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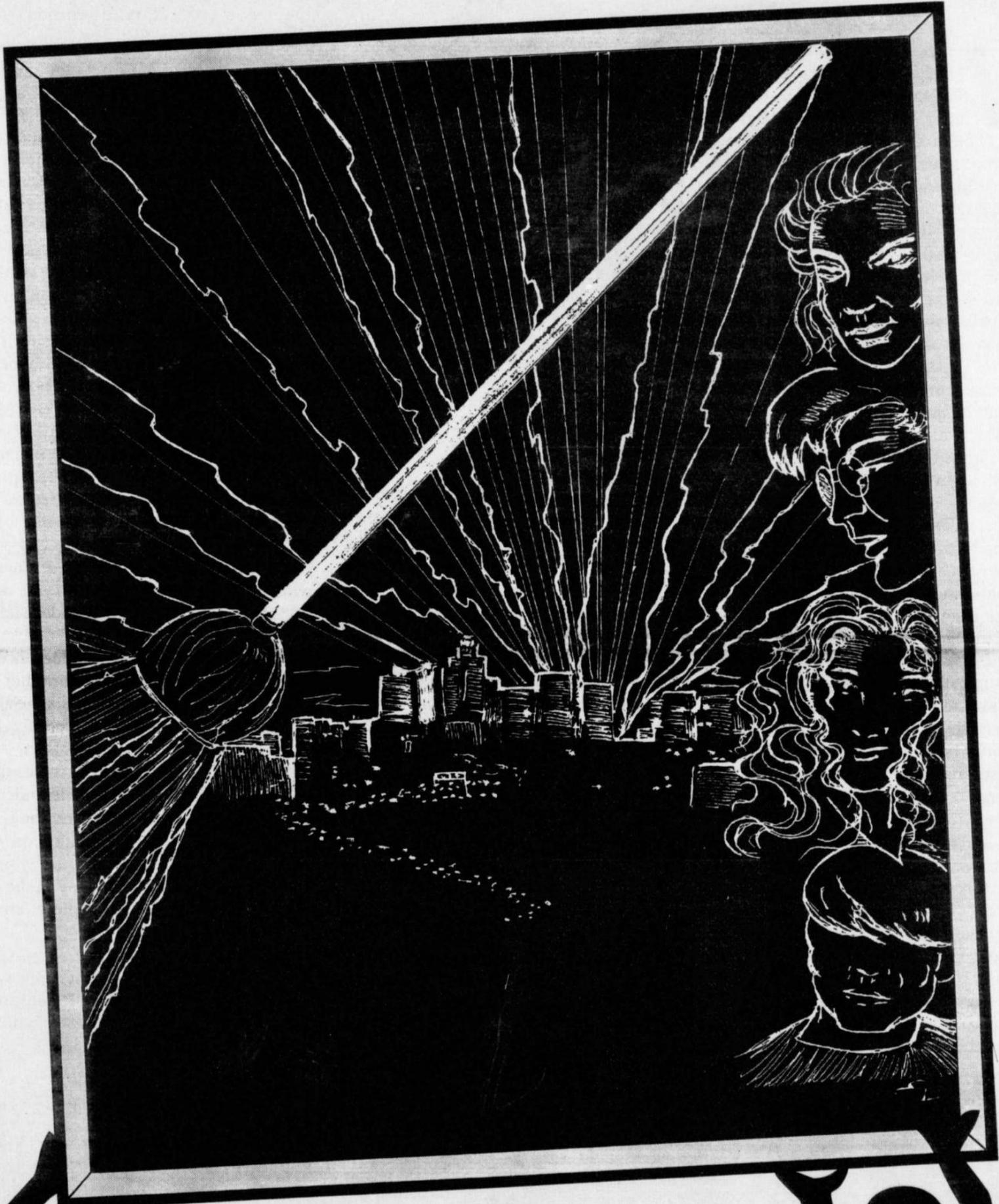
MOMENTUM

• ASIAN

PACIFIC ISLANDER AMERICAN •

May - June 1993

Volume 2 - Number 5



BUILDING AN
UNDERSTANDING:

A CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY
ASIAN AWARENESS WEEK 1993

APSU Conference '93

Addressing issues facing Asian and Pacific Islander Students throughout California and the United States

By Matthew Baldwin
STAFF WRITER

We meet again—The Asian and Pacific Islander Student Union, the statewide organization for Asian and Pacific Islander students. Though APSU is recognized statewide, the annual conferences draw leaders and participants alike for an evening of unity and celebration.

Everyone who went had a different reason for attending and got as many different things from it. Some might have come for the fun and social aspects, others may have come for the issues and everything between, but almost everyone left with at least some of each. Talking to people who went, I found many things. The first thing I found was that the dinner provided at the conference was "wack." Having gone to the conference myself, I would tend to agree, but I really thought that people would have remembered something besides just the food. Actually, there were other memorable parts. For those of the San Diego Region, there was a tremendous sense of unity gained from the conference. During the main assemblies for example, all the attending schools from San Diego sat together in a show of unity.

Putting all the lighter things aside, there was some serious work to be done at the conference as well. There were three speakers who addressed the attendants and some, surprisingly were greeted with mixed reactions. Young Shin, who is with the Asian Immigrant Womens' Advocates, spoke about her struggle in helping Cantonese seamstresses get paid by Jessica McLintock, whose subcontractor bounced over \$12,000 worth of paychecks. Jay Ruiz, an active student in San Diego, spoke on youth issues, such as gangs. Afternoon Speaker Angela Oh, a Korean American attorney, spoke on working within the community. The speakers were an important reminder of some of the issues that the Asian community



Angela Oh, an assistant district attorney with the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office, was one of the speakers at the conference.

still struggles with today.

I found that a more significant and important part of the conference was the workshops and the resolutions. There were three sessions of workshops on topics ranging from Asian gangs to starting an Asian American Studies department. The workshops are where students can learn, in depth, about particular subjects that interest them. The Asian gangs workshop was one of the better ones I heard about. The classroom was even packed to over twice the capacity. One other set of workshops was the Educational Rights Caucus, which was a first for APSU in that its purpose was to draw up a resolution on Educational Rights to be passed that very day. According to one student, "This year was good because there was actually some discussion of the resolutions, especially the women's one." The women's resolution was an attempt to establish a sys-

tem that mandated that no more than half of APSU's Coordinating Committee could be men. Since the resolution would impose quotas, it was a strong source of debate. The resolution took over three-fourths of an hour to be decided, at which point it was found that the resolution and its many amendments did not pass. Other resolutions were: one to support AIWA in its boycott of Jessica McLintock, another to support a UC Berkeley professor in his fight for tenure, a recruitment and retention resolution, and the Educational Rights Act of 1993.

Aside from unity, food, and issues, there were also a great variety of cultural performances throughout the day. There were taiko drummers, Polynesian dancers, a Cambodian dance, three Pilipino dances, two pieces by Here and Now, a Vietnamese dance and various others. The best performances of the day were the Korean Han Nuri drummers, Tininkling—one of the Pilipino dances, and a Pilipino Ragga-Hip Hop and dance crew called Island Savages, who used some traditional-type dance and music and mixed it with modern Reggae and Hip Hop styles.

That sums up APSU's '93 conference, but remember, it isn't ever just a another conference, because every year is special and because APSU is not just a conference, but a working statewide organization. APSU works year-round to address issues facing Asian American and Pacific Islander students throughout California and the U.S.

If you want more information on APSU including statewide meetings, lobbying and rallying at the state capital, any of the resolutions mentioned in the article, and/or anything else, contact:

UCSD Coordinator: Matt Baldwin @ (619)558-2247 or **San Diego Region Co-chairs:** Jay Ruiz Jr. @ (619)998-5102 and Roger Ledina @ (619)429-1657.

Statewide News



Staff of UC Santa Barbara's first Asian American newspaper at APSU '93

Politics

VILLA MILLS

RUNNING TO SUCCEED TOM BEHR AS SAN DIEGO'S FIFTH DISTRICT CITY COUNCIL MEMBER.

