

APA Journal

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Asian Political Association

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Adidas Sneaker Provokes Heated Debate



Courtesy of the Washington Post

The Adidas-Salomon AG creates confusion over the fine line between artistic expression and stereotyping for commerce

By Lorraine Ling

A new sneaker from Adidas is decorated on the tongue with the image of an Asian man with bowl-cut hair, slanted eyes, pig nose and buckteeth. The shoe is part of a limited edition line called the “Yellow Series” and only 1,000 pairs of the offending sneakers have been produced. Sold at boutique shoe stores for \$250, they target die-hard sneaker collectors, not your everyday shoe-shoppers. Nevertheless, in the age of instant communication over the internet, outcry over the offending image has quickly spread.

Anh Phan, communication director of the Organization of Chinese America in Washington, D.C., expressed, “Taken in context with all the mentions of yellow, it’s upsetting.” Although many Asian-American interest groups do not call for a boycott of Adidas, they have demanded an apology.

Meanwhile, Adidas and the artist contend it’s about art and self-expression. The character on the shoe is the creation of a San Francisco graffiti artist, Barry McGee, who is half-Chinese. McGee, who calls the character Ray Fong after an uncle who died, said the image is based on how the artist looked as an 8-year-old. “Fong” had been used previously in McGee’s art as anti-racist commentary. In an Adidas consumer relations email responding to my angry “That’s racist!” email, McGee states “Keith (HUF) and I never thought the image was “racist” and I am sorry to those people who perceive it that way. All I remember is having Stan Smith’s

face on my Adidas when I was young, and was elated to put a caricature of myself on a shoe when presented the opportunity this year.”

Aimee Baldillo, a deputy director at the Asian American Justice Center in Washington, D.C., opines that McGee’s image “might come from a good place, but slapping a Chinese face on a sneaker removes it from that context. Ultimately it becomes yet another harmful image that perpetuates the stereotype of Asians.” This stereotype is unfortunately not new. McGee’s image defines Asians as foreigners, and is similar to ones used in anti-Chinese political cartoons in the past.

So should we all just “lighten up” in what I think is sometimes an over-PC world? I guess the issue is removing a potentially subversive image from the context of art and sticking it onto a commodity to be sold. Does the image still have the same power to subvert

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Looking forward...

I’ve always thought that one goal of APA is to make it so that one day, the necessity of its existence is gone.

Asians will probably always be categorized as Asians – there are a great many physical differences that make the discrepancy in race nearly unavoidable. However, Asians being involved in the political arena is something that we as people and as an organization can change.

There are many factors that may determine Asian entrance into the political arena, those foremost in my mind being the rise of China as a global power and competitor, and the continual immigration of Asians into the U.S. However, putting our fate into the hands of these forces beyond our control is only complacency and acceptance—people can rise and challenge what society has given them.

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India as a Global Nuclear Power?

By Malin Kimoto

The Bush administration's controversial nuclear cooperation agreement between the United States and India has gained growing concern and criticism from both sides of key lawmakers over the past month. The proposed deal, one of the most important foreign policy accomplishments, will aid India in their nuclear power industry. Although India has not signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, lawmakers urge the US to accept India's status and pursue economic interests. US Secretary of the State, Condolezza Rice has urged support, while others expressed concern over military and economic cooperation between India and Iran, which was demanded by the US Security Council on March 29 to halt its uranium enrichment program.

This deal is significant as it now recognizes India as a global nuclear power instead of a regional one. Yet many fear that it will weaken the non-proliferation regime. States like Iran and North Korea will probably continue to pursue their nuclear program, while China's support remains unpredictable. How will such an agreement affect India's relationship with China or the US's relationship with China, who will most likely assist Pakistan? If India does agree to such a treaty, it may lead to many conflicts among other nations. Thus, the US and India must thoroughly acknowledge the unpredictable consequences of such an agreement before ratification.

