in Taiji, Wakayama Prefecture, partly with hidden cameras, and won the 2010 Academy Award for best documentary but garnered controversy in Japan, with some claiming that it has factual errors.

PHILIPPINES

A controversial gay rights group in the Philippines, Ang Ladlad, can now participate as a party list group in the May 2010 elections. Ang Ladlad was formerly denied participation because it "advocated immorality" and homosexuals were viewed as a "threat to youth." Recently, however, the court ruled that the group satisfied every party list requirement set by the Republic Act 7941, or the Party-list System Act. Ang Ladlad is composed of Filipino gays, lesbians, transgender, and bisexuals.



Vietnam

There has been a heightening trend of young women working in Saigon's massage parlors, hailing from poor rural families. These women are often in charge of providing for their families. In one instance, Lan Pham (a worker in a Siagon parlor) uses her wages to pay for her younger siblings' schooling and feeding her family. Even though massage workers earn more than cooks or factory workers, they are looked down upon by many Vietnamese, especially men. They repeatedly encounter insults at work and on the streets.



THE HIKIKOMORI EXPERIENCE

Hikikomori refers to people, often men, who self-confine themselves in their rooms to avoid judgment from society—as a result of a myriad of factors, from co-dependent relationships to ambiguity of male role to clinical depression and autism, and more; they are often not integrated into society and depend on their parents/families for support.

*social withdrawal,
school refusal,
solitude, selective
mutism, life crisis,
reclusive, hermit,
loner*

Japanese; lit. pulling away, being confined

A leading psychiatrist claims that one million Japanese are hikikomori, which, if true, translates into roughly 1 percent of the population. Even other experts' more conservative estimates, ranging between 100,000 and 320,000 sufferers, are alarming, given how dire the consequences may be. As a hikikomori ages, the odds that he'll re-enter the world decline.

Source: The New York Times

CALENDAR



Date	Event	Details
MAY 27 7 pm	UCLA Department of Art Lectures: Anthony Hernandez <i>Hammer Museum Free</i>	Lecture on Anthony Hernandez, photographer and UCLA Art Council Chair for Spring 2010
MAY 29 5:30 pm	Indian Student Union Culture Show <i>Royce Hall Free</i>	Show will display the diversity of the Indian subcontinent through dancing, singing, acting, and composing classical and fusion music
JUNE 2 7 pm	Award-Winning Student Poetry Reading <i>Hammer Museum Free</i>	This year's UCLA prize-winning student poets will be reading their work aloud. Awards have been granted by the Academy of American Poets
JUNE 5 8 pm	Asia America Symphony Orchestra <i>Japan American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC) in Little Tokyo \$50 - \$100</i>	Dave Koz, Grammy® nominee guest stars with Maestro David Benoit and The Asia America Symphony Orchestra, including timeless classics from Stravinsky and John Williams
JUNE 12 - JULY 18 8 pm	"Winter Garden" Art Exhibit <i>George J. Doizaki Gallery in Little Tokyo Free</i>	Organized by Japanese Foundation, this exhibit explores micro-pop imagination in contemporary Japanese art, featuring videos, paintings and drawings of pop/contemporary Japanese artists
JUNE 18 8 pm	Film Screening of "Womans Looks on Fire with Water" <i>Regal 12 \$12</i>	A moving drama about two men living in a fishing village in Malaysia. In Mandarin, Korean, and Cantonese with English subtitles
JUNE 19 7:30 pm	"1,2, 3: Apogee" Screening <i>GRAMMY Museum \$12</i>	A selection of Japanese music videos that are big in Japan will be playing at the 2010 LA Film Festival
JUNE 20 7 pm	Film Screening of "1428" <i>Regal 13 1000 West Olympic Boulevard 90015 \$12</i>	Documentary of the Great Sichuan Earthquake that rocked China on May 12, 2008; part of L.A. Film Festival's International Showcase
JUNE - AUG.	Movies on the Plaza <i>Japan American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC) in Little Tokyo Free</i>	Summer Outdoor Film Series present classic movies, food vendors, and music
AUG. 27 8:30 pm	Kollaboration Acoustic 4 <i>Ford Theaters \$15 - \$30 (early bird special starts Aug. 20 : \$10 - \$15)</i>	Talented API musicians and artists perform original songs--acoustic style

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introducing...