PLANS FOR HER NON-PARTISAN, COMMUNITY-BASED CAMPAIGN:

- CREATING JOBS AND SUPPORTING BUSINESS
- FIGHTING CRIME, GANGS AND GRAFFITI
- REDUCING TRAFFIC—ESPECIALLY ALONG THE I-15 CORRIDOR
- CONTINUING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SELF-SUFFICIENCY

STUDENT VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Let's Dance...

*Let the music take your mind
Just release and you will find
glad you're goin my way
I love it when we're cruisin' together*
— from Smokey Robinson's "Cruisin"

My friend is often singing and dancing to his favorite Motown music. I can never seem to stop him. It's always Smokey or the Temptations. He makes me laugh. Sometimes he makes me want to dance along with him. The music makes me think about people, ideas and about celebrating. It makes me think of what we have: opportunities of education, free speech, civil rights.

In past issues we have focused on ethnicity, identity, hate crimes, feminism, racism and other important issues involving the community. In this issue we look toward the future. The future of ethnic studies, of race relations, of Asian American men and women.

It's been 2 years since our first issue of *Momentum* which came out in Fall of 91. We want you, the reader to get involved. This is your newspaper. It time for you to make a change, to have a voice, to express your creativity. It's the only way that we can build an understanding and to keep on celebrating the rich diversity of our community.

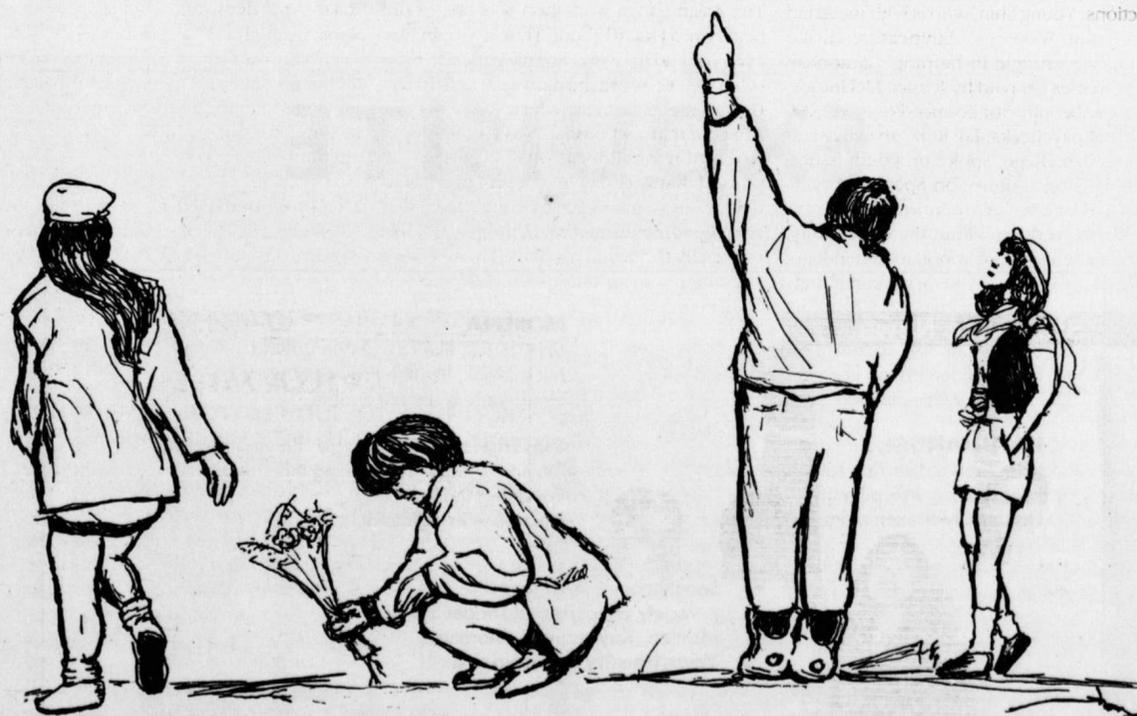
It's time to just kick back, enjoy the music, and celebrate.

Poet Janice Mirikitani says it best,

*We must recognize ourselves at last:
We are a rainforest of color
And noise*

—Joanne Tashiro

*We hear everything
We are unafraid
Our language is beautiful.*
—excerpted from "Breaking the Silence" by Janice Mirikitani.



Are You Any Different?

Challenging Assumptions We Make About Each Other...

By Rita A. Schack
STAFF WRITER

Christina is late. She tentatively opens the door and glances in the room. A sigh of relief passes through her. There are some empty chairs in the back so she does not have to interrupt the meeting by looking for a seat. She slips through the door and enters the room. As she walks toward one of the empty seats the speaker notices her arrival. He stops in mid-sentence and looks at her. His action draws the attention of the students he is addressing; they all turn around to see why he stopped speaking. Halfway to the chair Christina pauses, realizing that her entrance has stopped the meeting and has drawn attention to herself. Quickly she looks from face to face, first at the speaker's then at each of the students'. She feels the pain of rejection as she sees the questioning look she knows too well on each of their faces. "Why are you here?" To them, her face is unfamiliar and different.



Earlier that day Christina had spent the better part of the morning and afternoon gathering up courage to come to the orientation meeting of this Asian organization. She had tried to talk herself into not prejudging the members based on her past experiences. But she could not get the conviction out of her mind that this group of people would be like all the others. After all, she thought, why would this group be any different? She was against being rejected again, but

her stronger feelings of wanting to be accepted and belong gave her the desire to try once more. So she reasoned with herself, maybe this time it will be different, maybe they will be accepting. After finally convincing herself to take the chance, she had resolved to go.

Now standing there with all eyes upon her, Christina wishes she had never convinced herself to come. They are like all the others—they are marginalizing her identity. This time she does not feel like defending her right to be there; she is tired of having to prove her identity so she slowly walks the rest of the way to the chair and sits down. Realizing she is not going to answer their questioning looks, the students gradually turn back around. The speaker resumes his talk and continues to glance in her direction every so often.

Sitting in her seat trying to listen to the speaker tell the students about the many activities offered through the organization, Christina feels occasional stares

from some of the students. Every now and then they look her way—their stares piercing through her. She shifts uncomfortably in her chair. It is hard for her to concentrate on what the speaker is saying. Christina anticipates having to justify her presence to them. She is willing to give them a chance, but her decision to return or not depends upon how they receive her at the end of the meeting. ■

Christina is an Amerasian...

EXQUISITE

by Cheryl Therese Villanueva Soriano

MESTIZA,

Skin, white, like coconut flesh
Eyes, golden hazel, like powdery sand
Her beauty is emulated

KAYUMANGGI,

Skin, brown, like rich soil of the fields
Eyes, brown, like pili nuts
Her beauty is exemplary

MORENA,

Skin, black, like fine cocoa powder
Eyes, black, like the Provincial night sky
Her beauty is exceptional

SISTERS in the all-inclusive "Pilipino Family"

"White is Right" is breaking this bond
Poisoning the family,
Division is its objective

Beauty comes in all forms
A variety of colors and shades
Mestiza, Kayumanggi, Morena
Your beauty is exquisite

in the public eye

By Joyce Chang and Cindy Lin
STAFF REPORTERS



This year, Asian clubs and organizations brought us not only social opportunities, but also cultural programs such as talent shows, dances, cooking classes, traditional holidays, and a wealth of other events to celebrate. ▲



Dragon dancers perform for the Chinese New Year's celebration on Jan. 24 by CCC.



Hawai'i Club members are decked out in traditional Hawaiian island attire for the club's annual luau held at UCSD.



A group of CSA members and staffers joyously perform a 50's style dance for the annual CSA semi-formal and talent show.



Mabel Lam takes her chances by faux gambling at CSA's Casino Night.



UCSD clubs went to the APSU conference April 23 at UCR.

The Joys of Dining 24 Hr. Style

By Austin Sung
STAFF WRITER

One of the greatest necessities of college life, one that surpasses studying, partying, and picking up, is eating. Without food one would shrivel up into a lifeless husk of skin and bones. Food is by all means essential to survival at UCSD. One could even venture to say that without food, one would die. Yet look around UCSD. What can you find to eat after 11:00 pm at night?