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It is easy for students, especially Asian students, to remain apathetic towards politics, given their upbringing and motivations. The prerequisites for a generally considered "good life" do not include this knowledge, as one can easily get by without it.

It is not an easy task that APA has been charged with, and nobody should claim it to be. UC Berkeley will probably continue to have a high number of Asian students into the foreseeable future, all entering college with future employment and economic gains as their top priorities.

College, to my utmost belief, is a place where one expands their field of vision upon life. Continuing to live in a bubble, albeit a larger bubble, does not successfully fulfill that goal.

Thus until the day when Asians, as an encompassing culture and a socially defined race, are able to enter politics at a higher level and of their own efficacy, the Asian Political Association will be charged with leading them towards greater knowledge and activity. Whether that day shall come, I surely do not know, but let us be content in knowing our efforts are not frivolous, because for each and every individual who learns more about their society and how it ultimately affects them, the more chance they have to make the change that they want.

-Albert Wu

President, Asian Political Association, 2005-2006

Cal LiNK [Liberty in North Korea] presents: North Korean Awareness Week for Human Rights

Submitted by the Executive Board of Cal LiNK

The entrance to the Holocaust Museum in Washington DC has two words adorning the doorway: Never Again. Touring through the museum, you are overwhelmed with stories and images of horrible atrocities, filling visitors with a sense of disgust and anger, sadness and bewilderment. This was the lowest point in the history of mankind, the ultimate manifestation of man's cruelty and the display of our worst potential. The two words, as simple as they appear, are full of hope; hope for a better future with lessons learned from the past.

But history has a tendency to repeat itself. Currently there are serious human rights violations occurring halfway around the world. It is lost amidst power politics and skewed American foreign policy. Millions of people die each year in silence as the world calmly turns away.

You might be thinking that I am talking about Darfur, but I'm not. I am talking about North Korea. For many Americans, North Korea is seen only in the context of nuclear weapons, the George W. Bush proclaimed "Axis of Evil," and through satirical pieces such as "Team America." When people hear North Korea, they immediately think about Kim Jong-Il, with his tan jump suit and oversized aviator sunglasses. The country is as enigmatic as its leader, instilling a slight fascination in its peculiarity, but nothing more.

What is lost amidst these issues and peculiarities are the egregious human rights violations at the hands of the despotic regime. Amnesty International deems North Korea as one of the worst violator of human rights. In April 2004, the UN Commission on Human Rights passed a resolution "expressing deep concern about continuing reports of systemic, widespread and grave violations of human rights." North Korea ranks among the worst in censorship and freedom of the press. According to a study published last year by the Food and Agricultural Organization, 13 million people in North Korea, over half the total population, suffered from malnutrition.

Reports also indicate that there are numerous labor and torture camps established throughout the country by the regime to punish dissidents and political prisoners. The regime tightly controls its subjects every movement, punishing anything that would be construed as counter-revolutionary.

Each day, thousands of North Koreans desperately cross the Yalu River into China, hoping to escape their dismal existence and to pursue political asylum. However, the Chinese government continues to maintain their policy of returning captured North Korean refugees, sending them to a certain and grim fate. Many risk their lives against the elements—North Korean agents

and Chinese security forces—knowing that their decision to leave North Korea has very final and dire consequences.



Many North Koreans risk their lives crossing the Yalu River

Courtesy of Google Images

How can we continue to pretend that nothing is going on?

This past fall, we established Liberty in North Korea (LiNK) here at UC Berkeley. Part of a larger umbrella organization based out of Washington, DC, LiNK strives to bring awareness to these issues that are being largely ignored by the media and our own government. Our organization is non-partisan, non-religious, and non-ethnic. LiNK's philosophy is empowerment from a grassroots level, as we hope to bring change from the bottom up, through education and empowerment of the student body and the local community. We are not here to demand for regime change or to criticize our own administration. Politics is not our game. We demand a change for the better for those who wish to live without constant fear, to speak without limitation, and to achieve a certain amount of happiness.