DAVID K. YOO

Asian American Studies Center Director

by LEILA MIRSEYEDI



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID K. YOO

In April of 2010, UCLA announced the appointment of Professor David K. Yoo as the new Director of the Asian American Studies Center and Professor in the Department of Asian American Studies. Pacific Ties had the opportunity to sit down with Professor Yoo and get his insights on various topics in the API community.

Even though David K. Yoo grew up in the very Asian-concentrated areas of Torrance, Gardena, his interest in Asian American history did not blossom until he went to college on the East Coast. It was at Princeton and Yale where he noticed that little to nothing of what he had learned in American history classes all those years spoke to his own experience as a Korean American.

Through Asian American journals such as Amerasia, Yoo discovered various narratives that spoke about the struggles of Asian Americans, past and present. Although Yoo had planned on going to law school, an internship at a law firm made him realize that a law career was not for him. Instead, he decided to combine his desire to spread awareness of Asian American history with his love for teaching.

After working for 15 years at the Claremont Colleges, Yoo is now at UCLA as the Asian American Studies Director and a professor in the department. At Claremont, he noticed a driving force in the dissemination of Asian American history that resembled what happened during the 1960s and 70s: a push for an accurate account of Asian history on a global scale. Yoo plans to nurture this movement at UCLA, where the Asian American Studies Center is currently working with Chinese scholars to paint a more accurate picture of the relationship between the U.S. and China under the U.S. Chinese Media Brief. Yoo views this as an act of "reclaiming" Asian history, much of which is still untold.

The center's already large library and archival collection is growing as its 50 faculty members, along with community organizations, collect data to research contemporary issues. Despite the progress, however, Yoo believes that it will be much longer before Asian American history, let alone a transnational Asian history, is able to take substantial form.

"I wanted to study Korean American history because that hasn't been a lot (said) about it. I make the argument that religion is central to their experience because it (speaks) to their whole range. It provides a structure, main way of communication, a place to find meaning, and a way to come together...what's interesting about Asian American studies is the intersection of race and religion."

DKY's thoughts on...

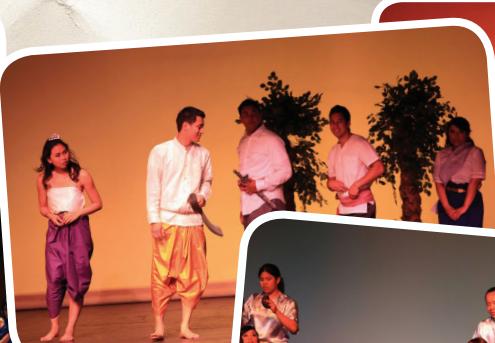
interconnectedness "For me, what I think will be increasingly important is coalition-building – how we (are able) to do more things when we combine forces with other groups. We have to also continue to question how the Asian American experience relates to other minority experiences."

student relations "One of the other things I would like to do is to create a kind of traffic flow through the center that will hopefully attract more students. We've always had a strong community component. All the research that we do needs to be in some way tied to the community. The center can connect the student to different communities."

Asian American studies "What it means to be Asian American is incredibly diverse. What I try to tell people who aren't familiar with Asian American studies is that there isn't one (definition). It's all about...complexity and nuances. The field tries to focus on the multiplicity. I think that often, society tries to stereotype what Asian American means and I think the field tries to provide counter-narratives to those stereotypes."

BACKPAGE AROUND TOWN

KHMER CULTURE NIGHT



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SOTHY ENG

HMONG CULTURE NIGHT



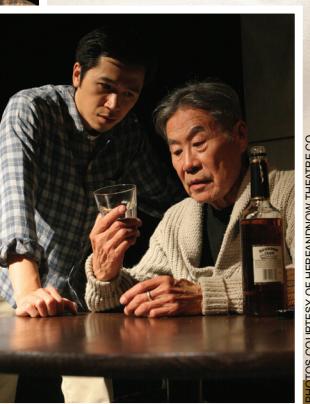
PHOTOS COURTESY OF SOUANIA MOUA

CHINESE AMERICAN CULTURE NIGHT



Photos courtesy of ACA

NO-NO BOY PLAY



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HEREENDNOW THEATRE CO.

MIGHTY MIC



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CLAUDIA LI



recycle *after reading.*
**SPREAD THE SEED.
PLANT KNOWLEDGE.**
recycle *knowledge.*