You've heard of Why Not Here for all you Revelle people. But that's not real food. The most extravagant thing that they serve there is Cup 'O Noodles, which can be likened to astronaut food; just add water! Now I'm not trying to take anything away from the valuable service that Why Not Here provides, I'm simply requesting something that requires more preparation than one could do in one's dorm room.

Throughout my college career I have searched for food places that close late. Sadly, I have found few that close after 11:00. I'd like to pass on a few of these haunts out to you.

For those of you who like Chinese food, try Imperial Mandarin on Convoy Street, south of Balboa. This place has absolutely no ambiance, which is good when you speak of Chinese restaurants. Open until 12am Sun-Thu and 1am Fri-Sat, it makes a great place to eat after the movies.

For Japanese food, right beside Imperial is K Sushi. Not only does this place have the same hours as Imperial, they will usually serve a little later. They have a full bar that does card [wink] and serves some really good sushi. K Sushi also has a nice karaoke system.

With this in mind, no more late night stomach growls. ■

Roots and Branches: Vietnamese American Identity

A keynote speech delivered by Yen Le Espiritu at the first Vietnamese American Student Conference at UCLA April 24th, 1993.

Good Morning, the topic that I am addressing this morning is "Roots and Cultural Identity." In the next 15 minutes, I would like to share with you some of my thoughts on remembering our Vietnamese roots and on making the transition to being a Vietnamese American.

April 30, 1975. The fall of Saigon. The end of a way of life. For those of us old enough to remember our flight from Vietnam, we can still feel the pain of having left behind something precious and mourn the loss of home and of country. As Vietnamese poet Vinh Liem writes, *Tôi nào muốn thành người di tản*

(I never wanted to be a refugee)

Sống lang thang, vật vờ vương xử người

(Wandering aimlessly in someone else's country)

Xa bạn bè, gia đình ly tán
(Far from friends, family all scattered)

Đêm âm thầm nước mắt tuôn rơi

(Crying silently at night)

This is how many Vietnamese continue to see ourselves: as people exiled from our beloved country. And this is also how most outsiders continue to see us: as unwanted refugees in their overcrowded and overburdened neighborhoods.

But long before we were refugees, long before we were unwanted newcomers, we were a proud people who descended from dragons and mountain fairies; who have a language and identity that is over one thousand years old; and who have courageously resisted outside influence—one thousand years of Chinese domination and Sinification, close to a decade of French colonialism, and over twenty years of U.S. interference.

And though it all, in spite of overwhelming odds, we not only survived but had managed to maintain our own identity and unique culture. Forged by centuries of conflict with powerful nations, today, whether in Vietnam, or in the United States, we as a Vietnamese people possess a strong national tradition and culture. This cultural baggage,



along with our refugee experience, provides a basis for our Vietnamese identity.

April 24, 1993. The anguish, the longing for the way of life used to be, the nostalgia—these remain central in our parent's lives. Their conversations are often punctuated with "Back in Vietnam," and "When we go back home..."

In the meantime, we, the one and a half generation, the second generation, have fading memories of Vietnam—of its legends and myths, its soothing rain, its smoldering heat, its gentle, unhurried way of life. The United States—with its MTV, its mini-malls, its vastness, its materialism, its idealism, and its bigotries—informs and forms us in ways that we never though possible and that we are often unwilling to admit. As Vietnamese American journalist Andrew Lam writes, "America quietly steps in one night and takes hold of one's mind and body and the Vietnamese soul of sorrows slowly fades away." We can't live in a country—eat its food, watch its TV, listen to its music, learn its language, read its literature, share in its pain, join in its laughter—without also becoming a part of it.

Some of our peers and many of our elders sometimes refer to us as "Americanized." This is meant to be a negative term, that

we have moved too far away from our roots, that our anchor is too firmly placed in American soil. We shrink in shame. To become American is to leave one's Vietnamese self behind.

But I would like to suggest that this is only so if we adopt the mainstream definition of Americanness—one that defines white middle class culture as the norm, one that excludes rather than includes, one that demands conformity rather than celebrates diversity, one that forces us to shed our heritage, forget our language, bury our history and adopt the Anglo Saxon Protestant way of life. In this mainstream America, our experiences and culture are excluded, marginalized, or distorted.

We seldom see ourselves in the media. And when we do, we are horrified to find that we are portrayed as money-hungry prostitutes, evil war mongers, and martial arts experts. As a young Vietnamese American writes, "Everyday I was forced to look into a mirror created by white society and its media. As a young Vietnamese man, I shrank before white eyes." Racism shocks, angers, and shames us; it can drive us away from mainstream society or compel us to internalize its lies.

But we do not have to, and should not, accept mainstream definition of Americanness. As

citizens of this country—either by choice or by necessity—we have a right and a responsibility to expand this definition to include us, to reflect more accurately the colors (yellow, red, brown, black, tan, coffee...) and experiences of this multicultural society. As Le Xuan Khoa wrote in *Dat Moi* magazine, "We can demand to be equal, but we cannot and should not want to be alike."

And as Vietnamese Americans, we also have a right and a responsibility to look not only backwards to our lives or our parents' lives in Vietnam, but also forward to our future in the United States, and to become more politically aware and involved so that we may assist our Vietnamese brothers and sisters—and also our fellow Americans.

Finally, to be a Vietnamese American is not only to recognize the multiculturalism of United States society, but also to understand and embrace the diversity of our community. It is to expand the definition of who is Vietnamese to include...

◆ not only those who were born in Vietnam, but also those who were born in refugee camps and in the United States;

◆ not only those who speak Vietnamese fluently, but also those who understand their parents' Vietnamese but never speak it themselves and those who don't know the language at all;

◆ not only those who are full Vietnamese but also those who are half Vietnamese and those who are raised by non-Vietnamese parents;

◆ not only those who are well-to-do professionals but also those who struggle to survive and those who receive government assistance;

◆ not only those who are Fullbright scholars but also those who drop out and those who join gangs; and

◆ not only those who are heterosexual but also those who are homosexual or bisexual.

Only then, I believe, can we say proudly that we are Vietnamese American! ■

Yen Le Espiritu is a professor in the Ethnic Studies Department at UCSD.

G.L.A.S.S. Reflections

Dispelling Stereotypes Concerning Gay and Lesbian Asian Americans

By Scott Okamoto
STAFF WRITER

As we move into the mid-90's, issues of sexuality and sexual identity are becoming more prominent in the consciousness of many Asian Americans. The issue of homosexuality has made way for a new generation to question who they are. Some face the realities of homosexuality and its place in one's identity. This struggle can often be disheartening. Where do you turn?

Addressing this very question is a relatively new San Diego organization called G.L.A.S.S. (Gay and Lesbian, Asian and Pacific Islander Social Support group) Momentum was able to talk to Jeffrey Tom, present treasurer and past co-chairperson, about the group's goals and progress.

In a world dominated by white males, Asian American homosexuals are left out of the picture. "The typical image of a gay man is the macho, white, leather clad male," says Tom. "That's who holds the power of the gay movement." Just as there are organizations for the specific

needs of racial groups at UCSD, G.L.A.S.S. meets the needs and addresses the issues of gay and lesbian Asian Americans.

According to Tom, the number one purpose of G.L.A.S.S. is to provide a support network for Asian American and Pacific Islander lesbians and gays. They also wish to provide a place of visibility, belonging and pride. There are also political aspirations on their agenda. "We need to bring forth Asian American gays and lesbians, and put them in places of power," says Tom. "Then we will begin to see the representation we deserve."

G.L.A.S.S. has also done some coalition-building. Tom and G.L.A.S.S. members attended the recent gay and lesbian rally in Washington D.C. "It was very empowering," says Tom. "We marched with the People of Color contingent, which included Blacks and Latinos. About a hundred Asian Americans from all over the country stood under a banner that read, 'Asian America: Queer



Cindy Lin

and Proud." Tom hopes that G.L.A.S.S.'s presence at the rally will give them a greater voice in the Gay and Lesbian agenda, as well as in the mainstream Asian American community.