As an executive member of LiNK, I invite you to our annual North Korean human rights week, from April 24th through the 27th. There will be film screenings, a debate with different professors and speakers all addressing the current problems in North Korea. My hope you come to these events with a sense of curiosity and leave with a sense of obligation. Education, we believe, is our greatest weapon in our struggle. While this event is sponsored by many Korean groups on campus, this by no means is a Korean issue. This is a human issue that should be recognized by everyone as an injustice.

I do sincerely hope you attend and are inspired by what normal everyday people out there are doing in the name of human rights. While this might seem like a gargantuan issue that is simply overwhelming for any one person, I respond with an idea, taken from the Berlin Wall: "Many small people who in many small places do many small things can change the world."

For more information, check out www.xanga.com/callink or email us at callink@gmail.com with any questions.

Much Ado About Nothing? The Immigration Battle | *Ron Foo*

As the Senate grapples with the immigration bill related to the Securing America's Borders Act (S. 2454) shelved until after the Senate's spring recess, the United States continues to be galvanized with this issue. In Southern California, 36,000 students in the Los Angeles Unified School District walked out in late March in protest of HR 4437 after half a million protestors took to the streets of Los Angeles to protest the same House Resolution which would make illegal immigrants "aggravated felons."



Students Protest the immigration bill in Los Angeles

Image courtesy of wikipedia.org

HR 4437 (which passed the House of Representatives), introduced by Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-Wisconsin), would make it an aggravated felony for illegal immigrants and those who assist them, including those organizations affiliated with the Catholic Church. At the same time, Section 1002 of the bill would build a fence and other security features on the U.S. border with Mexico from the Pacific Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico. But those opposing the bill often neglect other aspects of the bill. Take for example Section 116 of the legislation, which would use radiation detectors at U.S. ports of entries to screen for nuclear and radiological material entering the U.S. Section 1131 would enhance penalties for illegal immigrants committing crimes. These aspects of the bill are drowned out by those with narrow-minded visions for protecting our borders and protecting the United States. Far from just immigration reform, HR 4437 works to build facilities that authorize abuses of civil liberty. Nonetheless, HR 4437 focuses too much attention on the United States' southern border. HR 4437 would only set up a "Northern Border study." Did those in Congress forget that Ahmed Ressay attempted to enter the United States from the US-Canadian border in order to launch an

attack on Los Angeles International Airport on the eve of millennium celebrations? HR 4437 fails to address the Northern border. Indeed, the immigration issue is not just a south-of-the-border problem. Illegal immigration affects all communities, including the Asian Pacific Islander community. Though the United States Census Bureau did note that 69% of illegal immigrants in 2000 came from Mexico, six other nations had over 100,000 "unauthorized residents" in the U.S., most notably China. Every year, 100,000 Chinese nationals attempt to enter the United States illegally, mostly from Fujian Province. In the United States, over 500,000 Chinese have illegally entered the U.S. since the 1980s. And the Chinese are not the only one entering the nation illegally from Asia, but also from Korea, India, and the Philippines. Other nations worldwide contributing to the 11 to 12 million in the United States (besides Mexico) include Russia, Poland, and Canada. Far from the vision of crossing the southwestern deserts, illegal immigrants are coming in by plane, disappearing after their passports get stamped. Even the Irish Lobby is proposing immigration reform. Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern attempted to persuade President Bush to provide legal standing for the 50,000 illegal Irish immigrants residing in the U.S.

As for S. 2454, the bill accommodates President Bush's guest worker's program, taking a softer line on those charity organizations helping illegal immigrants, and down-sizes the wall project. Instead, the bill would divide illegal immigrants into three groups: those that have been in the US 5 or more years can apply for citizenship if they learn English, pay taxes, and fines; those who have lived in the US for 2-4 years must return to their country and apply for legal status; the rest would be deported. The bill would allow 7 million illegal immigrants to become citizens. At the same time, Section 205 of S. 2454 would take a similar line with HR 4437 in aggressively penalizing those who commit gang violence.