Whatever view Asian Americans may have of gay and lesbian issues, the fact is that gay and lesbian Asian Americans are here, and they deserve to have a

voice. They are a part of our community, facing the same oppression and discrimination commonly attributed to the Asian American experience, plus the added such troubles associated with their sexual identity. So, as coalition-building continues into the 90's let's hope that the gay and lesbian Asian Americans don't get left out. ■

Two Nations, Two Schools of Thought

Factors which contribute to the lower first-time passing rate of Philippine-trained nurses are academic as well as cultural

By Kris Easterling
STAFF WRITER

Working in San Diego as a nurse, I've had the chance to meet and work with nurses from a wide variety of academic and cultural backgrounds. Through the many discussions with my Filipino colleagues, I've observed a curious trend in graduates from the Philippines.

I've found that the state board passing rate for RN's (Registered Nurses) from the Philippines is well below that of U.S.-trained nurses. According to figures from the local nursing schools, 80 to 90% of their graduates pass the test on the first attempt. The question now is whether this perceived imbalance is based on cultural differences? Or is there a difference in the academic preparation in the Philippines?

I interviewed Lilly, a Filipino nurse working at Mercy Hospital. She states that the curriculum is the same in the U.S. as in the

Philippines, and all Philippine trained nurses have a bachelor's degree. Both places require students to go through similar didactic and clinical rotations.

Like their American counterparts, the nursing preparations in the Philippines include basic chemistry, physics, biology and microbiology in addition to

social science and nursing. Additionally, they are given courses in calculus and organic chemistry that are not taught to most American nurses. As in American schools, Filipino nurses are also required to seek out and conduct independent research in a specialty.

The work and knowledge of

the Philippine trained nurses is judged of equal quality according to all local hospital personnel departments contacted. Unlike in other professions, in nursing equal job opportunities are offered to graduates of either country who pass the state board. There does not appear to be a lack of academic preparation on

the part of nursing schools in the Philippines. There does, however, seem to exist significant cultural differences. Virgil, a male Filipino nurse states that compulsory education in the Philippines lasts only through 10th grade, thus cutting off a period of crucial development in the area of critical and

independent thinking. Also, teaching methods in the Philippines are more dogmatic and direct than in the U.S.. This further limits the development of independent thinking. This familiarity to a more clinical testing style could negatively affect Filipino nurses when faced with the situational style favored by American testers. A director of a local nursing school has expressed that while Filipino graduates are excellent in memory, they are less trained in hands-on applications.

A further barrier to Filipino nurses is the difference in the sentence structure and usage between the two countries. The Filipino use of English is generally less direct and more subtle than in the U.S.

Therefore, it is mainly, but not completely a cultural difference that contributes to the disparity in the success ratios of first time test takers. ■



SA I GU...

ONE-ON-ONE WITH STEVE YANG, LELAND SAITO, & YEN LE ESPIRITU

By Shoon Lio
STAFF WRITER

Steve Yang, Community Relations Coordinator of the Korean American Coalition (KAC).

1. *How has the Korean community in L.A. been coping?*

"Since last year, the Korean American community has been busy working with the victims of the unrest. More than half of the stores destroyed last year were Korean-owned. We are looking at approximately 2000 Korean families that were affected which roughly translates into 5000 or more individuals. There are those families who are barely scraping by after their livelihood was destroyed. There are those families who have sent their children back to Korea. Marriages were broken. Others are suffering from Post Traumatic Stress and other forms of psychological disorders resulting from the civil unrest of last year. Those whose stores weren't destroyed are doing a little better than the others." "Quite a number of community organizations are working on the various aspects of providing relief. Some of our community organizations are working on a relief collection. A number of agencies are trying to bring attention to the fact that the money promised by the Small Business Agency last year has not been forthcoming.

2. *How responsive have these government officials been?*

"They haven't been responsive at all. This Rebuild L.A. (RLA) consortium, headed by Peter Ueberoth, made it clear from its inception that it wasn't going to be a relief organization. The very thing that the Korean American community needs, relief, is the very thing that Rebuild L.A. won't supply. The community has had the rug pulled from under them.

3. *Are there Korean Americans in Rebuild L.A.?*

"We have a number of board members on RLA who are from the Korean American community. Their feelings are that RLA can't do much for the Korean American community. I sit on several of RLA's task forces and it is my personal impression that we meet and talk alot, but nothing gets done.



4. *What are ways in which we can bring about better communications between the different communities?*

There are no easy answers to that question. But it seems to me that it has to start with personal contacts. When people meet on the

personal level, you can really start to understand that person and understand that beneath the different skin colors, different accents, different cultures, we all are human beings. Our organization is going to devote more of our activities to reestablishing ties with the various communities in Los Angeles.

4. *Is there hope?*

"It depends on who you talk to. There are those who are just barely making it. They will tell you that there is no hope. You can't make broad generalizations about our community. I know that there was a collective sense of relief after the second verdict. There seems to be less tension. You know, Koreans have a long historical tradition of memorializing a significant event in its history by its date. The civil unrest that occurred last year is known in the Korean community as *Sa I Gu* which means "429." We as Korean Americans, actually ALL Asian Americans must remember *Sa I Gu*. You see, Asian Americans are far from integrated into American society.

"I would recommend all young Asian Americans to get involved in political affairs and educate themselves. *Sa I Gu*, this past April was a wakeup call for all us."

Leland Saito, a professor in the Ethnic Studies Department who specializes in ethnic politics and redistricting.

1. *Is there any hope for programmatic changes in our society?*

"One of the reasons why I'm in academia is that I haven't given up hope. I am hopeful that we can examine all the social programs that were enacted and figure out what works. We can take this knowledge and build from there. I don't want to give you the impression that all the reforms didn't work. Look at the Martin Luther King Jr. hospital that was built after the unrest of the

L.A. 1 YEAR LATER

60's. Having a hospital in your neighborhood where you can be treated without having to take a bus crosstown, is a positive and empowering thing."

2. *What about the argument that Asian American and Latino American representation is made at the expense of African Americans?*

"There is room for improvement on the representation of all three groups. There are some areas of L.A. where formerly African American communities are transforming into Latino communities.

The situation is very delicate. I think that the focus should be on gaining greater representation for all three groups. After all, in the year 2010, California will be a predominantly ethnic state. But we know that power doesn't follow demographic changes.

Yen Le Espiritu, a professor in the Ethnic Studies Department who specializes in Asian American Studies.

Ethnic entrepreneurship offers ideological affirmation of the American Dream—of pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps through sheer hard work, fiscal responsibility, and ambition. As sociologist Edna Bonacich put it, social mobility through entrepreneurship is, in some sense, the very essence of the ideal of American capitalism. Apologists for this system, therefore, elevate Asian immigrant entrepreneurs, and Asian Americans in general, to the status of cultural heroes or "model minorities." The celebration of Asian American achievements (first surfaced at the height of the civil rights movement) affirms the existence of equal opportunities for people of color in this country, de-emphasizes the critical role of institu-

tional discrimination, and shifts the cause of racial inequalities away from those in power and onto minority communities.

Implicit in the model minority thesis is a social judgement and moral injunction: If Asian Americans can make it on their own why can't other minorities? Despite persisting statistics to the contrary, Asian Americans continue to be held up as models to be emulated by less-fortunate groups. Pitting Asian Americans against other racial minorities this thesis aggravates interracial tensions in urban America—tensions born out of cultural differences, but more so of declining economic opportunities, and increasing competition for shrinking resources. As exemplified by the Korean-African American conflicts in Los Angeles and elsewhere, Asian American entrepreneurs are often viewed as the "haves" who oppress the "have nots."

Rodney King Coverage Fails to Break the Peace

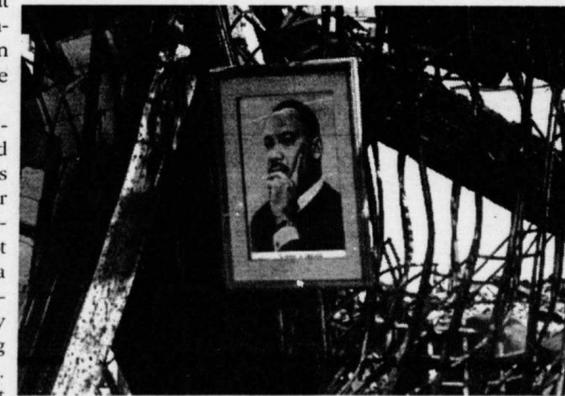
By Stuart Kimura
OPINION EDITOR

My roommate commends the media coverage of last month's second Rodney King trial, but I think it served to aggravate tensions in Los Angelinos. He believes the fact that there was no violence at its conclusion is proof that the media helped to diffuse tensions, but I think it had more to do with the fact that the L.A.P.D. put the "City of Angels" under siege by putting an army on the streets to discourage violence.