What to do? Get rid of them all? Keep them all? Both Senate and House bills have major flaws, the former being too lenient with those who entered the nation illegally and the latter focusing too little on the US-Canada border. Despite their imperfections, these bills indicate a step closer to comprehensive immigration reform. Congress should work on securing our borders—both North and South—through increasing personnel for border patrol. The United States should also enforce laws which make the US unattractive for undocumented workers, including enforcing OSHA laws, as Robert Scheer suggests. By making the US job market exclusive to documented and legal workers, it would discourage unwanted migration. Employers should be pressured to hire only documented workers (which both Senate and House bills address).

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the stereotype? Or has it unwittingly devolved to just the racist image? As this controversy has shown, context is key and on the shoe the context is hidden and lost, which initially led to all the uproar.

However, in comparison to the truly disastrous and racist Abercrombie and Fitch T-shirts marketed two years ago, these limited edition sneakers, which were not conceived for mass retail are, in my opinion, mostly harmless. Does that mean we just let Adidas and other corporations exercise idiotic judgment? No, we must let our voices be heard, because who else will tell the business suits when they are being dumb asses?



The caricature McGee lovingly dubbed "Roy Fong"

References: K. Oanh Ha. "Adidas sneaker roils Asian-Americans" The Mercury News Apr 8, 2006

The following is the actual consumer relations email Lorraine received from Adidas:

Courtesy of Google Images

Thank you for your email. We welcome your comments and take your concerns seriously as adidas is committed to understanding, valuing and incorporating the diversity of our communities and various fields of activities among the global marketplace.

With the current introduction of the adicolor series, adidas brings back an iconic footwear concept that celebrates the touch points of self expression, customization and personalization.

Comprised of over 40 unique footwear designs, the adicolor collection is divided into two major parts, the White Series and the innovative Color Series. Represented by six different colors, the latter features a number of collaborations between adidas Originals and a diverse group of partners—all icons from the worlds of fashion and art.

Among those is San Francisco-based store HUF, who hooked up with the well-respected West Coast artist Barry McGee, better known by his tag name, "Twist". Working on and inspired by the streets of America's cities since the 1980s, Chinese-American McGee and HUF chose to feature one of Twist's favorite characters, fictional bondsman Ray Fong, on the footbed, lace jewel and tongue of their adicolor sneaker.

McGee on his adicolor sneaker: "Ray Fong is a character I developed well-over four years ago for an art installation in New York. The image was made from a picture of me when I was around eight years old. When I look at the photo, I think- cute! The name Ray Fong came from my uncle Ray Fong who passed away over a decade ago. Keith (HUF) and I never thought the image was "racist" and I am sorry to those people who perceive it that way. All I remember is having Stan Smith's face on my adidas when I was young, and was elated to put a caricature of myself on a shoe when presented the opportunity this year."

The HUF/Twist sneaker represents the adicolor concept as it takes expression from the contemporary urban world. Part of the most limited-edition package of the adicolor series, these were produced for a one-time run with a limited distribution of only 1,000 pairs available exclusively at just twelve retail locations worldwide. There is no plan to market these sneakers in the future, and they are expected to completely sell out following this limited release. Please visit www.adidas.com/adicolor to see other models included in the adicolor series and for information on the project in its entirety.