The trial grabbed the undivided attention of television and newspaper reporters, not for its own merit as a news story, but for its *potential* in drawing to a dramatic conclusion (i.e. another riot after the decision). The media scrutinized each new development in the trial by providing daily progress reports and their ensuing impact on the L.A. community. There weren't stories about peaceful reactions to the trial's proceedings; such coverage is boring and doesn't sell well. The stories that dominated the headlines for weeks leading up to the public announcement of the verdict were the ones that convinced the public that L.A. was bracing to become a war zone. This was unfortunate for people who depended on the media for all their information about the trial's impact,

because they got a view of the trial that assumed there was no chance for a peaceful resolution.

CNN and Newsweek were all over the story. An armed guard in Koreatown patrolled the rooftop of a local business, protecting it from any racially motivated attack.



These images are vivid and powerful, and their messages ominous. Surely you can't tell me this type of coverage did not lead people to expect that something was going to go down in South Central L.A. As for the people of Los Angeles, imagine the impact of this revelation.

Following the riots of the year before, Los Angelinos did not benefit from the media's

extensive coverage of the small-scale arms race that took place in South Central. A story about Koreatown merchants purchasing shotguns and revolvers en masse aggravated already rampant paranoia and made perfectly rational people go out and purchase their own automatic rifles. It's called escalation, and it's not going to enhance the level of trust and cooperation among racial groups anytime in the near future.

The media's concern for public safety in informing the American public (if you want to believe it was concern) should be commended, but why work the American public into a panic by reporting only the factors that increase the likelihood of conflict? It would be nice for once if the media actually waited for a news story to develop on its own rather than filling in the blanks themselves. But in reality a riot would have been a more favorable consequence of the verdict to the media than the 'outbreak of peace' that ensued. After all, violence is what journalistic Pulitzer Prize winning material is made of. For the media's information, I have a tip. There's plenty of conflict around the world that deserves media coverage (Pulitzer Prize-winning stuff) without having to make the Rodney King situation into one of them. ■

An Exclusive Interview with Nobu McCarthy: Part I of II

By Scott Okamoto
STAFF WRITER

Hollywood is dominated by white actors, actresses, producers, and directors. There are few roles for Asians, compared to whites and even blacks recently. But while the Asian American community complains and shoots down movies like *Come See the Paradise*, there are Asian American actors and actresses out there trying to find work. In doing so, they are trying to represent the Asian American community which criticizes their work so heavily.

Chances are, you've seen McCarthy somewhere. Long before Gedde Watanabe played Long Duck Dong, before Bruce Lee even, Nobu McCarthy was working as an actress in movies, searching for her place in Hollywood. In the early 60's, she co-starred with Jerry Lewis in *Geisha Boy*, her first appearance in film. A few years ago, she was Pat Morita's love interest in *Karate Kid 2*. McCarthy's most obscure, yet critically acclaimed work was in a movie called *Farewell to Manzanar* filmed in 1974, which made the Los Angeles Times list of the 25 best films in the past 25 years. The first time I ever saw Nobu

McCarthy was on an episode of the television sit-com *Different Strokes*, where she played a Korean woman who Mr. Drummond had an affair with during the Korean War.

Presently, McCarthy is the Artistic Director for the East/West players, and she recently spoke to *Momentum* about her life, her career, and her vision for Asian American actors and actresses of the future.

MOMENTUM: How did you get to Hollywood?

NOBU: After the war, I became one of the top fashion models in Japan, and then I was married. I came to the United States in 1956, and because of my modeling, a lot of Japanese Americans knew who I was. Some Asians in Hollywood spotted me and tracked me down, and asked me if I was interested in making movies. At the time, I didn't know much about Hollywood, but I was very intrigued by it. I had a kind of split image of heroines. I loved Audrey Hepburn and Ingrid Bergman, but I also loved some Japanese actors and actresses. Well, I forgot about Hollywood after a few weeks, and then I got a call from Jerry Lewis' people.



M: What was that experience like?

NOBU: Well at the time, I didn't speak any English. I had to learn all my lines phonetically. I took English classes, but they weren't much help, so I learned almost all of my English while on the set of movies. I had to.

M: Did you have a translator to help you communicate?

NOBU: No, they gave me a coach, for acting. He just made me memorize my dialogue. Then I would go back home and learn what they meant. Now, Jerry, you know, is always a kidder. One day he changed the cues for me to say my lines. So with when

my turn came to speak, I just stood there smiling, while everyone laughed. Jerry later took the outtakes from these scenes and showed them on Johnny Carson's show. It was kind of interesting, but I didn't understand about prejudice. I was from Japan. I remember feeling sorry for Chinese and Koreans in Japan, because they were always treated poorly, but I really did not know what it meant to be ridiculed. So I didn't understand that people were laughing at me because I was different...

continued next issue

Debut: A Realistic Film about Pilipino Americans

Asian American involvement in movies and television is dangerously lacking. Asian roles in front of the camera are limited to one-dimensional stereotypes, and Asian involvement behind the camera is equally deficient. This lack of Asian involvement in the media results in the negative portrayal of Asians in film and TV, which consequently results in ignorance and egregious stereotyping Asian communities by

the non-Asian American society. As a response to this, filmmaker Gene Cajayon and his staff of volunteers at Five-Card Productions are producing *DEBUT*, the first hour long television movie about Pilipino American youth.

The story revolves around Ben Mercado, a "whitewashed" Pilipino American teenager recently graduated from high school. He is a talented artist who wants to study the arts in

college, but his father wants him to study medicine.

One day, upon seeing his teenage cousin perform the Tinikling dance, the national dance of the Philippines, Ben is amazed by his cousins' intense, unashamed pride in Pilipino culture.

His brief but intense exposure to Pilipino culture helps him to understand his father better and gives him the strength to take a stand about his college plans.

This past year, Mr. Cajayon produced the first ten minutes of an earlier draft of the script for *DEBUT*. This short film served as his senior thesis for his bachelor's degree in Film Production at Loyola Marymount University. He is currently using the short as a trailer for the hour long version of the film.

Five-Card Productions' dedicated volunteer staff has embarked on a grass roots fundraising campaign within the Pilipino American community. They began their financing drive

this March, by first garnering support from the Pilipino youth groups at California's colleges and universities.

So far, Mr. Cajayon reports that the response from the youth has been tremendous. In addition to getting involved with the production of the film this summer, the youth groups are supporting the film with numerous fundraisers over the upcoming school year.

Five-Card hopes to raise at least half of the \$50,000 budget needed for the film through private donations. The project will be the first film about Pilipino American youth produced and financed by Pilipinos.

With this movie, Mr. Cajayon is hoping to help change the negative image of Asians in the media, and to encourage Pilipino and Asian youth to take pride in their cultural heritage.

If anyone wishes to get involved with or sponsor this project, contact Five-Card Productions at (213) 508-3342.



A scene from the movie *DEBUT*

Asian & Pacific Islander Awareness Week Schedule

May 22 - API Orgs "Golden Rice Bowl Sports Tournament" Volleyball, Tennis, Basketball
Sign up with your club or organization to win!