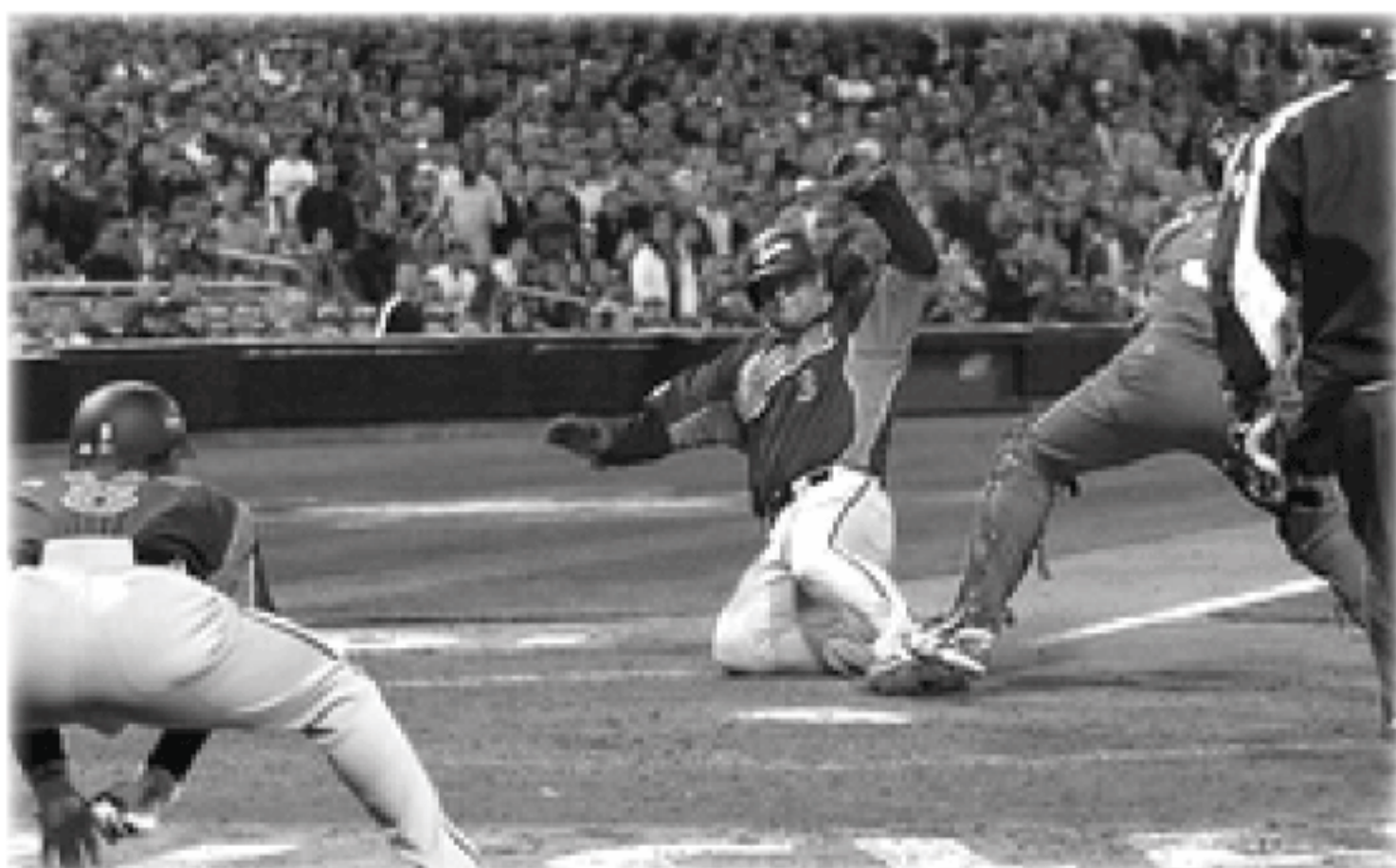
adidas is excited to have featured HUF and McGee as part of this project. adidas does and always has valued an open dialogue with its consumers. Therefore, we welcome your feedback and that which we have received from the global community and will continue to do so. We respect your views and concerns. It is an unfortunate coincidence that the HUF/Twist sneaker and its inclusion as part of the "Yellow Series" has been misinterpreted as purposely offensive. It is not our intention to offend any group or individual as adidas prides itself on being a multicultural organization.

Should you require further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us. We welcome your inquiries regarding our products.

Consumer Relations
adidas America

JAPAN WINS WORLD BASEBALL CLASSIC

By Thomas Lee



Images courtesy of wikipedia.org and worldbaseballclassic.com



Japan celebrates its victory

Since the late 1800s and the early 1900s, baseball has been considered America's pastime, America's sport. Around the world, people wear Yankee hats without really knowing what baseball is, only knowing that somehow, that logo represents all that is American. And in March 2006, in the World Baseball Classic, somehow, that feeling stayed.

The World Baseball Classic was a huge success – despite its many detractors and critics, it was an incredible tournament. Almost every game was competitive and close, the fans brought an amazing atmosphere, and the excitement could be felt in the air. It felt like the World Series was being played in March. Several moments stood out – when Big Papi David Ortiz launched his game-winning home run against Venezuela, he flipped his bat and lifted his hands just as he did for the Red Sox in the playoffs. When Chan Ho Park struck out the last batter against Japan, he showed more emotion than he ever did playing in the major leagues. And when Japan finally won it all, they came out and celebrated like they had won a world championship – because they had! For all those who thought this was just a gimmick, that no one cared, they didn't watch this tournament. Because everyone cared.

For Asia, specifically, this was a tournament to remember. The surprise of the tournament, Team Korea, brought an incredible pitching staff and a defense that was second to none. In a land where the home run is king, the Koreans reminded us that it is the glove, not the bat, which is most important to the game. And of course, Team Japan. The inaugural champions did it all – their MVP was a pitcher who kept them alive in all the games they played, their star was an outfielder who found gaps and hit to all sides of the field, and their hero was a bench player with a keen sense of when to hit his backbreaking home runs. Say what you will, but Japan came and played *baseball*. They played like champions, and they deserved their title.

Yet, somehow, in a tournament that was dominated by Koreans, Dominicans, Cubans, and especially Japanese, there was never more feeling that this, indeed, was America's sport. In stadiums around the world, but especially within the good old USA, people from around the world gathered, bringing their unique cultures, their unique fans, their unique playing styles, and blended it into an experience that was unlike any other. And that, really, is what America is all about – a one-in-a-kind melting pot, a global blend that is unlike any other. Only in America, Peter Gammons raved. Only in America could something like this happen, and he was right. Whether it was the crazy arm angles and deliveries of the Asian pitchers, the hard-swinging bats of the Latino hitters, the wide-eyed exuberance of the European players, everyone brought something to the table – and it was accepted and even admired. In a century that has so far been filled with war, divisiveness, and the never-ending criticism of America, the World Baseball Classic is a symbol of how America is the only place on Earth where every culture, every ethnicity, every person can live and play side by side as equals.

Immigration, continued from page 4

But the issue is far more complicated where a few lines of words can easily solve the problem. Yet the positive outcome of these bills is that they have spurred a healthy debate and action in dealing with this issue instead of politicians paying lip service to the American people.

Sources:

Yin, Xiao-huang, "The Invisible Illegal Immigrants", Los Angeles Times, April 2, 2006

Charles Babington and Shailagh Murray, "Immigration Bill Falls in Senate," <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/07/AR2006040700182.html>, April 8, 2006

WHITEWASHED OR FOBBY? A TAKE ON CROSS CULTURAL IDENTITY

By Albert Wang

Often times, I have trouble defining my own ethnicity. By living in the American culture for so long, I have replaced many of my old Taiwanese traditions with American traditions like baseball and apple pie. Yet I still retain parts of my Asian heritage by listening to Taiwanese music and eating Taiwanese Food. Perhaps the best way to describe my ethnicity is “Taiwanese-American”.