May 23 - Asian & Pacific Islander Culture Night
Price Center Ballroom, 6:00pm to 10:00pm

May 24 - Food Festival
Price Center Walkway - 11:00am to 2:00pm
Barbeque & Pacific Islander Concert
Price Center Plaza - 5:00pm
Forum/Workshop - Model Minority Myth
Price Center - 3:00 to 4:30pm

May 25 - Forum/Workshop: Asian & PI American Sexuality
Price Center - 4:00pm
Here and Now - Asian American Theater Troupe
Triton Pub - 7:30pm

May 26 - Mini Cultural Show
Gym Steps - 12:00 noon
Forum/Workshop - Interracial & Interethnic Conflict
Price Center - 4:00pm
Asian & PI American Video & Film Exhibition
GH 1118 - 7:00pm

May 27 - Forum/Workshop: Asian American & Pacific Islander Political Empowerment:
Price Center - 4:00pm
Karaoke & Game Night
Ocean View Lounge - 7:30pm

May 28 - Unity Jam - "Dreamscape" Dance w/ DJ's and rap group
Price Center Ballroom - 9:00pm to 1:00am

All events are free admission

Programs are subject to change without notice. For more information, please contact Asian & Pacific Islander Student Alliance Office at 534-2048

ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER AWARENESS WEEK



MAY 22-28 1993

Sponsored by APSA, CSA, JaAMS, KASA, Kaibigang Pilipino, Hawai'i Club, CCC, Psi Chi Omega, Kappa Delta Phi, SAAC, Sangam, College Councils, ASUCSD, SD Region APSU

AYOP IS COMING... FALL '93

Whether you enjoy working with kids, or want to give something back to your community, join

Asian Youth Outreach Project
and help Southeast Asian immigrant children overcome language and cultural difficulties and strive toward a brighter future. Make friends, have fun, and help out children in need. We have tutoring, workshops, field trips, sports/games, and more...

Watch out for us at Fall Festival on the Green (FFOG) starting in September...

Upcoming Events

Wednesday, May 12 - CSA Movie Night - "The Lover"
7:00pm @ WLH 2005

Thursday, May 13 - JaAMS Speed Racer Movie
7:00pm @ Ken Cinema

Saturday, May 15 - CSA Car Wash
10am @ Miramar Texaco
JaAMS Karaoke Night
8:00pm

Friday, May 21 - Sun God Festival

Saturday, May 22 - "Golden Rice Bowl" Asian Games
12:00pm @ Muir Courts
CSA Boat Cruise Semiformal
8:30pm

Saturday, May 29 - VSA Boat Cruise Semiformal
CSA Farewell Picnic/bonfire
2:00pm @ Mission Bay

Sunday, May 30 - APSA Graduation Banquet
6:00pm @ International Center

Asian and Pacific Islander Awareness Week Edition

Voices On...

By Tina Wu

"What makes me Korean?
I love kim-chi.
It seems that Koreans compared to other Asians, in general, can tolerate spicier foods."



Sean Lee



Madhu Gupta

"Indian culture is the values that I learned (while growing up) in India. (Indian culture) is not necessarily dressing in traditional clothing or not exposing certain parts of your body."

"I'm more Americanized. I wouldn't say I'm 'white-washed.' I can still identify with my (Vietnamese) culture, but I don't restrict myself from other cultures."



Ngan Le

Ethnic identity goes beyond physical appearance. It may be a way of life, the manner of action or thinking. Different aspects of the Asian and Pacific Islander culture have been passed on from parent to child, from generation to generation.



Chris Reyes

"I identify with the Pilipino culture in my actions and my philosophies, such as respect toward parents and people older than me, and the way I deal with my 'barcardas' (or buddies)."

"I feel most Chinese when I use chopsticks to eat, because I almost always use chopsticks. I'm a klutz when it comes to forks, knives, and spoons."



Herb Liu



Teresa Sekiguchi

"(Although) I was born and raised in Mexico, at home, (my siblings and I) were raised like the (traditional) Japanese family. We speak Japanese. (Like most traditional Japanese families), the whole family gets together to celebrate New Year's."

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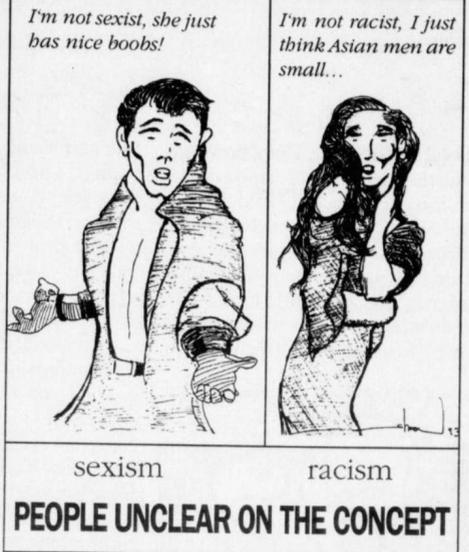
Acknowledgements & Special Thanks:

Yen Le Espiritu
Greg Green
Nobu McCarthy
Steve Mib
Bert Nakano
Leland Saito
Junichi Semitsu
Linda Vo
Steve Yang
G.L.A.S.S.

Momentum is a tri-quarterly publication funded by ASUCSD. Momentum does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, or gender. Submissions and letters are encouraged. The views and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of Momentum or its sponsors and funding sources.
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SHOONY TOONS

By Shoon Lio



Spouting Off

By Austin Sung

Waco Texas is burning as I write this. As I type people are dying for a cause which I would describe as purely a cult. Hours earlier I was watching a man screaming on TV about how the L.A. riots were justified and how without justice there should be no peace. The man on TV advocates the riots and claims that the riots were simply a way to express outrage. Sometimes the world just doesn't seem to make sense. People are dying for no reason at all and people just don't understand. Sure these problems have gone on since Adam and Eve were thrown out of Eden, but it still amazes me each time it happens. Idealism has made me a cynic as I watch the fire consume the Waco complex. David Koresh, the most recent incarnation of Christ; what are you thinking of? Are you proud that you have such control over people? And people of the L.A. riots what did you think of? Did you really think that burning down LA would get you justice? The police officers were retried and found guilty. During the riots a white man was pulled from his truck and beaten by four angry young black men in a manner similar to that received by Rodney King. Someone even got it on tape.

Still you chant "no justice no peace." How much justice do you think those four police officers have. People nation-wide saw what happened when those four officers were acquitted of their charges. How hard would it be to find impartial jurors? Reginal Denny's (sic) beating was even worse than King's because there's no doubt in my mind that this beating was racially motivated. David Coresh (sic) how can you be Christ when Christ never tells lies and you've deceived the media so many times? You tell the world your people want to stay, yet most of the people who have left tell stories of horror and sexual debauchery of you. They didn't want to stay. You told the world you'd give up if you could just televise one message to the world. You lied. And the world continues, and these people, these incidents, become footnotes in history.

People have said one shouldn't point out problems without advancing solutions. What am I suppose to say when I'm a part of the problem. I'm a member of this society and I am pathetic, just pathetic. Life goes on. I'm just spouting off. ■

GUEST COLUMN JUNICHI SEMITSU

The Asian Man's Penis

Ever since the placenta was wiped off and the circumcision was executed, before I even had a chance to measure or compare myself to others, I have been led to believe that I have a small penis. As an Asian American male, I have been subject to an oppression that has become so common that I have almost become blind to the self-hate that keeps getting inflicted upon fellow Asian males.

I frequently hear jokes about how Asian women park an inch away from the curb because their Asian husbands tell them that that distance is actually sex inches. I turn on the television and watch Arsenio brag about how American baseball players are better hung than their Japanese counterparts. I hear rumors that Chancellor Tien expelled the "naked guy" because the competition was just too visibly intimidating. I read in the San Francisco Chronicle that the U.S. government's planned parenthood program sends smaller-sized condoms to Asian countries because, according to one senior official, "It's a tradition." This tradition must be confronted.

How could a generalization of this magnitude become so commonplace even on elementary school playgrounds? I have yet to be convinced of the truth of the stereotype. Since you never find an Asian male in an American pornographic magazine or movie, I would think it would be hard to create an analytical study off the VCR. Research has failed to show any major differences in the sized of erect penises among ethnic groups. If this observation is accurate, either top secret researchers have been taking notes in shower stalls or women have been disproportionately complaining that Asian men just can't satisfy them to the extent that others can. Or... somebody has created this anatomical myth.

Although Asian males have been unfairly shafted (excuse the pun) by this insult, I am more concerned about why this stereotype has come about.