But what exactly does it mean to be “Taiwanese-American”? Over the weekend of April 6th – 8th, I set out to “Discover the Taiwanese American Consciousness” by attending the ITASA West Coast Conference at UCLA. Over the course of two days, I attended many workshops and heard from speakers such as actor Roger Fan from the movie “Better Luck Tomorrow”, physician Perry Shieh from the WHO, and Berkeley’s own Teddy Liaw from the Taiwanese American Citizens League. The premise of the conference was to teach its participants what being Taiwanese means, specifically in context of community, network, culture, politics and personal goals. However, I would argue that the as the conference went on, many participants found that being Taiwanese-

American was still something that needed to be defined. Indeed, for most of us, we’re caught in the crosshairs of a culture clash. We aren’t entirely “White Washed” Americans or entirely “Fobby” Taiwanese. Ultimately the conclusion of the conference was that Taiwanese American youths today will determine what Taiwanese American means a decade from now. However, while defining this label, we must be proactive in seeking political representation and efficient in building a solid incorporative cultural identity. Without these two things, a stable ethnic identity cannot exist.

I hope that ten years down the road, I will fully be able to understand what being Taiwanese-American means. I hope that instead of being confused, I will be proud to be Taiwanese-American.



ITASA West Coast Conference 2006, Photo courtesy of Albert Wang

CANADA APOLOGIZES TO THE CHINESE- 125 YEARS LATER

By Monica Tsao

A short article appeared in the New York Times on April 5th with the headline, “Canada Apologizes for Tax on Chinese.” The story reported that the Canadian government would apologize for the discriminatory tax it imposed on Chinese immigrants between 1885 and 1923. In other words, a formal apology is still pending, but as Beverley J. Oda, the heritage minister, expressed, “It has been a couple decades that the community has been asking for an apology from government, so I am very pleased to say the prime minister is moving forward on this” – it is a moment worth rejoicing.

Actually, Canada’s promise to give a formal apology to Chinese-Canadians was but a small part of Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s address to the Conservative-led Parliament, in which he vowed to “get tougher on crime, crack down on government corruption and cut taxes.”

It’s interesting to see that it took more than 125 years for the government to finally shed light on this much-protested

humiliation amongst the Chinese community in Canada. Thanks to all the heat on immigration, recognition is granted at last.

Thousands of Chinese workers poured into Canada in the 1880s to aid the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. After the completion of the CPR, however, the Canadian government no longer needed the Chinese laborers. Fearing the immigration flux, the government passed the Chinese Immigration Act of 1885, which imposed a “Head Tax” of \$50 on every Chinese going to Canada. By 1900, this amount increased to \$100 – eventually growing to \$500 by 1903, “the equivalent of two years’ wages for many of the immigrants.” Finally, the government imposed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1923, which lasted until 1947.

This story should not sound peculiar to anyone who is familiar with immigration issues throughout America’s history as we have our own similar narrative of Chinese immigrants in America. Would America also care to recognize its own discriminatory acts against its immigrants? Perhaps it is yet too soon.



ASUC Elections



APA is endorsing the following candidates

EVP



Photo Courtesy Of Daily Cal
Ben Narodick for Executive Vice President

SENATE



Jane "Cal Dems" Park #61 for Senator

AAVP



Joyce Liou for Academic Affairs Vice President

SENATE



Karl Sigantoria #50 for Senator

ASUC elections are from April 25th to April 27th. You can vote either online at <http://election.asuc.org> from 9:00 AM to 7:00 PM or you can vote at one of the various polling stations that will be set up around campus. For more information go to <http://election.asuc.org>.

APA ELECTIONS

APA is now accepting applications for our Fall 2006 Cabinet! Executive positions are year long and Chair positions are for the semester. Applications are available at <http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~apa>. Please read the instructions and qualifications carefully. Applications for executive positions are due Sunday April 10th at 12:00 PM. Applications for Chair positions are also due on Sunday, but we will accept them until Wednesday May 3rd!

Email completed applications to Malin at mkkimoto@berkeley.edu.

Elections are on **Thursday May 4th** in 122 Barrows, Time TBA

Everyone is welcome to apply.

Good Luck!

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| Executive Positions |
| President |
| Internal Vice President |
| External Vice President |
| Secretary |
| Treasurer |
|
 |
| Co-chair Positions |
| Issues Committee(2) |
| Outreach Committee(2) |
| Public Relations (2) |
| Newsletter (2) |