The Asian-American male is essentially perceived as an asexual being. From international Playgirls to International Male catalogs, he is invisible. At best, he can be seen in movies as an opium drug dealer, a kung-fu expert, or a pencil-neck computer geek. I will have a new hearing aid and a new bladder by the time an Asian male gets cast in any American soap opera or romantic film. "Asian Week on STUDS" just wouldn't live up to the standards of excellence demonstrated in these love connection shows. No wonder Asian-American females are increasingly dating outside their respective races; why would you want to date somebody with absolutely no identifiable sex appeal?

For every racial stereotype ever known, a reason for its creation and continued usage exists. The myth of the African-American's "big black cock" makes him an intimidating threat to white society. Daddy would never let his white pumpkin date Long Dong Silver, for why would he want to subject his daughter to the traditional adage, "wrath and the rape of the black-skinned ape?" On the other hand, dating an Asian male is unthinkable, for what is a prospective male role-model who doesn't represent masculinity? The image of the African-American male and the opposing image of the Asian-American male were both created for a reason. In order for the white man to ensure that white women would not want to date outside their color he must preserve his status as society's ideal image of beauty. And God forbid that this foundation ever be rocked.

Despite an increasing presence of minorities in Hollywood, the romantic lead, the hero, or the protagonist has rarely ever been "colonized." The American audience would be horrified to see a Native American run around naked instead of Kevin Costner's over-paid pale ass in "Danced with Wolves." The increasing presence of stars such as Denzel Washington, Lou Diamond Phillips, and Wesley Snipes is a sign of change. However, within my own external identity, whom do I have to glamorize? Mr. Miyagi? Jesus Christ's second coming would probably happen before Asians could become a real "model" minority.

Despite the humor one may find in the discussion, a larger and more immediate issue exists surrounding the imbalanced portrayal of Asian-American males. The struggle for identity is a difficult enough challenge as it is without having to deal with jokes about how the difference between a Caucasian and an Asian is the "Cauc."

Junichi Semitsu is a UC Berkeley sophomore majoring in economics

We're On Our Way To The Perfect Place...

■ Yogi's Ark, Asian American Feminists and Multilocality

By Shoon Lio
STAFF WRITER

As of late, I've been thinking of an animated feature I watched as a child—"Yogi's Ark." In it, Hanna-Barbera characters such as Yogi Bear have banded together to escape their polluted neighborhoods and finally, the earth itself. They wanted to find the utopian, pollution-free "perfect place." They finally realized at the end of the movie that they must commit themselves to making wherever they were a more perfect place.

The metaphor of "place" or "space" features prominently in the writings of feminist women of color who feel dis-placed by traditional feminist and/or traditional anti-racist discursive practices (see Kimberle Crenshaw's analysis of the Hill/Thomas controversy and how it didn't fit in either paradigm in her essay "Whose Story Is It, Anyway?" in Morrison's *Race-Ing Justice, Engendering Power*). In fact, the metaphor of space, place or position is central to the type of transformative politics advocated by feminist women of color and multiculturalists:

"As a radical standpoint, perspective, position, 'the politics of location' necessarily calls those of us who would participate in the formation of counter-hegemonic cultural practice to identify the spaces where we begin the process of revision (b. hooks's Yearning, p. 145)

For hooks, these spaces are sites where we "...can engage in critical dissent without violating each other." (ibid.) and where we can "affirm each other and by so doing heal many of the wounds inflicted by racist domination" (ibid.) These sites are not conflict-free, but rather are sites where people can assert their own agency—that is, take control over their lives and empowering themselves against the larger forces of oppression.

At college campuses, Asian American women and other women of color have opted to form their own groups where they can establish a "safe place" for themselves (actually, the comparative form, "Safer," would be more appropriate given that one of the goals of traditional feminism is to create "safe" places.) They do this in part because they feel that the established ethnic student organizations are not self-interrogating or self-critical enough with regards to sexism. Theorists such as Elaine Kim and Lisa Lowe have long pointed out the tensions between nationalist and feminist politics in Asian American discourses. The most visible example of this is the ongoing conflict between writers Maxine Hong Kingston and Frank Chin.

For women of color, mainstream feminist student organizations are not self-interrogating or self-critical enough with regards to racial privilege. The way sisterhood or

womanhood is constructed as an "universal" obfuscates the fact that this "universal" is based on the experiences of middle-class white women. This universalizing and essentializing construction of identity ends up obscuring the significance of race: "White feminists have been reluctant to incorporate race into their narratives about gender, sex and power ("Whose Story Is It, Anyway?" in



Morrison's *Race-Ing Justice, Engendering Power*) Thus, the impetus for separate women of color groups is understandable.

The theme of separation as the beginning of self-discovery and self-empowerment has a long tradition in Western thought. The essayist Montaigne advocated separation as part of a process which culminates in a greater awareness of one's creative possibilities—with which the familiar places one inhabits cease to be oppressive and confining (Essay "On Vanity.") Similarly, bell hooks points to the idea that creativity can deconstruct the social boundaries that con-

fine and silence us: "Spaces can be interrupted, appropriated, and transformed through artistic and literary practice"(Yearnings).

The problem here, and it is one I am guilty of, is the lack of creativity in imagining and envisioning new habits of being or new forms of discourse with which we can carry on a real dialogue. The lack of creativity manifests itself in the different forms of separatist politics (as distinguished from the process of separation) to be found in Asian American social/political discourses. Whatever form it takes, the separatist impulse usually results in "dis-enabling" critiques and contemptuous feedbacks which would actually inhibit the creation of "safe places"(see the dialogues on "homeplace" between bell hooks and Cornel West in *Yearnings* and *Breaking Bread*).

For instance, some Asian American feminists end up reproducing some of the reductive, essentialist rhetoric which made the very "places" where they had felt displaced, "unsafe"(i.e. the Asian student organizations, the women resource centers, the university, etc.) This essentialist and separatist discourse is evident in phrases bandied about in the debate on Asian American gender politics: "You Asian men are the root of my problems." "You men just can't understand." To which Asian American males would respond with more contemptuous, but equally unimaginative responses: "Yeah, so what if I'm a sexist?" "You females just need to get @*%!!" "You Asian women are just traitors that want your white boyfriends." The moment these essentializing phrases are uttered, the possibility for dialogue and reform is stunted because the possibility of empathy is effectively dismissed. Instead of dialogue, a concept which everyone pays lip service to, you get a series of monologues treating each other as non sequiturs.

Extending this separatist ideology to its logical conclusion, we are led to believe that nobody can understand anybody. Instead of feeling liberated by the unveiling of the social boundaries that intersect our lives, we end up being more circumscribed by them. Nobody can understand anybody because no one is you. Thus, the only seemingly safe place is one that is tailored to the peculiar circumstances of one's birth and life. In other words, a safe place can only house one person and no more. Therefore and ironically enough, we end up becoming individual atoms vulnerable to all forms of oppression. A "safe place" becomes illusory under the practice of such a separatist and radically individualistic form of politics.

According to bell hooks, safe places are not the romanticized, pollutant-free sanctuaries where one lives apart from one's oppressors (*Yearnings*) Rather, as the moral of

Continued on Page 16

In Defense of Ethnic Studies Majors

■ Ethnic Studies offers more than just Standard Education; it promotes Personal Growth

By Cheryl Soriano
STAFF WRITER

"Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self confidence"—Robert Frost

"What's your major?"

"Ethnic Studies." This is where a plethora of responses come in, such as: "Come again?" "What's that?" or my personal favorite, "That's cool, but what can you do with it?" I have heard these responses so many times that I smile every time I hear them. Before, I would get defensive. When I told them why I chose this major, I would come across feeling ashamed. Now, I just calmly explain how Ethnic Studies is an interdisciplinary major that covers different areas like history, literature, language, and field research. Why the

change in attitude? I finally realized all the things I learned from this major and its role in my growth.

Since declaring this major in Winter Quarter 1992, I have learned so many things that I would have missed out on otherwise. I learned about the rich history of Asian Americans in California. They made so many contributions to California's agricultural industry and to the building of the railroads. As a Pilipina American, it was en-

lightening to learn about Pilipinos who came to California as migrant farm workers. Anti-Asian sentiment was strong at the time. Stores had signs that read "No Filipinos Allowed." I have

The most valuable thing I have learned from Ethnic Studies is the ability to look at things from many perspectives.

been able to learn about my heritage and recall with respect the struggles of the older Pilipino generation. Although I'm embarrassed to admit it, I probably would have remained ignorant otherwise. There was so much I didn't know, and I did not like being in the dark. Ethnic Studies has helped to combat my personal ignorance. The most valuable thing I have learned from Ethnic Studies is the ability to look at things from many perspectives. Issues are never black and white, there are many shades in between. Now when I formulate an opinion, I try to look at all sides of the issue. This may seem obvious, but it is harder than it appears. It forces you to look beyond your biases and prejudices, so that you can make an attempt to empathize with others' points of view. Ethnic Studies makes you question your own beliefs and value system. You begin to ask yourself, "Why do I think the way I do?" ■

Multiculturalism in America: It's a good thing

By Stuart Kimura
STAFF WRITER

The saga of Rodney King intrigues me. Obviously tensions haven't been tempered much over the course of a year, as we saw last month with all the events leading up to the public announcement of the second King verdict. Images of the merchants of Koreatown stocking up on semi-automatic weapons to discourage looters remain etched in my mind as fears of renewed clashes between different ethnic groups ran high. The L.A.P.D. put the city under siege during the week of the announcement of the decision.

The situation was symbolic of how little progress has been made over the past year in defusing the fear, anger, and resentment among and between different ethnic groups. Why has there been so little progress?

As Americans, it would be in our best interest to put our racial and ethnic differences aside for the greater common good of building a single national society with one set of shared common values. I am, however, not speaking in terms of political or economic values. Americans rarely waver in their devotion to the principles of democracy and entrepreneurship, but to social values. Are we being asked to transcend what makes America the most uniquely heterogeneous country in the world—its ethnic and racial diversity?

Liberty, freedom, opportunity, equality. All of these things were guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. So why should we encourage minorities to assimilate themselves into a society defined by mainstream America? Any attempt to cultivate a single national identity would go against everything the Constitution stands for. The hope for a homogeneous identity undermines the ideals and promises that America made to people immigrating to the United States. Ironically, ethnic diversity becomes the identifying characteristic of American culture—a diversity which I believe to be the single greatest attribute of American society.

We must learn that racial diversity can be a strength of American society. With ethnic diversity comes increasing danger of conflict, but would you sacrifice this diversity? As an American I am willing to accept the costs that social and cultural diversity impose.

America is a society in its idealized state that doesn't consider one ethnic group superior to another. Such bias endangers the notion of equality in America. Because of this lack of valuing one cultural over another, America does not cater to the special interests of ethnic groups. Consequently, ethnic groups or communities often call upon each other to share cultural experiences. This solidarity can be a source of ethnic pride. The celebration of Hanukkah, or Cinco de Mayo are important traditional celebrations for various ethnic groups in America today. All Americans may not celebrate these holidays, but they are as legitimate and important as any other. Ethnic ties preserve traditional mores and customs of a particular culture, but they may work against efforts to forge a unified national society.

School House Rock on Saturday morning TV captured the essence of America's multiethnic society in a sketch called the "Great American Melting Pot", which portrayed America as a country made up of many different cultures sharing the same pot (society). Though it falsely assumed all cultures would melt together to form a single society, its message was well received. We have come to realize that minority cultures don't need to melt together, as idealized in the "Great American Melting Pot" in order to make America strong. While America is a country with diverse people who have learned to share the same pot, we don't need to melt together to do so.

We can maintain our respective cultural identities without forging a monolithic society. Multiculturalism is what makes Americans special. If everybody melted together we'd have a pot of tasteless mush instead of one full of many distinctive flavors that make America what it is today. Gee, I guess there are some benefits to watching Saturday morning television. ■

on "Yogi's Ark" would suggest, "safe places" are constructed right where you are situated—the sites of oppression and resistance. The Anthropologist, Margaret Rodman suggests that we begin the re-construction of empowering places by

"looking at places from the viewpoints of Others, while recognizing that there are really no 'others' in a world in which everyone can potentially suffer from one agent's actions (as for example, in oil spills or nuclear accidents.)" (Margaret Rodman. "Empowering Place: Multilocality and Multivocality." *American Anthropologist*. v. 94. 1992.)

Although such places are social, zoned have multiply-defined centers, paths, and boundaries, it is not fragmented (ibid.) What is implicit in the multi-local conception of "place" is the possibility of empathy and the recognition of our interconnectedness. As my friend Jo Tashiro puts it, sexism "is not a matter of *My* problem or *Your* problem, but *Our* problem." And concomitantly, "It's not *My* solution or *Yours* solution, but *Our* solution." By claiming sexism, racism, and poverty as our problems, we can begin to form, reform, and transform the places we are at into places of empowerment.

Thus, what were formerly "unsafe" places, the Asian student organizations, the women's resource centers, the university, and society itself, can be recon-

stituted into empowering places "...of recognition and understanding, where we know one another so well, our histories, that we can take the bits and pieces, the fragments of who we are, and put them back together, re-member them." (bell hooks and Cornel West. *Breaking Bread*) These are the sites on which we can assert our agency through the creative construction of our individual identities.

But to be honest with you, I can't claim credit for any more creativity or vision than those who will inevitably attack me for

having the audacity to write about "women's" issues. I can only hope that by collectively recreating the world into a more perfect place, we can make up for our individual deficiencies and lack of imagination. But to echo Montaigne: "*Que sais je?*"—what do I know?

After all,
I am a
flippant/sexist/self-righteous/
insensitive/ignorant/overweight/
amusing/socially inept/caring/
painfully shy/occasionally
lonely/impooverished/urban-
dwelling/Asian American/

Motown-lovin'
mutha from
New York City/lower East side
Smith housing Projects/a
dysfunctional family
who can't
dance for beans/connect
emotionally
and is
a decent cook/poet/artist/
pedant
And yes, very much a loner.
I wonder where I can feel
safe?

I wish to thank Michelle Esperanza and Jim Ingram for reading earlier drafts of this essay.

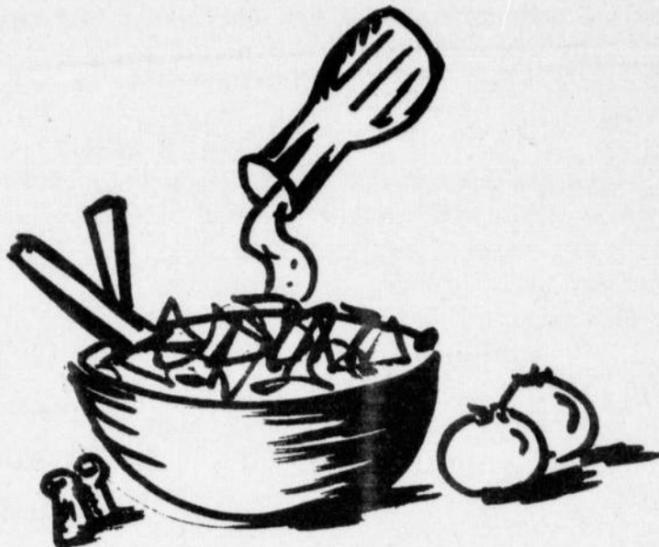
Ginger-Orange Vinaigrette

A Perky Miso-Based Japanese Salad Dressing

By Chef Shoon

Ingredients:

- 3 Tbsp. rice vinegar
- 3 Tbsp. orange juice
- 3 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 1/2 tsp. shiro miso
- 1 tsp. ginger juice
(squeezed from
freshly grated ginger)
- 1 tsp. soy sauce
- 1 tsp. kuro goma
(black sesame seeds-optional)
- 1/4 tsp. mirin
- 1/4 tsp. dry mustard

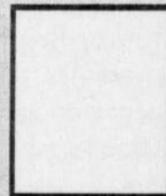


Directions:

1. Mix rice vinegar and mustard, then stir in ginger juice.
2. Whisk in miso, soy sauce, mirin, and orange juice.
3. Whisk in the oil.
4. Prepare your salad and top with kuro goma.
5. Use about 3 tablespoons of dressing for each 8 oz. salad serving.

Momentum

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